



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

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**Annual report of the Executive Director**

## **Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on progress made on the strategic plan, 2014-2017, including the midterm review of the strategic plan**

### *Summary*

Pursuant to Executive Board decision 2013/5, this report combines the midterm review of UN-Women's strategic plan, 2014-2017, the annual report of the Executive Director/Under-Secretary-General for 2015, and assesses the implementation of General Assembly resolution 67/226 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the UN system.

This report provides an overview of progress achieved to date in implementing the strategic plan, challenges and lessons learned. It examines how changes in the external environment, as well as findings from the 20-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action, the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and other normative milestones impact UN-Women and the implementation of the strategic plan. This review was conducted through an in-depth analysis of results, a synthesis of independent evaluations and assessments, and consultations with internal and external stakeholders. It was coordinated with other relevant UN entities.



The review confirms the strategic plan's continued relevance. UN-Women has achieved significant results in the last two years, demonstrating its capability to make an even greater difference in the lives of women and girls, and to support the unlocking of their full potential for the benefit of all humanity. However, for progress to be sustained and enhanced, UN-Women needs to tackle internal and external challenges and be better resourced. While thematic changes are not proposed in this review, adjustments to the results framework are suggested. The report outlines specific initiatives to enable UN-Women to deliver at the level of ambition set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in support of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Elements of a decision are contained in section VII of the report.

## I. Introduction

1. This midterm review of UN-Women's strategic plan takes place at a pivotal moment, with gender equality and women's empowerment higher on the global agenda than ever before. These raised ambitions commensurately demand more of UN-Women, underscoring its central relevance to the accomplishment of that agenda. The review considers the scale and scope of demand, and establishes the basis for UN-Women's response.

2. A convergence of international processes has brought renewed attention and enhanced political commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. These processes include the 20-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing+20), the Political Declaration of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and the fifteenth anniversary review of implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 together with the adoption of resolution 2242 on women, peace and security.

3. Building on this foundation, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment as a stand-alone goal and reflected throughout the agenda, reinvigorates efforts to end gender inequality by 2030. In addition, commitments contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change emphasized the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment for sustainable change. There is also greater recognition of the importance of women's engagement in humanitarian action.

4. These normative gains have been achieved against a backdrop of developments that present both challenges and opportunities. The slow pace of economic recovery and austerity measures represent challenges that disproportionately affect women and girls. The unprecedented scope of humanitarian crises and largest level of human displacement since the Second World War demand that special attention be paid to women's needs, as well as to their participation in recovery and resilience.

5. The shift in the nature and complexity of peace and security threats, including rapid proliferation and entrenchment of armed conflicts, climate shocks, global health pandemics and a rise in violent extremism, has been accompanied by deliberate attacks on women's rights to education, public life, and decision-making over their own bodies, among others. The emergence and mobilization of conservative movements has at times had a profound impact on women and girls and on the shrinking space for civil society's participation in public life. While legal frameworks and policies have been strengthened, their implementation has been disappointing. Women who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as women with disabilities, indigenous women, migrant women and lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, face compound discrimination and violence. Overall, progress towards gender equality has been too slow and uneven and has even regressed in some contexts.

6. These challenges occur alongside opportunities. The 2030 Agenda offers an unmissable opportunity to accelerate progress towards gender equality. In recent years, there has been an anchoring of gender equality within the sustainable development agenda. The world is yet to fully engage women and girls, shifting attitudes from viewing them as passive beneficiaries, to resourceful agents who can be game-changers for today's challenges. With the largest generation of young

people in history, the potential demographic dividend of generations realizing their rights could bring about exponential progress if adequate investments are made. Major technological changes are redefining socioeconomic structures, presenting opportunities to break the marginalization and isolation facing many women, particularly the poorest.

7. Ongoing discussions on ensuring that the UN is “fit for purpose” to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, and the upcoming quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR), all advance the cause of UN reform from which UN-Women was created, and thereby provide opportunities for UN-Women to make the most of its triple mandate.

8. The agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women provide an intergovernmental road map for the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Commission emphasized UN-Women’s central role in supporting Member States, coordinating the UN system, and mobilizing civil society organizations, private sector and other stakeholders, for the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda.

