



Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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Evaluation

Corporate evaluation of UN-Women's United Nations system coordination and broader convening role in ending violence against women

Summary

This report summarizes the corporate evaluation of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)'s United Nations system coordination and broader convening role in ending violence against women (EVAW).

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide an overall assessment of UN-Women's United Nations system coordination and broader convening role in the area of EVAW, examine existing mechanisms and include a forward-looking analysis with a view to informing UN-Women's new Strategic Plan (2022–2025). The evaluation findings are expected to contribute to strategic decision-making, organizational learning, accountability and strengthening of UN-Women's United Nations system coordination and its broader convening role in EVAW. The primary intended users of the evaluation are the UN-Women Executive Board, senior management and programme staff directly working on, or with an interest in, EVAW.

I. Background

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

2. UN-Women works to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls (VAWG), increase access to services for survivors and make private and public spaces safer for women and girls. In working towards ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG), UN-Women leverages its integrated mandate through the provision of normative support, coordination of the United Nations system, and implementation of its operational activities. UN-Women engages on multiple fronts by partnering with governments, United Nations organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other partners to: (a) build capacity among multiple stakeholders to prevent and respond to VAWG in public and private spaces; (b) raise awareness of the causes and consequences of VAWG; (c) provide policy and technical guidance on VAWG legislation and policy reform; (d) provide essential services for survivors; and (e) collect and analyse data, provide thought leadership and disseminate knowledge products on EVAWG, including through established global communities of practice.

3. The evaluation studied the value and benefit that UN-Women's United Nations system coordination and broader convening role in EVAW has in achieving collective EVAW outcomes. The overarching question of the evaluation was: What value and benefit does UN-Women's United Nations system coordination and broader convening role in EVAW bring to UN-Women, United Nations organizations, governments and other partners, and to the overall achievement of collective EVAW outcomes?

II. Purpose and objectives of the evaluation

4. The evaluation provides an overall assessment of UN-Women's United Nations system coordination and broader convening role in EVAW, examines existing mechanisms and includes a forward-looking analysis with a view to informing UN-Women's new Strategic Plan (2022–2025). Drawing on insights collected during the evaluation inception stage, the evaluation focused on five key questions:

- (i) What is the strategic significance of UN-Women's United Nations system coordination and broader convening role in advancing globally agreed EVAW goals?
- (ii) How has UN-Women operationalized its United Nations system coordination and broader convening role with respect to EVAW issues?
- (iii) What are the results of UN-Women's United Nations system coordination and broader convening role with respect to EVAW issues?
- (iv) How has UN-Women's coordination and convening role contributed to EVAW during the COVID-19 global pandemic?
- (v) What lessons emerge from programmes where UN-Women's United Nations system coordination and broader convening work has had a demonstrable impact on EVAW?

5. The evaluation covered the period from 2018 to 2020, focusing in particular on UN-Women’s United Nations system coordination and convening role in EAW during the current Strategic Plan (2018–2021) and allowed for the inclusion of relevant historical results and mechanisms. Although not a focus of this evaluation, the emerging lessons learned on coordination and convening from the Spotlight Initiative to eliminate VAWG were also considered to the extent possible.

6. During the COVID-19 pandemic, UN-Women played an integral role in the United Nations system’s response and in raising awareness of VAWG. This included leading the development of an inter-agency statement on VAWG in the context of COVID-19,¹ supporting the United Nations Secretary-General’s political engagement strategy on gender-based violence, providing substantive inputs to support the inclusion of violence against women in the creation of the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker² in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and producing and disseminating a series of EAW and COVID-19 policy briefs on key issues³ to help inform the adaptation of policies and programmes in developed and developing countries at different stages of the pandemic.

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

III. Evaluation approach and methodology

8. The key emphasis of the evaluation was on mapping and validating UN-Women’s coordination work on EAW outcomes (those reflected in the Integrated Resource and Results Framework of UN-Women’s Strategic Plan for 2018–2021) and the targets enshrined in international commitments, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To facilitate this analysis, the evaluation relied on theory-based approaches to identify the intended outcomes of EAW initiatives and programmes, the pathways for change, the activities and resources undertaken towards achieving the outcomes, the evidence and degree of change and causal linkages to the building blocks of coordination, including leadership and advocacy, partnerships and networks, and mobilization and capacity-building of national actors.

