

TRANSFORM

UN Women's contribution to women's economic empowerment by advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 25th issue of Transform, which focuses on UN Women's work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies for women's economic empowerment.

Despite more than two years since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global economy continues to suffer from economic shocks due to regional conflicts and severe environmental and climate-related disasters. Inflation rates in several regions are higher-than expected, leading to a tightening of global financial conditions. However, gender equality perspectives have not been adequately considered in policy discussions and responses.

This evaluation offers a retrospective look at UN Women's contribution to women's economic empowerment by advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships during the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 period, as well as a forward-looking view that can be leveraged as implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022–2025 gets underway. The Entity works across various sub-thematic areas, including macroeconomics, decent work, social protection, and sustainable development. Additionally, UN Women convenes several women's economic empowerment agendas and is involved in various groups, such as the Global Alliance for Care and the UN Network on Migration.

This evaluation found that UN Women has a comparative advantage in normative work, policy dialogues, and building partnerships. While its work aligns with regional and national priorities, it should plan to adapt to new priority policy areas. UN Women has achieved or exceeded its targets in several sub-thematic areas, and significant efforts have been made along the pathway to policy change. UN Women has also contributed to generating research and evidence for women's economic empowerment debates and policy development, while there is also a scope to improve reporting and tracking results along this pathway. Financial and human resources pose significant challenges for UN Women in this area of work. Although the organization's approach incorporates the principles of Leave No One Behind, there is room for improvement in its intersectional approach.

We hope this issue of Transform raises awareness and understanding of the critical role of UN Women in supporting the global discourse and normative frameworks on WEE across sub-thematic areas and advocating for gender-responsive approaches in emerging priority policy areas.

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Think Beyond. Stay Ahead.

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ON THE COVER

Seychelles - Daily Life - *Market Vendors*. Mana Celestine (left) sells bananas, coconuts, papaya, chillis and soursop in the market in Victoria with the help of her granddaughter Anel.

Photo ©UN Women/Ryan Brown



Women's time
IS money



Advancing
the Care
Agenda



Why evaluate UN Women's work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies for women's economic empowerment?



Are we getting it right?

Does our support positively change the lives of women and girls and contribute to gender equality?

To get better results, we need to know what works. We also need to know what doesn't work and how to adapt it.

As part of the UN Women Corporate Evaluation Plan (2022–2025), UN Women's Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) conducted a corporate evaluation of UN Women's contribution to women's economic empowerment (WEE) by advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships.

UN WOMEN'S WORK ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT BY ADVANCING GENDER-RESPONSIVE LAWS, FRAMEWORKS, POLICIES AND PARTNERSHIPS.

WEE is one of UN Women's four key thematic impact areas. Work on WEE aligns with key global normative frameworks and international commitments, including the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and a series of relevant International Labour Organization conventions amongst others.

As articulated in the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, UN Women focused its contribution to WEE in three areas as shown below.

UN Women also collaborated with a wide range of partners to deliver jointly and/or to convene key actors to establish alliances and partnerships that can amplify the Entity's efforts in influencing gender-responsive policy change related to WEE.

In the current Strategic Plan 2022–2025, UN Women's impact area on WEE focuses on integrated approaches to address the root causes of inequality and identifies key interventions for WEE. The Strategic Plan 2022–2025 also brings with it the introduction of Signature Initiatives.

Signature Initiatives are to be the primary programme implementation instrument for UN Women and they provide flexible, yet coherent, programming frameworks and standardized approaches to guide the work of UN Women's Regional and Country Offices in strategic areas where UN Women is best positioned to make the highest impact at scale to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Of the nine Signature Initiatives, three are being developed around WEE. These include 1) decent work and entrepreneurship; 2) transforming the care economy; and 3) women's climate change, and green and blue economies. It is envisioned that work on gender-responsive macroeconomic policies will be integrated across all three of these Signature Initiatives.

UN WOMEN'S STRATEGIC PLAN WEE AREAS AND KEY PARTNERS



More policies promote decent work and social protection for women.

This includes support to address women's disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and care work and the gender pay gap; promote the rights of domestic workers and workers in the informal sector, as well as the voice and representation for women, including through trade unions.

KEY PARTNERS: ILO, OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, International financial institutions, key line ministries, regional bodies, regional economic commissions, Member States



More women own, launch and/or manage small, medium and large enterprises.

This includes ensuring women's access to digital, financial, technical and vocational education and training opportunities, as well as leveraging public and private procurement processes to expand opportunities for women-owned enterprises and increasing levels of commitment by employers to the Women's Empowerment Principles.