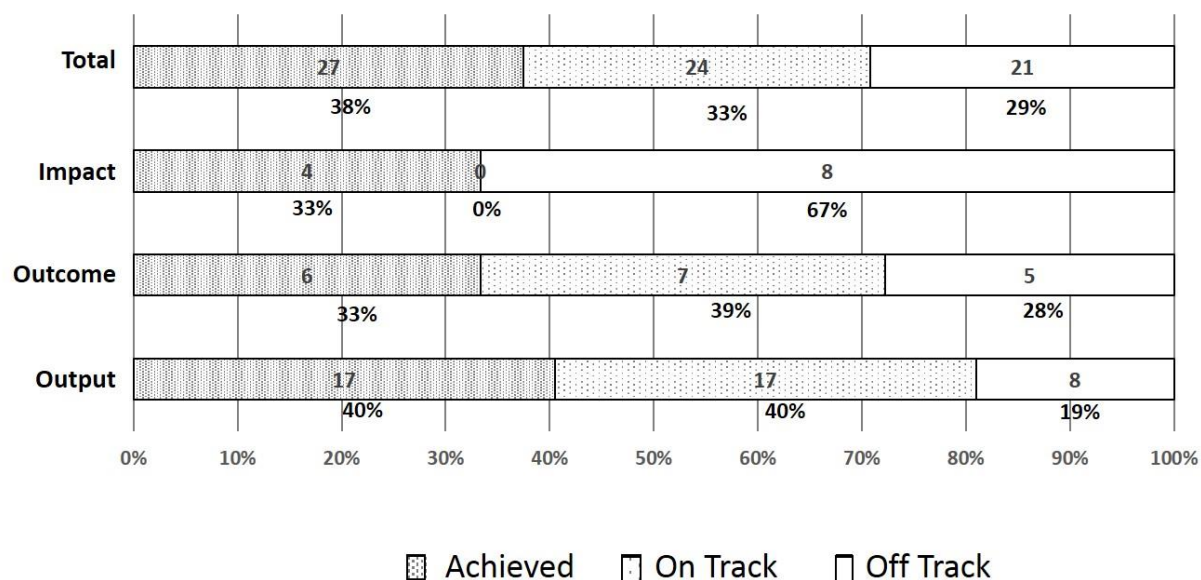
9. The first two years of implementation of the strategic plan have provided practical demonstrations of UN-Women’s relevance and impact. The General Assembly’s decision to create an entity that combines normative support, UN coordination and operational activities has been validated. UN-Women has supported Member States in strengthening norms and standards for gender equality and women’s empowerment. It has improved coherence and coordination of the UN system and strengthened accountability for gender equality. With its partners, UN-Women has contributed to translating normative achievements into tangible improvements for women and girls. UN-Women has achieved this while establishing its own institutional structure and in the context of a level of resources significantly below that agreed with its Executive Board in every approved budget to date.

10. The midterm review examines these factors, informed by independent evaluations, external assessments, extensive consultations with partners, and review and analysis of country reports. It complements annual reporting by drawing lessons from implementation and makes proposals for adjustments, including through the recently launched Flagship Programming Initiatives.

11. Sections II and III of the report provide an overview of UN-Women’s performance since the beginning of the strategic plan. Sections IV and V provide an analysis of factors that have enabled or hindered performance, lessons learned and strategic initiatives for the way forward. Section VI and VII draw conclusions with an outlook to the new strategic plan, 2018-2021, and make recommendations for the Executive Board’s attention.

## **II. Assessment of development results**

12. In 2015, UN-Women implemented programmes in 93 countries, an increase of seven countries since 2014. At the midpoint of the strategic plan, UN-Women’s performance against its targets is positive. In total, UN-Women met or exceeded 38 per cent of its development targets and is on track to meet another 33 per cent (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Achievement of Strategic Plan Targets**

13. This section highlights progress against outcomes in each impact area and provides an analysis of the effectiveness of UN-Women's strategies. Annex I provides a detailed report of progress on all indicators.

**Since the start of the strategic plan, UN-Women in collaboration with partners has contributed to the following results:**

**Leadership and participation**

- ✓ 8 gender-responsive constitutional reforms were completed and 32 new laws were adopted in 2015 alone
- ✓ 15 new gender equality committees in parliaments have been created in countries where UN-Women operates

**Economic empowerment**

- ✓ 29 countries, with a combined population of women and girls of over 770 million, have adopted a gender-responsive policy framework for women's economic empowerment
- ✓ More than 338,000 gender equality advocates from over 190 countries have been able to access knowledge and good practices at [EmpowerWomen.org](http://EmpowerWomen.org)

**Ending violence against women and girls**

- ✓ 26 countries, with a combined population of women and girls of over one billion, have strengthened their legislation to address all forms of violence against women
- ✓ 26 countries, with a combined population of women and girls of over 466 million, have adopted National Action Plans or strategies in this area
- ✓ Over 3.2 million practitioners have been able to access expert knowledge at [endVAWnow.org](http://endVAWnow.org)