9. The evaluation team used both primary and secondary data sources to provide and validate evidence against the evaluation questions. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with United Nations standards on ethical obligations to participants with respect to confidentiality, informed consent and treatment of sensitive data. In total, over 400 stakeholders were involved in the evaluation through interviews, focus group discussions, surveys and questionnaires. The evaluation team also carried out five in-

¹ *Inter-Agency Statement on Violence Against Women and Girls in the Context of COVID-19* (2020). Available at https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/news%20and%20events/stories/2020/inter-agency-statement-vawandcovid_en.pdf?la=en&vs=1045.

² United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), “Covid-19 Global Gender Response Tracker”. Available at <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/>.

³ United Nations Agency for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), “EAW COVID-19 briefs”. Available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/series-evaw-covid-19-briefs>.

depth case studies which were considered of an appropriate scale and maturation to offer useful lessons.

IV. Lessons learned and promising practices

Lesson 1. Having a coordination mandate is a necessary but insufficient condition for ensuring effective coordination to mainstream gender perspectives in development results. Implementing the mandate requires appropriate investment to strengthen the legitimacy vested in the coordinating entity to ‘lead, promote and coordinate’ the United Nations system.

10. Although UN-Women’s mandate is fundamentally to lead the United Nations system in coordinating for gender equality and women’s empowerment, it is the collective responsibility of the United Nations system to work together to achieve this goal. Coordination is the joint action of entities coming together based on shared and agreed benefits. Drivers, incentives and enabling factors are therefore needed for peer entities to engage in the coordination of EAW work, based on a clear and shared understanding of its contribution to system-wide results, as much as to support agency-level objectives.

Lesson 2. Coordination in thematic areas is intertwined with the normative and operational roles of UN-Women’s mandate. A large part of coordination in thematic areas takes place within the context of normative work and programming: joint planning; development and dissemination of knowledge products; programme implementation; and advocacy and communications. Coordination therefore needs to be viewed in terms of the value it adds to normative and operational results and outcomes.

11. The acknowledged importance of coordination in contributing to results needs to be corroborated by due recognition in Strategic Plan thematic results through a theory of change, adoption of appropriate results indicators (beyond processes), elaboration of resource needs, allocations in programming budgets and the implementation of a framework of standards against which progress can be regularly aggregated, measured and documented. Systematic reporting of coordination efforts would also ensure recognition of the significant time spent on coordination for results, along with the quality of the enabling environment in which the coordination takes place.

Lesson 3. Coordination is as much about people skills and building trust as it is institutional arrangements. Instances of strong leadership and individual efforts to build collaborative relationships were found to result in successes. Good examples were noted in the United Nations Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence (the Essential Services Global Programme) and the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls.

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

13. In terms of coordination practices, the evaluation team noted the following examples as promising practices that demonstrate the benefits of coordination.

14. First, from a design perspective, some elements of the Spotlight Initiative's coordination structures could be further studied and potentially applied to joint programming. As one of the United Nations' flagship programmes on the SDGs, and in line with the United Nations development system reform, the Spotlight Initiative positioned the programme's United Nations system coordination under the Resident Coordinator's Office. Although an assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of this arrangement was not part of this evaluation, UN-Women is well positioned to undertake the technical coherence role by supporting the Resident Coordinator's Office through its in-country and regional office structures. UN-Women's substantial human resources and expertise in EAW is a corporate asset that remains unmatched in the United Nations system.