KEY PARTNERS: ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNDP, UN Global Compact, ITC, UNIDO, UNOPS, Executive Committee agencies of the UN Network, CSOs, private sector



More rural women secure access to productive resources and engage in sustainable agriculture

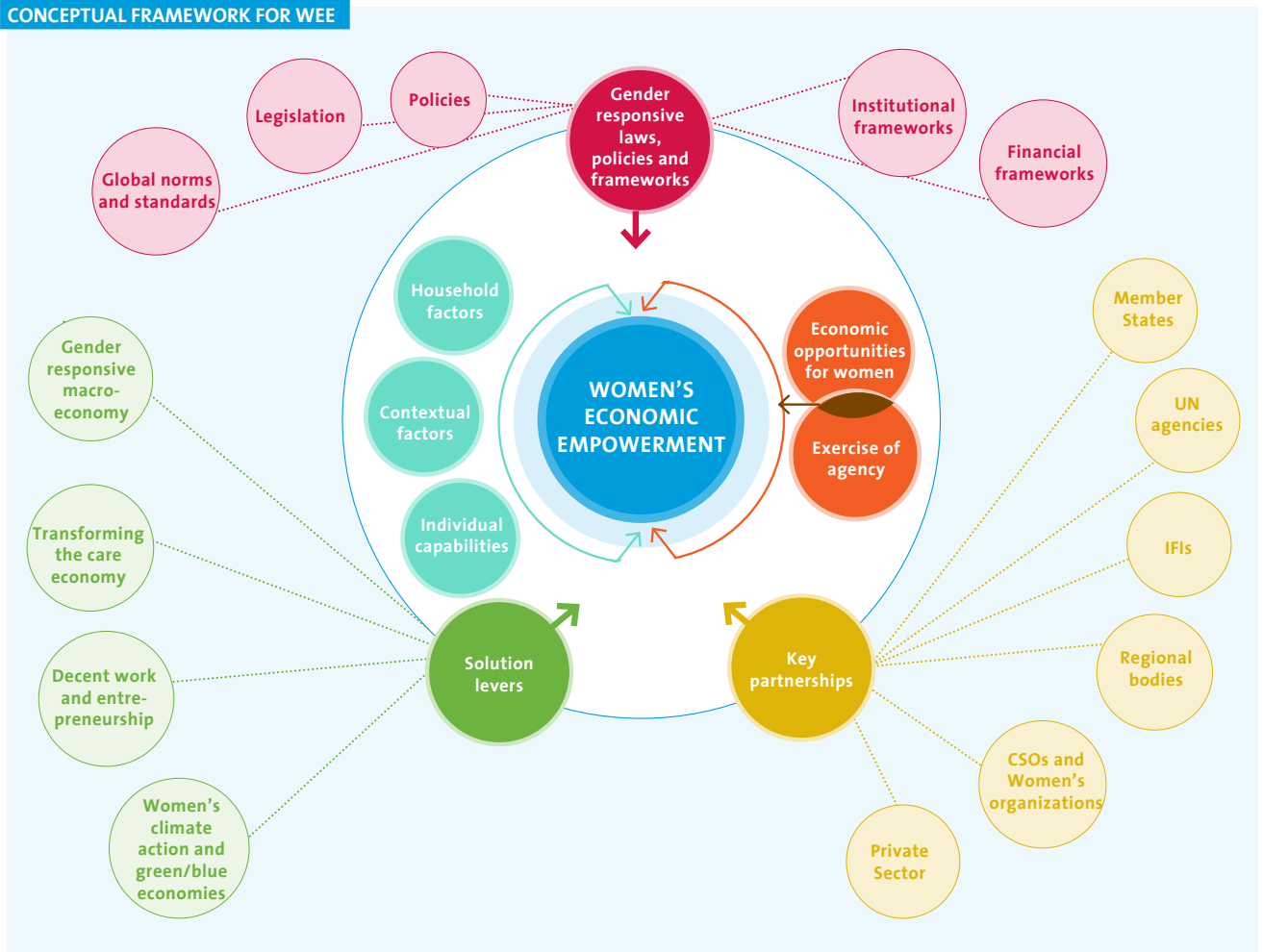
This includes support to ensure access to land, information, finance, markets and vital infrastructure services such as telecommunications, water and energy.

UN Women also collaborated with a wide range of partners to deliver jointly and/or to convene key actors to establish alliances and partnerships that can amplify the Entity's efforts in influencing gender-responsive policy change related to WEE.