**Peace, security and humanitarian action**

- ✓ UN-Women served as the Secretariat of the Global Study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325. The study informed the High-Level Review at the Security Council where an unprecedented 113 interventions were made and resolution 2242 adopted
- ✓ 46 experts were deployed to support accountability mechanisms and ensure investigation of sexual and gender-based crimes;
- ✓ The Peacebuilding Fund has met the 15 per cent funding target on gender-responsive peacebuilding
- ✓ 18 more countries have adopted National Action Plans on women, peace and security. 67 per cent of all National Action Plans have indicators to monitor progress
- ✓ 34 UN-Women offices reported humanitarian activities in 2015, a 183 per cent increase from 2014

**National planning and budgeting**

- ✓ 31 countries have increased budget allocations for gender equality commitments
- ✓ Nearly 15,000 civil servants have been trained on gender mainstreaming and gender issues

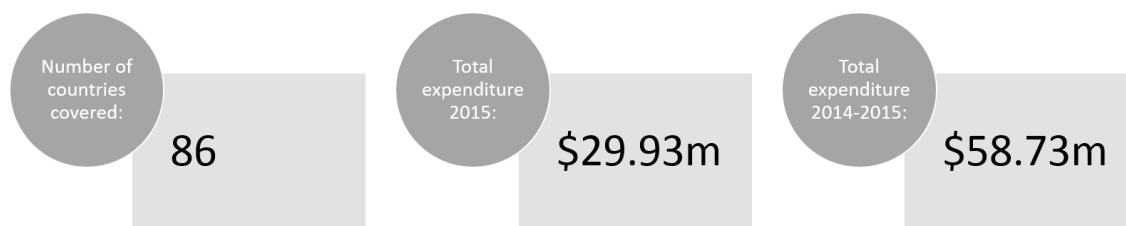
**Global norms and standards**

- ✓ A record 167 national reviews have been conducted on the occasion of the 20-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action
- ✓ 100 civil society and government stakeholder consultations have been convened on topics such as the Beijing+20 review, the post-2015 development agenda and Financing for Development
- ✓ Participation of over 6,800 civil society representatives from over 1,100 non-governmental organizations was facilitated at the Commission on the Status of Women

**Coordination, partnerships and communications**

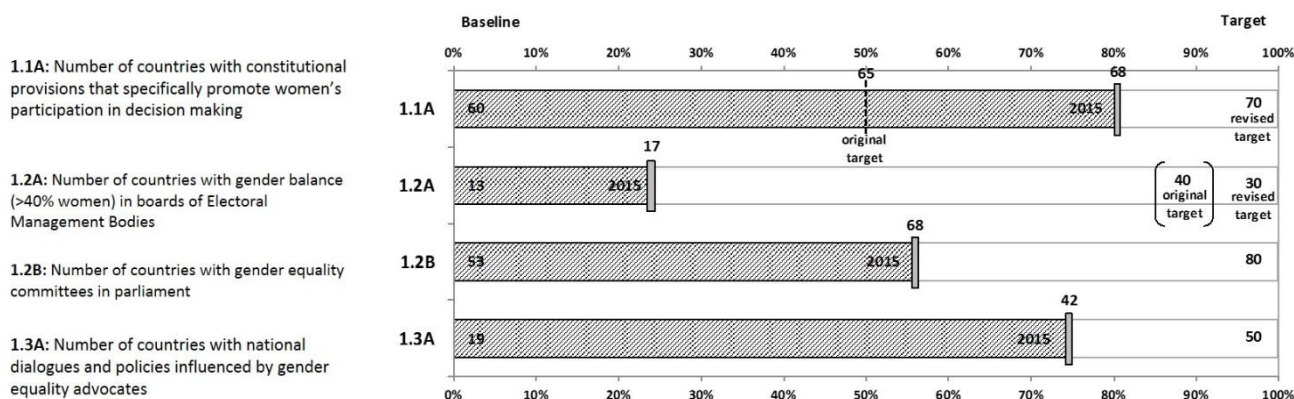
- ✓ 64 UN entities have reported on the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
- ✓ Over 1,000 companies have signed on to the Women Empowerment Principles
- ✓ Over 11,500 UN staff have completed the *I Know Gender* course
- ✓ Over 700,000 men have signed up to HeForShe
- ✓ 32,000 news reports have been generated on UN-Women's work
- ✓ UN-Women and WomenWatch websites have had 6.6 million unique visitors
- ✓ UN-Women social media platforms have reached 3 million followers

## A. Impact 1: women lead and participate in decision-making at all levels



14. UN-Women works on women's leadership and participation by supporting reforms in constitutions, laws and policies; promoting gender-responsive measures for women's participation in politics; and engaging gender equality advocates.<sup>1</sup> Figure 2 summarizes progress against outcomes.