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

16. Third, notwithstanding some challenges in developing an effective division of labour, both UN-Women and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) have made efforts to evolve pragmatic inter-agency arrangements in joint programming, the development of global knowledge products and advocacy and communication activities. This was evident in the agreed division of areas of responsibility in the Essential Services Global Programme and in the UNiTE Campaign in Asia and the Pacific, and also in the management of joint programmes in countries where UN-Women does not have a country presence. These successes are largely due to the initiative shown by individuals to build collaborative relationships as part of specific engagements towards common objectives. There is also mutual recognition and respect among both entities' senior leadership of each other's technical expertise and continuing investment in EAW capacities, which has led to the current dialogue on more effective corporate arrangements for collaborative action.

V. Key conclusions

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

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

18. In its initial five-year phase (2012–2017), United Nations system coordination and accountability focused on the achievement of minimum standards in mainstreaming gender perspectives within processes and functions of individual organizations. Accountability for harnessing the potential of coordinated actions (planning, mobilizing, delivering and reporting) for transformative development results was incorporated in the second phase of the UN System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) and the United Nations country team (UNCT)-SWAP, which started in 2018. In the case of EAW, present accountability systems need to be complemented by appropriate accountability instruments for results. A system-wide accountability instrument is required that comprehensively reviews and reports on the United Nations system’s high-level results and progress towards achieving SDG target 5.2 ‘Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private sphere, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation’ across countries, regions and globally.

19. The adoption of UN-SWAP 2.0 in 2018 is a positive development in ensuring accountability for transformative results. This has important implications for system-wide coordination and broader convening mechanisms in thematic areas, including a redesign or recalibration of objectives, processes and outputs and engagement modalities.

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

20. Although there is sufficient clarity on UN-Women’s coordination functions relating to accountability for gender mainstreaming in United Nations entities, what such coordination means, entails and is expected to achieve in specific thematic areas, including EAW is neither publicly stated nor uniformly understood.

21. The promotion, leading and coordination of the United Nations system for performance and results in thematic areas such as EAW involves coordination and convening beyond global intergovernmental processes and engagement within and outside the United Nations system at both the regional and country levels.

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

- convening of stakeholders in intergovernmental processes and mechanisms for agenda-setting and the adoption of international commitments and standards
- production and dissemination of global knowledge products, methodologies and technical guidance materials for policy action – mostly at the global level
- stocktaking and implementation reviews of EAW trends, investments, challenges and innovative practices
- awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns on EAW
- formulation of common/concerted approaches and strategies at country or higher levels
- joint programming and implementation (country, multi-country levels)
- data and evidence gathering and monitoring
- reporting of and communication on progress towards agreed development goals (SDGs).

23. The lack of a system-wide accountability framework and periodic reporting on EAW present challenges in operationalizing a coordination framework for results

through collaborative actions. Coordination is therefore largely voluntary for United Nations entities, with no sanctions or incentives established.

24. At the country level, coordination and broader convening tasks involve both United Nations system and external stakeholders. United Nations system coordination mechanisms at the country level (Gender Theme Groups) often do not include specific workplans and budgets linked to coordination-specific actions and deliverables for EAW.

25. UN-Women has struggled to raise resources for its coordination mandate. Donors are reluctant to fund United Nations system coordination activities from non-core or earmarked contributions (where UN-Women has seen the largest growth in recent years), as they expect United Nations system coordination activities to be funded from assessed contributions or voluntary contributions in regular (core) resources. However, this logic is not necessarily applicable to coordination in thematic areas that have joint programmes implemented through significant United Nations system coordination and broader convening, support provided to national governments to implement normative commitments, and communications and advocacy activities, as these actions take place more at the regional and country levels, and tend to have human and financial resource costs that are not explicitly delineated.

26. Another gap in building the case for coordination is the lack of recognition of the resources expended by UN-Women as a convening organization (which is the case in most joint programmes). The administrative organization of a joint programme receives 1 per cent of programme budgets, yet the convening organization is expected to deliver on its role with no additional resources. This lack of extra resources places a considerable burden on UN-Women's programme staff.

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

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

28. Several joint EAW programmes have been designed as global, regional or multi-country programmes. This has enabled the use of standardized approaches (with due contextualization) based on a theory of change, drawing from internationally accepted standards and good practices.