KEY PARTNERS: UNEP, FAO, IFAD, WFP, women's cooperatives, farmers associations, CSOs

UN Women collaborated with a wide range of partners to deliver jointly and/or to convene key actors to establish alliances and partnerships that can amplify the Entity's efforts in influencing gender-responsive policy change related to WEE.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR WEE



KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR WEE:



TRANSFORMING THE CARE ECONOMY by strengthening and implementing the 5Rs: recognize, reduce, redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, and reward and represent care workers



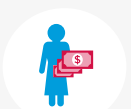
Incentivizing **DECENT WORK, EQUAL PAY FOR WORK OF EQUAL VALUE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**, including by promoting financial and digital inclusion to close the digital gender gap and gender-responsive procurement, among other strategies



Supporting the development and implementation of **GENDER-RESPONSIVE MACROECONOMIC POLICIES AND PRACTICES** by influencing ministries and international financial institutions.



Championing women's increased participation and leadership in **GREEN AND BLUE ECONOMIES AND CLIMATE-RESILIENT AGRICULTURE**.



Engaging effectively with women-led organizations, the private sector and trade unions to tackle discriminatory social norms, practices and legislation, and **ENSURING WOMEN'S ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP IN THE ECONOMY**.

EVALUATION SCOPE AND PURPOSE

The evaluation covered the period from January 2018 to June 2022, which includes the entirety of the previous Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and the first two quarters of the current Strategic Plan 2022–2025. The evaluation was initiated in February 2022 and completed in January 2023.

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency and sustainability of UN Women's contribution to women's economic empowerment (WEE) by advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships and to develop recommendations and insights to strengthen this area of work.

THE KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS ARE:



To what extent is UN Women's work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies for WEE **ALIGNED WITH GLOBAL NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS, PRIORITY POLICY AREAS, AND THE NEEDS OF BENEFICIARIES?**



To what extent is UN Women's work in WEE **COHERENT WITH THE WORK OF PARTNERS AND OTHER KEY THEMATIC AREAS?** How effectively does UN Women leverage its integrated mandate?



To what extent have UN Women's efforts in this area led to **DEMONSTRABLE IMPACT/ OUTCOMES?** What metrics exist to measure progress?



What efforts have been made to ensure **EFFICIENCY OF PROGRAMMING AND SUSTAINABILITY OF BENEFITS AND EFFORTS** in this area?



To what degree are **HUMAN RIGHTS, LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND** – including **DISABILITY INCLUSION** and **GENDER EQUALITY** – principles integrated in this area of work?

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



Photo: UN Women/ Eduard Pagria

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 gender-responsive laws, frameworks, and policies for women's economic empowerment bring to changing the lives of women and girls?

What notable practices can inform UN Women's strategies and implementation?

1

UN Women has clear and well acknowledged comparative advantages in normative work and facilitating policy dialogues, including through key intergovernmental processes, related to WEE.



National (and regional priorities) inform WEE programming and are responsive to changing contexts, for example the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is scope to proactively plan for the need to adapt to current and emerging priority policy areas, such as climate change, the cost-of-living crisis, macroeconomic stagnation and the impact of ongoing conflicts.

UN Women has successfully contributed to alignment in global norms, policies and standards for women's economic rights and autonomy. The Entity has facilitated policy dialogues and advocated for alignment with normative frameworks related to WEE through key intergovernmental processes, such as the Commission on the Status of Women. UN Women has also continued to make significant contributions to global discourse on WEE. Policy and normative work related to WEE remains one of UN Women's comparative advantages and the Entity has facilitated the engagement of CSOs in global intergovernmental policy processes.

In addition to the priority policy areas identified in the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and corresponding Strategic Notes, UN Women played a successful role in highlighting the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on WEE.

At regional and country levels, UN Women's work has been adapted to focus on contextually relevant sub-thematic areas within WEE. Where it has successfully aligned with national priorities, UN Women has been able to capitalize on strategic opportunities and develop close relationships with governments to facilitate implementation of gender-responsive policies. The current economic and political context encompasses rising inequalities and economic exclusion, protracted conflict and humanitarian emergencies, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change. While needs assessments and national and regional priorities inform UN Women's WEE programming, there is scope for further flexibility in adapting and responding to changing contexts at the field level.



2

UN Women works effectively to build consensus and facilitate a coherent voice within global policy dialogues on WEE.



While UN Women's approach to partnerships on WEE is generally sound and tailored to the operating context, engagement with international financial institutions on WEE-related policies could be further strengthened.

Within its work at global, regional and country levels, UN Women partners with a range of stakeholders including governments, other UN agencies, think tanks, CSOs and the private sector.

UN Women's partnering approach to WEE is often appropriate and sound, facilitated by formal multi-stakeholder planning systems (such as the UN Sustainable Development Group). UN Women also engages in a context-specific way, partnering and 'filling gaps' as needed with other partners. UN Women works effectively in building consensus on WEE issues across multiple stakeholder groups and in facilitating a coherent voice within global policy dialogues. This consensus is often translated into regional and national coordination work, to align regional and country partners with global norms and standards. The Entity promotes coherence and coordination on WEE within the UN system, working across a range of relevant agencies and tapping into relevant economic expertise where possible. While much of the work is complementary and improves efficiency, there are cases where partnerships for WEE are underutilized. For instance, engagement with inter-governmental bodies that focus on macroeconomic issues could be strengthened.