**Figure 2**



15. There has been better-than-expected progress on the adoption or reform of constitutions, legal frameworks and policies to advance women's right to participate in decision-making, with UN-Women exceeding its target for this outcome. In the last two years, UN-Women has contributed to eight successful gender-responsive constitutional reform processes. In 2015, 32 new laws were adopted to strengthen women's political participation. In Mali, UN-Women engaged in targeted advocacy to secure a 30 per cent quota provision in appointments to state institutions and on electoral lists. In Nepal, UN-Women contributed to the inclusion of provisions in the new Constitution on proportional representation of women in all state organs. The Constitution's ratification was followed by the election of the first female President and first female Speaker of Parliament.

16. There has been steady progress on the adoption of gender-responsive measures to promote women's participation in politics, including by working with parliamentary committees. In Morocco, a UN-Women-supported group of parliamentarians succeeded in mainstreaming gender-responsive measures into

<sup>1</sup> The Fund for Gender Equality also contributes to this impact area, as well as impact area 2.

electoral law reforms, nearly doubling the number of women elected at the local and regional levels. In South Sudan, the National Legislative Assembly ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) following lobbying by a specialized parliamentary committee supported by UN-Women. Bolivia became the second country in the world to reach gender parity in parliament after years of long-standing support by UN-Women.

17. Given the fluctuating nature of electoral cycles, the number of countries with gender balance on boards of Electoral Management Bodies has only increased by four countries since the start of the strategic plan. UN-Women has supported such bodies to adopt best practices in reported sex-disaggregated data in 10 countries. In Colombia, UN-Women and partners undertook a nationwide campaign “[More Women, More Democracy](#)”, resulting in the first-ever real-time production of sex-disaggregated data on women candidates and registration of women voters. UN-Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) co-authored a [publication on inclusive electoral processes](#) with innovative approaches to reform Electoral Management Bodies based on examples from over 50 countries.

18. The number of countries where policies are influenced by gender equality advocates has increased significantly. In Mexico, UN-Women supported women networks for the application of constitutional parity as a criterion for candidate nominations, resulting in an increase in women parliamentarians to 42 per cent at the national level and an average of 43 per cent at the local level. As part of the Beijing+20 review, UN-Women and the Government of Chile co-organized a high-level meeting bringing together gender equality advocates and global leaders, resulting in a call to action to increase women’s leadership and participation.

19. Key drivers of success for this impact area include strong partnerships with other UN entities and the International Parliamentary Union, and the development of practical tools for country implementation. There is a greater need to tackle social norms and stereotypes about women in public life, to end violence against women in politics, and to promote women leaders within political institutions. Allowing women to claim their rights through appropriate legal protections and access to justice, the elimination of discriminatory legislation and attitudes, and effective and accountable institutions is also essential.

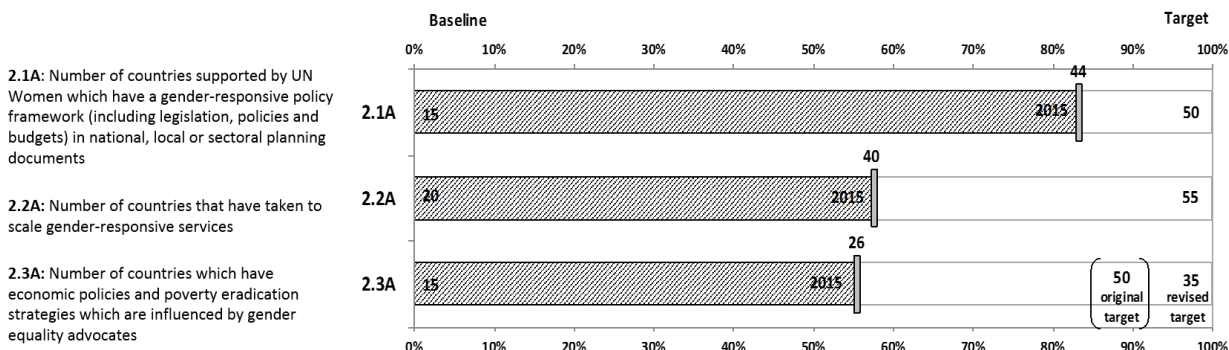
## **B. Impact 2: women, especially the poorest and most excluded, are economically empowered and benefit from development**



20. UN-Women promotes women’s economic empowerment by supporting the adaptation of national frameworks and policies; developing gender-responsive services to enhance women’s livelihoods; and engaging gender equality advocates to influence national strategies. Figure 3 summarizes progress against outcomes.