29. Some programmes have clearly elaborated coordination elements and human and financial resources specifically allocated for United Nations system coordination. In some programmes, UN-Women and partner organizations have made efforts to develop pragmatic inter-agency arrangements in joint programming, such as the development of global knowledge products, and advocacy and communication activities.

Conclusion 4. The COVID-19 response is a strong example of the power of a coordinated United Nations system response. Not only did the response elicit the best efforts of the entire United Nations system, but it also established UN-Women's credentials in a system-wide coordination role, emphasizing its capacities in thought

leadership, swift mobilization of evidence, and strong and cohesive advocacy for action to response to and prevent VAWG in public and private spaces.

30. UN-Women's engagement in the United Nations system's COVID-19 response spanned several dimensions. The Entity demonstrated perspicacity in highlighting the gender dimensions of the COVID-19 crisis, especially its adverse impacts on gender-based violence at a very early stage. Early evidence-based advocacy was instrumental in the articulation of the need for a system-wide response. Policy briefs from several agencies and a 10-point checklist for governments to enable a gender-responsive COVID-19 response were key in this regard.

31. UN-Women made a useful contribution in the formulation and roll-out of a political engagement strategy for the United Nations Secretary-General and other principles relating to the COVID-19 response, in particular leveraging inter-agency mechanisms such as the Secretary-General's Executive Committee. The Entity also reallocated resources across its EAW programme portfolio to incorporate COVID-19 responses at the regional and country levels through strengthening data collection and analysis, and provided support to strengthen access to services during individual countries' pandemic-response measures. UN-Women additionally collaborated with UNDP in developing the COVID-19 Gender Response Tracker to monitor governments' policy responses, and had effective media engagement, as evidenced through the Entity's partnerships with Google and Facebook, which helped it reach more than 2 million people worldwide.

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

32. UN-Women's Strategic Plan for 2018–2021 did not set aside coordination budgets for thematic areas, even though a large part of coordinating for results takes place within programming. EAW (a major area of programming for UN-Women) was the most prioritized thematic area within the United Nations system during 2014–2019, with 57 per cent of reporting United Nations organization listing EAW as a priority.⁴

33. Noting the complexity of the undertaking and several UN-Women efforts, the Strategic Plan for 2018–2021 did not include optimal results and success indicators to capture and report the contributions of its coordination pillar in the context of thematic area results. Coordination was treated as a contributor to operational efficiency and not as a critical component in mainstreaming gender perspectives in development results in thematic areas. Coordination workplans were therefore not systematically outlined, budgeted, documented or reported to showcase their benefits and value to participants and beneficiaries.

34. The common chapter mechanisms of the organizations of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination include no specific areas of coordination or collaborative actions that would drive a common, shared corporate understanding of coordination and minimize inter-agency dynamics. As a result, insights on the effectiveness of UN-Women's coordination and broader convening role are based on a mix of perceptions of UN-Women staff and other actors, rather than on objective and agreed measures.

35. Coordination responsibilities are intensive and take up a considerable amount of staff time. Senior staff at headquarters interviewed for the evaluation estimate that over a third of their time is spent coordinating with counterparts. Despite this, many key stakeholders perceive coordination and broader convening activities as abstract tasks that

⁴ As reported in *25 Years after Beijing: A Review of the UN System's Support for the Implementation of the Platform for Action, 2014–2019*, 25 of 44 (57 per cent) reporting entities cited EAW among their programming priorities.

are conflated with other tasks. For staff who primarily have programme implementation responsibilities, coordination tasks may be considered an added responsibility, as they are not based on clear deliverables and resources and, in most cases, are considered a further responsibility in addition to programme implementation tasks.

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

36. UN-Women faces challenges in fully operationalizing its United Nations system coordination role and in managing expectations among United Nations entities, with the biggest challenge being the balance between its coordination and operational roles. A major reason for some pushback against UN-Women within Gender Theme Groups is that the Entity does not generally have a sizeable field programme footprint to be able to coordinate other entities. There are some concerns about the variation in technical expertise across UN-Women's headquarters, field offices and regions, and the Entity's perceived lack of neutrality among United Nations organizations in contexts where UN-Women also mobilizes resources for programmes, which results in competition among organizations.