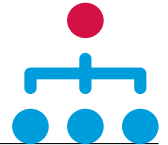
There is a need to ensure that engagement with international financial institutions (and other global actors) on issues related to

WEE is coherent with UN Women's overall strategy for cross-sectoral and thematic engagement with such institutions, and builds on existing engagements (joint research, technical cooperation, capacity development and convening) in the areas of gender data and public finance. While mainstreaming gender in macro-economic debates is recognized by many stakeholders as a key area of work, there is also concern about insufficient capacity to engage effectively on these issues. The recent move of engagement with international financial institutions work to the Economic Empowerment (EE) section and linking the EE section with the Financing for Gender Equality hub, are positive steps in having the appropriate internal architecture in place to strengthen work with international financial institutions.

UN Women's scope to work on multiple levels and optimize the interlinkages of its integrated mandate is a comparative strength that has yet to be consistently realized. There is also evidence where policy engagement is strong, but lacks a systematized approach to engaging CSOs and women's movements within policy processes.

3

The lack of a WEE strategy and managerial vacancies have impacted the direction of UN Women's work on WEE, the efficiency of internal architecture and personnel.



While there has been substantial progress in various WEE sub-thematic areas, the absence of a specific overarching organizing framework for WEE has hindered coherence. The recent appointment of a Chief of EE and current development of a strategy provides an opportunity to strengthen the strategic focus and organization of UN Women's work on WEE, including more proactive and systematic cross-thematic linkages.

During the period under review, the EE section experienced multiple vacancies among the senior leadership team, in particular, a long vacancy in the post of Chief. The lack of substantive leadership for some time has had an impact on the direction of the EE section, its internal architecture and personnel.

As a section, EE has a broad and ambitious mandate (responding to eight Sustainable Development Goals) and aims to strengthen women's economic rights and respond to pressing global needs across multiple sub-thematic areas. While the separate sub-sections have made significant progress against their objectives it has been in the absence of overarching WEE strategic guidance.

The appointment of the Chief of EE in 2022, and the current development of a strategy on WEE, provides an opportunity for the EE section to take stock and reflect on its strategic direction, consider where it has the potential to make the most transformative impact within its limited resources, and analyse whether it has the appropriate skills to advance. Fostering internal coherence and a shared sense of identity is an important element of this.

Engagement with other thematic areas is apparent at the country level, however, there needs to be a coherent vision for cross-thematic and integrated approaches across the organization.



4

UN Women’s reporting shows that the Entity has exceeded, or is close to achieving its targets on strengthening gender-responsive WEE policies, including on decent work, social protection, care systems, gender-responsive procurement and land tenure systems.



While there are some inconsistencies in interpretation and results reporting by countries, evidence collected from case studies shows significant contribution through constructive and agile engagement within the policy change process. There is limited monitoring of the impact of policy change on the lives of women and girls, which warrants further attention, for accountability purposes and learning and also to strengthen communication of UN Women’s results.

Changes in policies on decent work, social protection, care systems, gender-responsive procurement and land tenure systems have led to some progress. During 2018–2021, according to UN Women’s management monitoring and reporting data, the Entity contributed to the development and/or implementation of 53 gender-responsive macroeconomic policies, 41 gender-responsive fiscal stimulus packages, 114 laws and policies promoting women’s access to decent employment, 69 laws and policies on gender-responsive social protection systems, and 85 laws and regulations on the care economy. However, the reporting of some of these results within UN Women’s results management system is inconsistent, showing different

interpretations of indicators, which suggests a need to harmonize reporting and provide further guidance in some cases. Evidence from case studies confirmed significant efforts have been made along the ‘pathway’ to policy change, often taking several years. UN Women’s role in convening diverse stakeholders, providing technical support, developing evidence-based data and the use of specific policy analysis methodologies and policy guidance tools, are particularly valued.

While it is highly plausible that the gender-responsive WEE policies and legislative changes in place have had a positive impact, monitoring of how the changes impacted the lives of women and girls is limited.



5 **The proposed Signature Initiatives provide opportunities to work programmatically and scale up activities on global priorities for WEE, by embedding changes in laws, frameworks and policies within wider systemic change.**



While UN Women is in a position to lead and support on the care economy, decent work, and entrepreneurship at the global level, the Entity needs to strengthen its capacity on climate change if it is to play a supportive role in this area (including in gender-responsive approaches to the transition to green and blue economies and climate-resilient agriculture).