Figure 3



21. UN-Women is well positioned to reach its target on gender-responsive policy frameworks for economic empowerment, with an additional 29 countries having adopted laws and policies in this area since the beginning of the strategic plan. These frameworks have improved women's access to land, finance, productive assets, social protection and decent work, as well as removed barriers to women's participation in the economy. In India, UN-Women undertook formative research in several states that led to the adoption of gender action plans by the states' ministries of rural development. UN-Women has also influenced policies through knowledge products, such as the *Progress of the World's Women* report. Issued in 2015, the report provided recommendations on transforming economies to benefit women. A series of activities have taken place in many countries to promote the report's findings.

22. With UN-Women's support, an additional 20 countries have scaled up gender-responsive services in the last two years. Enterprise development assistance has been made available in an additional 24 countries. In Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, UN-Women worked with women vendors across 20 markets to ensure that marketplaces are safe, inclusive and non-discriminatory environments. With more than 60 per cent of women in leadership positions in market vendors associations, women are able to influence decisions on market budgets and infrastructure improvements. In Kenya, UN-Women targeted women entrepreneurs, including women with disabilities, to raise awareness about opportunities available in the public procurement sector.

23. UN-Women fostered dialogue between Governments and civil society on national development strategies in eight countries in the last two years, a slower-than-expected progress partially due to the multi-year nature of these strategies. In Tanzania, with UN-Women's support, gender equality advocates provided inputs to the second Five Year Development Plan to focus on women's economic empowerment. In Cambodia, UN-Women supported indigenous women's advocacy to access land.

24. The [corporate evaluation on women's economic empowerment](#) confirmed the critical importance of UN-Women's engagement in this area and its contribution to poverty eradication. This evaluation highlighted the need to develop a better theory of change, consolidate initiatives, and better connect micro-interventions to structural changes in institutions and macroeconomic policies — an area of focus for UN-Women going forward. UN-Women will foster greater focus in its economic

empowerment work and leverage it to respond to significant challenges, such as climate change.

25. The Secretary-General’s [High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment](#) represents an opportunity to identify structural interventions that can enhance economic opportunities on a large scale. Together with partners, UN-Women will also launch a global coalition on equal pay to drive action in this area.

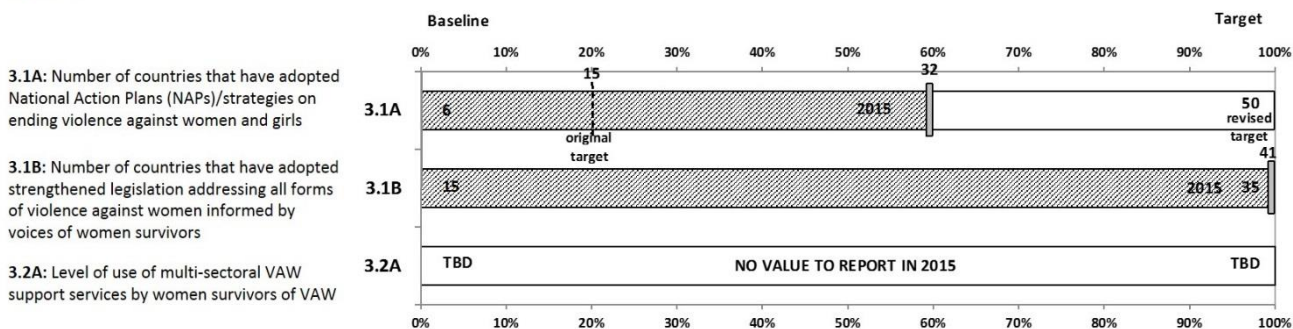
### C. Impact 3: ending violence against women and girls



26. UN-Women works to end violence against women and girls by promoting the adoption and implementation of laws, policies and strategies for prevention and response, as well as the provision of survivor-focused and quality multisectoral services.<sup>2</sup> Figure 4 summarizes progress against outcomes. Progress has been more rapid than expected and new targets and indicators have been proposed.

27. The number of countries that have adopted plans or strategies on ending violence against women has grown exponentially, more than doubling within a year to 32 countries with UN-Women’s presence. Legislative frameworks have been adopted or strengthened in 26 countries. In Egypt, a national strategy on combating all forms of violence has been adopted with UN-Women’s support. At the regional level, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has adopted an action plan, for which UN-Women played a key advisory role.

**Figure 4**



<sup>2</sup> The UN Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women also contributes to this impact area (see Annex VIII).