37. UN-Women's convening role is also not assertively defended by some country office staff, as it neither attracts additional core and non-core resources, nor provides dedicated posts, often resulting in an additional workload on staff with programme implementation tasks. A practical problem in this regard is the different seniority levels of programme staff in UNCT structures and decision-making bodies, with lower ranking staff members usually facing more senior counterparts in key meetings.

38. As a result, not all United Nations organizations automatically accept UN-Women's mandate, with the Entity having to earn such acceptance through showing its added value on the ground. Where UN-Women has sizeable human resource capacities and financial resources, or where it has cordially agreed the division of labour (such as the division of pilot countries and respective sector engagements within the Essential Services Global Programme) this has worked well. However, coordination between entities with greater capacity has sometimes been challenging, with successes often resulting from individual leadership rather than institutional arrangements.

VI. Key recommendations

Recommendation 1. UN-Women should reaffirm its United Nations system coordination mandate for results in key thematic areas (i.e. beyond its promotion of gender mainstreaming in United Nations organizations).

39. UN-Women should reaffirm its coordination mandate as a mandate to lead, promote and coordinate EAW towards meeting minimum standards in the United Nations system and to maximize collective efforts to achieve agreed thematic area results, i.e. EAW goals and outcomes (SDG 5.2). UN-Women should present the need for an appropriate system-wide accountability instrument for EAW that also complements existing accountability instruments. UN-Women should work with partners to change the narrative around coordination for EAW results, as this is not the exclusive responsibility of one entity, but the collective responsibility of all entities in the United Nations system. Coordination is therefore to be exercised throughout the United Nations system (and not just by UN-Women), and also requires further engagement outside the system with governments to other key stakeholders in order to achieve EAW results.

Recommendation 2. UN-Women should clearly articulate the value proposition of coordination to accelerate EAW outcomes and the risks and costs of non-coordination. It should also present the Entity's credentials to lead, promote and

coordinate United Nations system accountability for thematic area results and should propose a ‘coordination for ERAW results’ framework with clear results and indicators.

40. UN-Women should undertake a review of the gaps in existing mechanisms in respect of system-wide accountability for transformative results. UN-Women should itemize the coordination tasks specific to ERAW (with United Nations and other stakeholders) carried out at the headquarters, regional and country levels by various sections, including an estimation of the human resources, time and financial resources involved in these tasks. UN-Women should develop a ‘coordination for ERAW results’ package, menu or compact, which lists outputs, products and services, structures, mechanisms, partners and alliances. Some examples of package contents at the global level could include: a flagship review report on the state of violence against women as an annex to the Secretary-General’s biennial report; an annual dialogue with the Office of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by State parties; and standardized ERAW guidance.

Recommendation 3. UN-Women should appropriately recognize and reflect coordination and convening functions in the thematic areas of its Strategic Plan for 2022–2025 with specific results indicators and resource requirements at the global, regional and country levels to present a full picture of actions and funding gaps.

41. The theory of change in the Strategic Plan for 2022–2025 should highlight the results and outputs that cannot be achieved without strong coordination by UN-Women and the United Nations system and should itemize mechanisms and processes that call for coordinated actions to achieve ERAW goals and targets. UN-Women should formulate and include coordination results and indicators in the ERAW development results of its Strategic Plan, using the ‘coordination for ERAW results’ package as the basis, and should also include relevant metrics for substantive qualitative outcomes of coordination in the ERAW thematic area of the development results framework.

42. UN-Women should prepare a breakdown of coordination resources linked to United Nations system coordination and broader convening actions for accountability and (ERAW) development results, with financing targets for, for example, minimum package costs for coordination in thematic areas of the Strategic Plan or Strategic Notes at the country level, budgets for system-wide ERAW reviews and stocktaking as part of costs to support the Secretary-General’s biennial reports, coordination costs for minimum packages as budget items in donor agreements, and the costs of all tasks of a convening organization in joint programmes (showing any funding gaps).