The proposed Signature Initiatives provide opportunities to work in an enhanced programmatic way, within three key areas of WEE, namely transforming the care economy; decent work and entrepreneurship; and women's climate action and green and blue economies.

UN Women has made significant and pioneering contributions on transforming the care economy around the world, placing the issue on the global agenda, generating evidence and advocating for change. The Entity is well positioned to continue its leadership role (for instance with the Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights and the Global Alliance for Care as well as Joint Programs with other Agencies including the ILO).

UN Women brings experience and expertise in research and data, convening and advocacy in this area and in its collaboration with partners including ILO, UNICEF and African Development Bank.

Within the proposed Signature Initiative on decent work and entrepreneurship, UN Women aims to build on the Entity's substantial body of work on tackling discriminatory norms, laws and policies in both public and private sectors. The Entity works with different partners and takes a leading or supportive role dependent on the presence and role of different actors in different contexts. At the country level, UN Women often leads in the area of gender-responsive procurement, both in advocacy and implementation.



The Signature Initiative also provides the opportunity to include the rights of migrants to work, as UN Women is one of the few actors bringing a rights-based approach to migration. This Initiative will draw on UN Women's comparative strengths in convening, research and diagnosis, although a 'toolkit' of methodologies and tools that are used in related policy analysis throughout UN Women has yet to be established.

The third proposed Signature Initiative on women's climate action, green and blue economies is responding to the pressing global need to address the threats and impacts of climate change and environmental destruction, with particular focus on the destruction of livelihoods and markets with disproportionate impact on women, and unequal access to natural resources (including land tenure systems).

UN Women plays an important supportive role within the climate change process to ensure a gender-responsive approach, including within green and blue economies. However, as a relatively new significant area, UN Women does not yet have the capacity to successfully support efforts in a consistent way. There is also a need to ensure that climate change work is mainstreamed across the WEE portfolio, as part of a broader organization-wide strategy on climate change.



Photo: UN Women/Mahmudul Karim

6

Financial and human resources are identified as the most significant challenges for UN Women in advancing gender-responsive WEE laws, frameworks and policies.



Personnel at all levels are over-extended and take on multiple functional roles. There is a need to improve support across headquarters, Regional Offices and Country Offices, for example, to support programme management, knowledge management and resource mobilization. While WEE was the least funded thematic area from 2018–2021, the increased planned budget for Strategic Plan 2022–2025 is more commensurate with WEE’s broad mandate.

Financial and human resources were found to be the most significant challenges in achieving gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies. The resourcing of the EE section was constrained by limited funding during the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 period, with the lowest funding among thematic areas, and declining core funding. The reliance on non-core funding resulted in short-term, project-based resourcing with limited funding suitably dedicated to longer-term policy change processes.

Personnel have been pressurized over the period under evaluation, with capacities to work on the broad array of sub-thematic areas highly stretched. WEE personnel were found to take on multiple specialties and roles (e.g. policy analysis, programme management, resource mobilization, coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge management).

While there are positive examples of coordination across headquarters, Regional Offices and Country Offices, there was a need to establish clear lines of responsibility for supporting Country Offices in data generation, sharing policy guidance, tools and methodologies, or knowledge management in the spirit of ‘pivot to the field.’ Limited systematic knowledge management and sharing, specifically risks undermining the utility and value of the rich research and knowledge products developed.

For UN Women’s work on WEE to be successful, a strategy for WEE needs to be in place, along with stable leadership and strong institutional support. The increased planned budget for Strategic Plan 2022–2025 is encouraging.

7

Supporting gender-responsive WEE policy is a suitable strategy for nationally owned, sustainable change and potential impact at scale.



Systematic attention needs to be placed on advocating for policies that are resourced, and have implementation plans and appropriate accountability frameworks.

The inter-relationship between changes in laws, frameworks, policies and social norms is also important for sustainability and should be consistently articulated and integrated within UN Women programming.

UN Women's approach to working on WEE, in supporting the development and strengthening of gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies is paving the way for nationally owned changes. While achieving policy and legislative change represents a significant achievement, more needs to be done to ensure that they are accompanied by appropriate resources and implementation plans to achieve realizable and long-term change. The tracking and monitoring of results of policy change is also important, yet challenging. In addition to supporting governments, UN Women could draw upon its networks and resources in the CSO movement to support this.

The relationship and linkages between WEE laws, frameworks and policies and the relationship with social norms change is not consistently integrated within the WEE policy cycle. There are some positive examples where UN Women is working on complementary communications and advocacy campaigns, with different media some of which target men and boys (for instance, in the context of understanding and addressing the disproportionate share of unpaid care work by women and girls). However, there is scope to do more, and to tackle the root causes of gender inequalities and gender stereotypes to achieve more transformative and sustainable change.