28. The quality and availability of multisectoral services have been improved with UN-Women's support in 19 countries. In India, UN-Women supported the Government to develop a "One Stop Crisis Centre" for survivors of violence. Globally, an essential services package was launched in 2015 and will be tested in 10 countries. The package, jointly developed with other UN entities, provides tools for the provision of quality services across the health, police, justice and social services sectors.

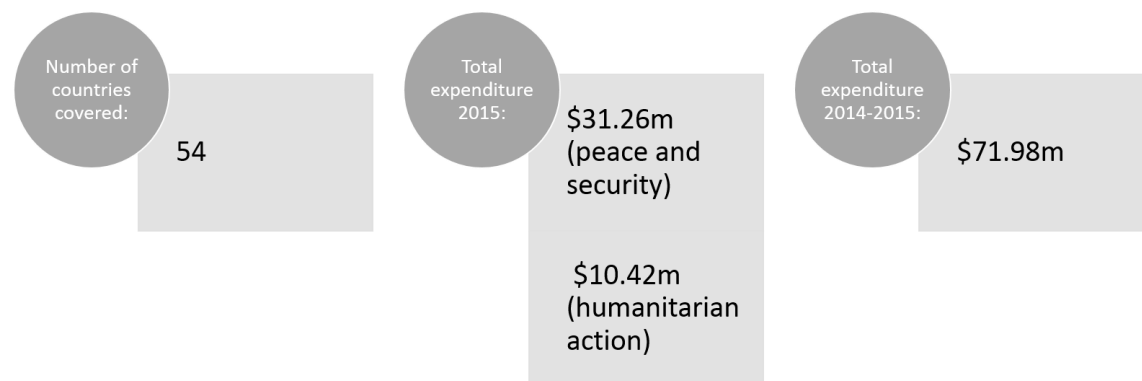
29. Globally, 23 cities have joined the Safe Cities initiative, including New York City. A global meeting on safe cities and safe public spaces supported the use of evidence-based tools and practices to prevent sexual violence in public spaces. In Kigali, Rwanda, UN-Women joined forces with municipal authorities and a wide range of partners to raise awareness about sexual harassment on public transport.

30. A major challenge remains the ability to measure progress in this area due to underreporting and data challenges in general, although impressive advances have been made, with 109 countries having generated data to date.

31. UN-Women has been particularly successful in leveraging its triple mandate in support of efforts to end violence against women and girls. The fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women provided impetus to drive changes in legislative and policy frameworks. UN-Women's coordination role proved instrumental in ensuring a comprehensive and multisectoral approach to prevention and response. In China, a UN task force bringing together seven agencies, with UN-Women as a co-chair and secretariat, provided advice and technical assistance to the National People's Congress over a period of four years to draft a new law on domestic violence.<sup>3</sup>

32. The persistence of discriminatory attitudes and social norms that tolerate and condone violence is a major obstacle to progress, requiring a stronger focus on prevention. UN-Women launched the UN Framework for Preventing Violence against Women, developed with six UN entities. The framework will support UN-Women in its work on fostering favourable social norms, attitudes and behaviours to prevent violence against women.

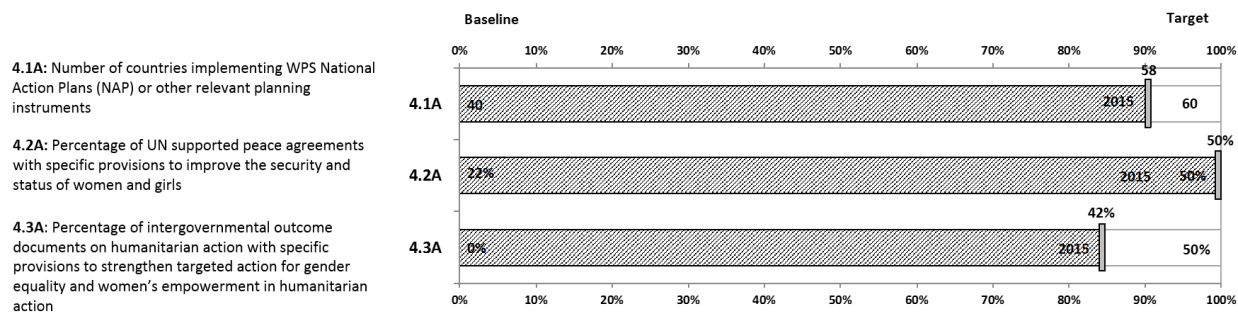
#### **D. Impact 4: peace and security and humanitarian action are shaped by women's leadership and participation**



<sup>3</sup> The law was successfully adopted in December 2015 and entered into force in March 2016.