Recommendation 4. UN-Women should lead and strengthen inter-agency mechanisms for coordinated actions in the thematic area of ERAW towards accountability for development results as envisioned in UN-SWAP and internationally agreed goals on ERAW, especially SDG 5.2.

43. UN-Women should present the case to United Nations organizations and to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General for re-forming an official inter-agency mechanism for coordinated reviews of system-wide ERAW initiatives and results as part of accountability for development results in UN-SWAP 2.0 and reports of the Secretary-General on ERAW. UN-Women should also propose a coordinated response framework for ERAW based on a system-wide ERAW agenda, which should include system-level diagnosis and coordinated actions. The coordination aspects of the framework could include monitoring and evaluation of ERAW results, mutual accountability frameworks (governments, UNCTs and other stakeholders) under SDG and CEDAW reviews, collaborative knowledge products and guidance, joint programmes and multi-partner initiatives, and joint advocacy and communications (speaking in one voice).

44. UN-Women should explore the interest of organizations of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination in developing a collaborative areas section for SDG 5.2 in their strategic plans using principles of engagement under a coordinated ERAW response framework, including common coordination success indicators and metrics. UN-Women should also build trust through neutrality and establish a credible distinction between its United Nations system coordination function and implementation of its operational activities.

Recommendation 5. UN-Women should strengthen in-house coordination mechanisms to better represent thematic area highlights and coordination challenges in inter-agency mechanisms and reporting.

45. UN-Women should review work processes to enhance coherence in coordination among the UN System Coordination Division (UNSCD), Ending Violence Against Women Section of the Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division (PPID), and the UN Trust Fund on ERAW to better compile, review and report on coordination-related initiative results in the ERAW thematic area. UN-Women should also instil coordination into the Entity's corporate programming culture, including making the role of coordination in all UN-Women programme staff's tasks more explicit.

Recommendation 6. UN-Women should systematically document and compellingly communicate the impact of coordination to the United Nations system, donors and national stakeholders through high-level messaging of the value proposition of its coordination work, using metrics and case studies suitable for external audiences.

46. UN-Women should consider the use of the Resident Coordinator's Office, United Nations cooperation framework and UNCT-SWAP structures to promote and report on coordinated actions and programmes at the country level. There is a need to systematically document coordination 'impact' stories, i.e. results that could not have been achieved without coordination, using metrics and case studies suitable for external audiences, also highlighting the real costs and challenges involved compared with the insufficient resources budgeted and allocated for coordination.

ANNEX I

Evaluation findings and overarching questions

Overarching Q1: What is the strategic significance of UN-Women's United Nations system coordination and broader convening role in advancing globally agreed goals on EAW?

Finding 1: UN-Women's United Nations system coordination mandate is a strategic asset that enables the Entity to engage with and coordinate aspects of gender equality and women's empowerment with several larger United Nations entities.

Finding 2: Existing accountability arrangements do not provide a system-wide qualitative review of investments and performance in specific thematic areas, especially EAW, which is the programming area with the largest number of United Nations organizations⁵ and one of the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Present accountability systems need to be complemented with appropriate accountability instruments for results in thematic areas, such as EAW.

Finding 3: At both the corporate and country levels there is sufficient clarity on UN-Women's coordination functions with regard to accountability for gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system. However, what United Nations system coordination means, entails and is expected to achieve in specific thematic areas (including EAW) is neither clearly articulated nor uniformly understood. Both within UN-Women and among other United Nations entities there is a lack of understanding or agreement on the concrete value proposition of coordination: What value does UN-Women's United Nations system coordination and convening role on EAW bring to individual entities, the United Nations system as a whole, Member States, other stakeholders and beneficiaries (women and girls)?

Finding 4: The common chapter mechanisms of the organizations of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination included no specific areas of coordination or collaborative actions that would drive a common and shared corporate understanding of coordination.