Social norms and the policy cycle

Through their effects on what is considered an acceptable arena for government concern and action and what is 'off limits,' social norms influence the types of laws, policies and programmes that are proposed and adopted.

Two of the most critical points are:

- development, adoption and publication of laws, which can help change patterns of behaviour, establishing new 'descriptive norms', attitudes and beliefs; and
- implementation of policies and related programmes, which may aim to shift discriminatory norms directly (by promoting discussion of the negative impacts of such norms) or indirectly by increasing women's access to resources and opportunities, which can lead to new norms emerging.

8

UN Women's overall approach to WEE considers leave no one behind principles and is perceived to be relevant to the needs of marginalized groups.



The approach could be strengthened by translating global principles and approaches into practical and context specific tools; improving the availability of disaggregated data; and by strengthening considerations of the connected systems and structures of power.

The degree to which UN Women's work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies related to WEE incorporates the principles of leave no one behind including disability inclusion, human rights and gender equality varies across offices and programmes. While global standards are clear about the inclusion of marginalized groups, they need to be translated into working principles that are relevant for, and sensitive to, the context of different regions and countries. Furthermore, implementation teams do not always possess the relevant monitoring and evaluation or data capacities to fully execute the leave no one behind requirements and meaningfully track the inclusion and impact of an intervention on all relevant marginalized groups.

UN Women's work on WEE highlights several good examples of a comprehensive leave no one behind approach, and the Entity has focused on policies with a particular emphasis on human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion. While UN Women has made efforts to include marginalized groups, there is room to improve the intersectional approach and consideration of the connected systems and structures of power. A lack of relevant data has been a challenge, particularly when trying to reach the marginalized groups left furthest behind.

Photo: UN Women/Norman Gorecho



LESSONS LEARNED AND PROMISING PRACTICES

WEE AND SOCIAL NORMS CHANGE



Where a more 'systems' approach has been taken and WEE programmes work to bring about changes in laws, frameworks and policies, informed by operational work, and accompanied by social norms efforts there is more likelihood of tackling the underlying causes of inequalities for gender norm change towards WEE.

Fundamental to some of UN Women's work on WEE is challenging notions of masculinity, for example, work on the unpaid care economy.

It is important to consider a life cycle approach, working with adolescents and women at all stages and considering the systemic barriers and risks faced at different stages.

PARTNERSHIP ENGAGEMENT



In looking at partnerships with national governments, one lesson learned has been the need to respond to and support government partners in other priority areas, sometimes as entry points and sometimes to develop trust and be a supportive partner. For example, the Georgia Country Office was asked by government partners to provide support on gender-based violence within initial engagement on WEE.

Using methodologies for identifying policy issues (e.g. gender impact assessment), analysing likely policy impact and institutional development have been useful for UN Women personnel. They are also valued and appreciated by other stakeholders and help to give UN Women's work further credibility.

Within policy engagement work, reaching out/increasing the capacity of various levels of government, including subnational governments, has been particularly relevant for implementation and ground-level monitoring. However, this requires significant resources, particularly in terms of personnel's time which needs to be budgeted and accounted for.

PROGRAMMING FOR IMPACT



Given the predominance of relatively short-term donor funding of programmes/projects in WEE, strategic decisions and selection of projects with the highest probability of uptake from the government and other partners has become important. UN Women has successfully implemented this in some contexts, for instance by focusing on supporting implementation of existing gender-responsive WEE policies and legislations.

UN Women has access to a large global network of gender experts and can play a convening role by facilitating linkages between organizations particularly where funds are limited.

UN WOMEN COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATIONS (CPE)

CPE REVISED GUIDELINES
(2022 Edition)



Download the interactive PDF [here](#)



MOVING FORWARD:

Six ways to strengthen UN Women's work

The evaluation offers six recommendations that are critical for UN Women's future work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies for women's economic empowerment.

Recommendation 1:

UN Women should continue its support to the global discourse and normative frameworks on WEE, while advocating for gender-responsive approaches in emerging priority areas.

UN Women should continue support to key global intergovernmental processes, multi-stakeholder alliances, and working groups and play a more active role in other global and regional mechanisms linked to priority policy areas. Additionally, the entity should identify and address gaps in internal technical capacity on priority policy areas, such as social protection, care economy, climate smart agriculture/ green and blue economies, macro-economic policies (fiscal, monetary and trade) etc.