33. Women, peace and security and humanitarian action have been areas of rapid development since the beginning of the strategic plan. Steady progress has been recorded against all targets.

**Figure 5**



34. The 15-year High-Level Review of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 and the Global Study, for which UN-Women acted as the secretariat, resulted in renewed commitment to the issue. Security Council resolution 2242 outlines a set of actions to improve the implementation of existing resolutions and contains new mandates for UN-Women, including to inform the Security Council's work. The resolution emphasizes the role of the women, peace and security agenda in addressing new global threats and challenges, including the rise of violent extremism.

35. By leveraging its triple mandate, UN-Women has taken steps to translate this normative development into action. Together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN-Women is drafting a guidance note for the UN system on women's rights and countering violent extremism and will chair an inter-agency working group on the issue, as well as support the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council. UN-Women has also started activities in a number of countries, including Cameroon, Iraq, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, and in the Sahel to prevent and respond to the spread of violent extremism, including related to humanitarian response efforts.

36. UN-Women has promoted women's participation and strengthened the capacities of actors engaged in mediation, conflict resolution and national dialogue processes. In Burundi, local conflicts were mitigated through a UN-Women-supported national network of women mediators. In Myanmar, mobilization and support to women's organizations contributed to the inclusion of gender-specific provisions in the ceasefire agreement and in the framework for political dialogue. Sustained support for the Syrian Women's Initiative for Peace and Democracy contributed to the establishment of a platform for Syrian women to support peace talks. UN-Women partnered with the South African Government and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) to support the African Union Commission in creating a network of women mediators. Women now represent 40 per cent of negotiating teams in the peace talks in Colombia, where UN-Women supported 18 representatives of women's organizations to provide inputs and the participation of ten gender experts to attend the Havana peace talks.

37. Through its partnership with Justice Rapid Response, UN-Women deployed 46 experts to accountability mechanisms investigating sexual and gender-based crimes,

including all UN Commissions of Inquiry. UN-Women's [guidebook on CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30 and the Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security](#) was launched in 2015.

38. A total of 34 countries reported humanitarian activities in 2015, compared to 12 in 2014, a 183 per cent increase. UN-Women has been increasingly engaged in capacity-building and the provision of technical support to needs assessments and analysis processes. Although there has been an increase in the percentage of humanitarian appeals that include a gender analysis, more systematic efforts are needed in this area.

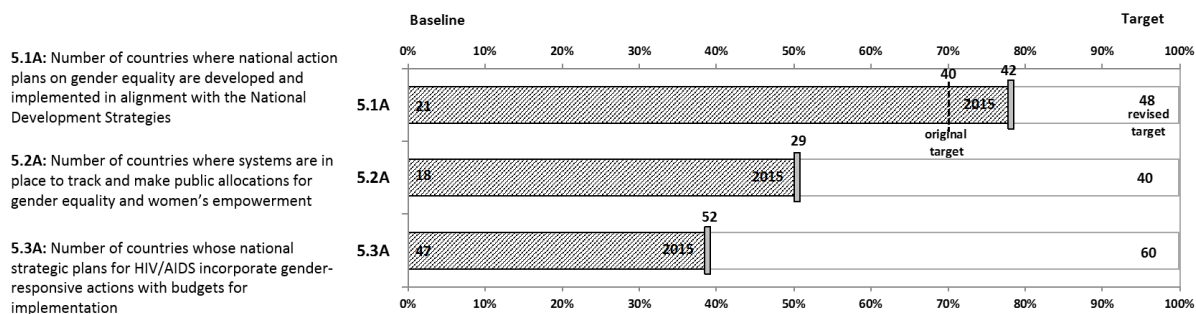
39. In Nepal, UN-Women facilitated the engagement of local women's groups in the response to the earthquake and advocated for the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data, as well as for gender indicators in the flash appeal. UN-Women supported a wide range of assessments, including in Cameroon, Iraq, Jordan, Rwanda, Uganda, and Ukraine. In Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan, UN-Women developed a multi-country resilience-based approach to humanitarian response to help meet the needs of affected populations, while supporting longer-term opportunities for employment and livelihoods.

40. UN-Women has been able to successfully advocate for the inclusion of a specific emphasis on the role and leadership of women and girls, in addition to addressing their specific humanitarian needs, in the deliberations and outcomes of major processes, including the World Humanitarian Summit. The Secretary-General's report on women, peace and security ([S/2015/716](#)) recommended UN-Women's representation in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and other relevant bodies, the lack of which constitutes a constraint to UN-Women's ability to scale up its work in this area. UN-Women is working with partners to act on this recommendation.