Finding 5: There is broad consensus and recognition of UN-Women's United Nations system coordination mandate and long-standing work on EAW, with the Entity's relationships with CSOs, women's rights networks and national women's machineries being strong drivers of comparative advantage. UN-Women's legitimacy to technically lead and coordinate on EAW issues at the UNCT level, and more broadly at the country level, is validated by its significant and growing resource investments in EAW.

Overarching Q2: How has UN-Women operationalized its United Nations system coordination and broader convening role on EAW issues?

Finding 6: UN-Women's regional offices play an important coordination role in the United Nations updated regional architecture, connecting normative and operational elements, while also coordinating technical support to country offices with limited resources.

Finding 7: At the country level, coordination and broader convening tasks involve both the United Nations system and external stakeholders. However, these efforts are not systematically documented or reported.

Finding 8: Coordination-related efforts and the costs incurred by UN-Women are not systematically captured, nor accurately reflected. In the absence of clear terms of

⁵ United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE), *25 Years after Beijing: A Review of the UN System's Support for the Implementation of the Platform for Action 2015–2019* (2020), p. 19.

reference, agreed responsibilities among Gender Theme Group members, workplans and commensurate budgets, United Nations system coordination successes at the country level tend to rely more on individual motivation, interpersonal skills and charisma rather than emanating from enabling structures and processes.

Finding 9: There are some differences in perception among UN-Women staff and some Gender Theme Group members about the Entity's coordination and convening role. Moreover, some stakeholders highlighted that UN-Women faces challenges in establishing trust among partner organizations and in resolving perceived conflicts between its coordination and operational programme implementation roles.

Finding 10: The updated Resident Coordinator system is a strong potential enabler for UN-Women's coordination role at the country level, while also being an opportunity to ensure and enhance coordinated approaches in ERAW programming through the Resident Coordinator and starter coordination indicators.

Finding 11: UN-Women's Strategic Plan for 2018–2021 does not include optimal results and success indicators to capture and report contributions to its coordination pillar in the context of thematic area results. Coordination is treated as a contributor to operational efficiency and not as a critical element in mainstreaming gender perspectives in development results in thematic areas.

Finding 12: The absence of objective and unambiguous coordination arrangements and metrics leads to varied perceptions within UN-Women and among partner organizations on its effectiveness.

Overarching Q3: What are the results of UN-Women's United Nations system coordination and broader convening role on ERAW issues?

Finding 13: A number of joint programmes and advocacy initiatives have contributed to the advancement of global norms and standards and the creation and steadily increasing adoption of guidance among countries. This has led to improvements in legislation and increased investments in the prevention of violence and provision of quality, multisectoral essential services to survivors. The United Nations system has also promoted several initiatives to strengthen ERAW data and statistics to provide evidence of challenges and responses.

Finding 14: Several joint ERAW programmes were designed as global, regional or multi-country programmes. This enabled the use of standardized approaches (with some contextualization) based on a theory of change, drawing from global norms and standards, with technical support, a global package of tools and guidance, and access to good practices available to address a set of challenges common to several countries.

Finding 15: The development and dissemination of knowledge products on ERAW issues was an area commonly cited by external stakeholders as a key strength and added value of UN-Women in the ERAW space. UN-Women's coordination role in this area is recognized by other organizations and partners.

Finding 16: UN-Women's role in United Nations system coordination and broader convening role in ERAW incorporates the leave no-one behind principle in different ways at the global, regional and country levels, with disability inclusion an emerging area of work. Key global ERAW initiatives maintain a focus on intersectionality and disability inclusion in programming, knowledge products and inclusive representation from stakeholders.

Overarching Q4: How has UN-Women's coordination and convening role contributed to ERAW during the COVID-19 global pandemic?

Finding 17: UN-Women was early to spot the shadow pandemic of VAWG and drive a cohesive United Nations system response.

Finding 18: UN-Women reallocated resources across its EVAW programme portfolio to incorporate COVID-19 responses at the regional and country levels, strengthening data-collection and analysis activities along with support to improve access to services during COVID-19 lockdowns.