UN Women should continue to take an evidence-based approach in responding to new and emerging crises/priority areas. In particular, the Entity should undertake analyses of current economic trends (such as the implications for women of current macroeconomic stagnation, and the cost-of-living crisis), environmental changes and political developments to assess likely impacts on WEE and propose mitigating policies and laws. The entity should draw on lessons from its successful response to COVID-19 (gender disaggregated data collection and use, rapid assessments, developing and implementing gender-responsive policy tools).

Recommendation 2:

UN Women's WEE strategy should include a clear articulation of key definitions and a framework for WEE; an assessment of current financial and human resources allocated to WEE policy support; and clarity on the approach to harnessing cross-thematic linkages.

UN Women should develop and articulate a progressive global framework on WEE that is rights-based and complementary to the approach of partners. The entity should harness the opportunity provided by development of a WEE strategy to reflect on the strategic direction and ensure it is grounded in the realities of available resources.

The approach should also be compatible with the systems and mechanisms for operationalizing systemic outcomes (including on gender-responsive normative frameworks, policies and institutions) of

the new Strategic Plan 2022–2025, and make links with the work of the Humanitarian Action section.

Given that WEE policy change can be a lengthy process, and projects tend to have shorter time spans, UN Women should consider developing a long-term vision and mobilizing resources to support various stages along the policy cycle. The entity could also further support awareness of resource mobilization opportunities, donor priorities and share guidance and lessons learned.

Recommendation 3:

UN Women should refine and systematize its approach to partnerships for WEE and look to further strengthen its engagement with international financial institutions (and other global actors), where strategically advantageous.

UN Women should integrate a partnership approach within the WEE strategy, setting out the appropriate partners to work with on different sub-thematic areas, while giving scope for flexibility in different contexts. This could include articulation of types of partners to be engaged at each stage of the policy cycle: 1) identification of policy issues and resource mobilization; 2) evidence generation, policy dialogue/positions, policy development; 3) policy change and strengthening institutions; and 4) policy implementation.

UN Women should strengthen the systematic engagement of CSOs, enhance the entity's coordination

role in WEE within the UN System. The entity should also strategically review WEE-related work with international financial institutions in terms of the potential to further contribute to macroeconomic policy debates; coherence with other key areas of engagement (including financing for gender equality, strengthening availability of gender disaggregated data etc.); and its own readiness to engage (capacity, networks, resources). The entity should continue to provide technical support, convening and capacity development support to governments, while also advocating for adequate resource allocations for implementation of gender-responsive WEE policies.

Recommendation 4:

UN Women should review and formalize the roles and responsibilities of headquarters, Regional Offices and Country Offices in the area of WEE, particularly in terms of knowledge sharing and management, research and data, and monitoring and reporting.

UN Women should review the coordination and communication of the EE section among headquarters, Regional and Country Office levels, with the view to support Country Offices to have the resources, capacity and knowledge to advance WEE outcomes at the country level. To improve knowledge management, the headquarters EE section could consider creating a central repository of research, guidance, relevant tools, methodologies and examples of the application in different contexts and successful strategies to support the development and implementation of gender-responsive laws and policies.

To enhance research and data, a research and data expert could respond to the research and data requests of Country Offices, by providing a network of experts and knowledge exchange as appropriate.

The entity should strengthen guidance on reporting to enhance consistency and strengthen quality assurance. The feasibility of policy implementation over the long term should also be captured, with indicators including elements related to allocated resources, implementation plans and accountability frameworks.

Recommendation 5:

UN Women should develop sustainable approaches to addressing structural barriers that impede WEE and to supporting social norms change. Efforts should be focused on supporting governments and other actors to monitor the effects of WEE policy changes on women's lives and livelihoods.

UN Women should continue to integrate a long-term approach, placing emphasis on the actualization of policies (including costing and resourcing policies, supporting implementation plans and strengthening accountability systems), and include a social norms dimension in upfront diagnostic work to ensure WEE policy cycle engagements are based on a holistic understanding of root causes.

The entity should strengthen data capacities within the EE section and collaborate further with the Research & Data section to support

national statistical offices and relevant ministries with tools and guidance on the collection and use of gender disaggregated data. It is recommended that UN Women explore ways to support governments to monitor the effects of WEE laws, frameworks and policy changes on people's lives and livelihoods, for instance by drawing on monitoring frameworks from CSOs and development agencies, collecting and sharing stories of change from the field.

Recommendation 6:

UN Women should refine and contextualize its approach and strategy to leave no one behind and the inclusion of marginalized groups, as they relate to WEE.

UN Women should consider global leave no one behind principles specifically within the context of WEE and embed this within the WEE Strategy. It is recommended to develop practical guidance for use in different regional and country contexts, highlight good examples of comprehensive and practical leave no one behind approaches to WEE, and provide tools to bolster relevant monitoring and evaluation

capacities in the field to fully execute leave no one behind requirements. The entity should also continue to expand outreach and engagement with organizations focusing on marginalized groups, including youth and persons with disabilities.



Photo: UN Women/Daniel Donald



EVALUATING IMPACT IN GENDER EQUALITY

Guidance note to evaluate impact in gender
equality and women's empowerment



Download the Guidance Note [here](#)



REFLECTION FROM MANAGEMENT

Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

Learning from this corporate evaluation

This article was developed based on UN Women's management response to the corporate evaluation.

UN Women welcomes the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the corporate evaluation of the Entity's work in the area of economic empowerment, which aims to assess the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency and sustainability of UN Women's contribution to women's economic empowerment (WEE) by advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies

and partnerships and to capture promising practices to inform UN Women's strategies and implementation. The thematic and geographic scope covers the entire WEE portfolio globally and across regions, with particular focus on sub-thematic areas with a stronger emphasis on laws, frameworks and policies, conventions, among others.

The evaluation provides an overview of results achieved during Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and prospective insights to support implementation of the current Strategic Plan 2022–2025 and the three WEE Signature Initiatives under the Plan: transforming the care economy, decent work and entrepreneurship and women’s climate action and green/blue economies. UN Women concurs with the evaluation conclusions (based on the findings): 1) recognition of UN Women’s comparative advantage in normative and policy work related to WEE, including through key intergovernmental processes, such as CSW, and at the regional and national levels; 2) effective work to build consensus and facilitate coherent global policy dialogues on WEE with diverse stakeholders and partners, although engagement with international financial institutions needs to be strengthened through the Financing

for Gender Equality Hub; 3) lack of a WEE strategy and managerial vacancies have impeded strategic progress and collective understanding of a common approach and vision, but are being rectified through the appointment of a Chief of Economic Empowerment and the development of a global WEE strategy; 4) meeting or exceeding targets on the strengthening gender-responsive WEE policies, although the impacts on women and girls of policy change are challenging to assess; 5) well-positioned to lead and support Signature Initiatives on the care economy and decent work and entrepreneurship, including gender-responsive migration, at the global level, but the Entity needs to strengthen its capacity on climate change, for which a global, organizational strategy on climate change is needed; 6) lack of sufficient financial and human resources are the most significant challenge to advancing

gender-responsive WEE laws, frameworks and policies, WEE being the least funded thematic area with the lowest and declining amount of core funds during Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021 and over-extended and highly-pressured personnel at all levels taking on multiple functional roles; 7) gender-responsive WEE policy is a suitable strategy for nationally owned, sustainable change and potential impact, but this requires appropriate resources, implementation plans and tracking and monitoring policy change; and 8) overall approach to WEE considers leave no one behind principles and attention to marginalized groups but could be strengthened by translating global principles and approaches into practical and contextualized tools and improving availability of disaggregated data and monitoring capacity.



Photo: UN Women/Gaganjit Singh

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation team adopted a theory-based approach, drawing on various methodologies for measuring policy influence and contribution analysis. This involved developing a conceptual framework on the role of gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies in bringing about change within individuals in the context of economic empowerment that considers the multidimensional aspects of WEE.

Contribution analysis was used to assess how changes were achieved at different levels and to compare the reality of UN Women's work on WEE in various contexts against a theory of change. Both primary and secondary data sources were consulted to gather evidence to address the questions developed for this evaluation.

The evaluation team adopted a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach, in alignment with the UN Women Evaluation Policy, the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, UNEG Ethical Guidelines, the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System and the recent UNEG Guidance on Integrating Disability Inclusion in Evaluation.

SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY FOR DATA COLLECTION



83 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured & mostly virtual

Internal* (38 female, 11 male)
External** (23 female, 11 male)



300+ DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Desk review, synthesis & portfolio analysis of work plans, evaluations, project documents, reports, etc.



MIXED-METHODS DATA

Qualitative & quantitative data collected & triangulated

Sourced from ATLAS, DAMs, RMS, OneApp



10 CASE STUDIES

8 country case studies (with regional representation) and 2 global case studies



2 ONLINE SURVEYS

UN Women personnel
(n = 90/309; 29% response rate)

UN Women's partners
(n = 38/128; 29% response rate)



2 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Focus group discussions with ministry representatives & CSOs while on mission in Kenya

* Internal stakeholders from UN Women Headquarters (n=19), Regional Offices (n=5) and Country Offices (n=24)

** External stakeholders from Academia/Think tanks (n=2), Beneficiary Representatives (n=3), CSOs/NGOs (n=7), Donors (n=2), IFIs (n=1), National/Sub-national Government (n=9), Private Sector (n=1), UN system (n=6)

LEARN MORE ABOUT GENDER-RESPONSIVE **EVALUATION**



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