#### **E. Impact 5: governance and national planning fully reflect accountability for gender equality commitments and priorities**



41. UN-Women works to integrate commitments to gender equality in national plans and strategies, put in place mechanisms to increase accountability, and mainstream gender perspectives in HIV/AIDS strategies. Progress against all outcomes has been steady (Figure 6).

**Figure 6**

42. UN-Women has contributed to the development and implementation of national actions plans on gender equality in 21 countries. In Morocco, UN-Women provided technical assistance to three ministries to support a coherent implementation of the national plan for equality. In Somalia, UN-Women worked closely with the Government and the UN Country Team (UNCT) to ensure the integration of gender equality in the national development plan, with an appropriate monitoring and accountability framework.

43. In 2015, Ministries of Finance in 17 countries issued gender-responsive budgeting guidelines with UN-Women's support. In Albania, the Ministry of Finance issued an obligatory requirement for all line ministries to consider gender equality principles in their budgets, while in Uganda UN-Women supported a certificate that mandates the integration of gender into annual budgets of all government agencies and ministries.

44. A total of 20 countries have increased budget allocations for gender equality commitments since 2013. An additional 13 countries monitor budget allocations and track expenditures from a gender perspective since 2012, using knowledge and tools provided by UN-Women. In Palestine, a gender marker has been established in a national aid tracking tool to ensure that donor programmes benefit women and girls. In Ecuador, the National Assembly required that public institutions use the budget classifier on gender more systematically in their planning and budgeting processes.

45. Progress in the number of countries integrating gender-responsive actions with budgets into their national HIV strategies has been slower than expected, due to the multi-year cycle of these strategies. Nevertheless, it is expected that the target will be reached by 2017, building on successful strategies rolled out in the last two years and validated by evaluation findings.<sup>4</sup> Civil servants have undertaken training in gender dimensions of HIV in an additional 12 countries and women living with HIV have been able to engage with national mechanisms in an additional 24 countries in the last two years. In Indonesia, a national network of women living with HIV successfully advocated for the integration of gender-specific actions, budgets and indicators into the national strategy.

46. Drivers of success for this impact area include the ability to garner political support at the national level. Sustained and long-term capacity-building, as well as the ability to monitor government spending to demand greater accountability, are important factors. Ultimately, a commitment to transparency in public spending and

<sup>4</sup> Supporting gender equality in the context of HIV/AIDS: end-of-programme evaluation of EC-UN-Women's programme.

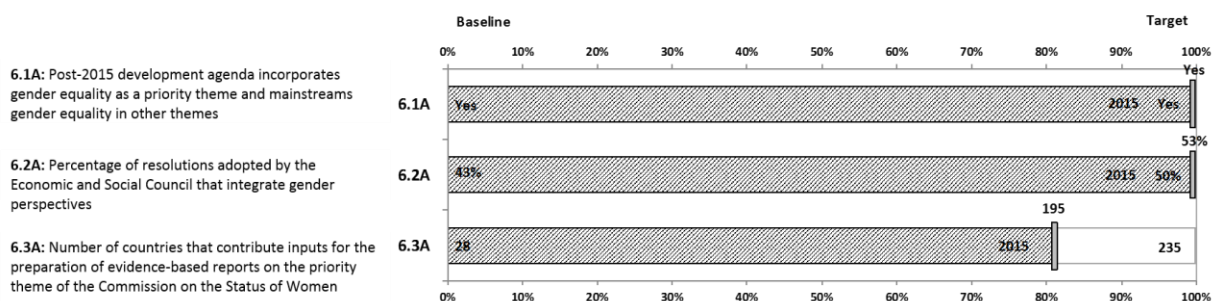


the enhanced role and participation of citizens is critical. Continued challenges include the weak institutional capacity of government agencies, including national gender equality mechanisms and Ministries of Finance, poor accountability tools and monitoring mechanisms. Multi-stakeholder collaboration needs to be further enhanced by engaging the private sector, emerging donors, and philanthropic organizations.

## F. Impact 6: a comprehensive and dynamic set of global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and women’s empowerment

47. UN-Women successfully advocated for gender equality and women’s empowerment to feature centrally in major intergovernmental outcomes, including non-gender-specific ones. It leveraged partnerships, provided expertise and policy analysis, strengthened the knowledge base, and integrated good practices and lessons learned from regional and national experiences into its normative support. Steady progress has been made in this area, with two out of three targets achieved.

**Figure 7**



48. The evaluation of UN-Women’s normative support functions found that “UN-Women has enhanced the visibility of, and attention to, gender equality and the empowerment of women through its normative support work”.<sup>5</sup> It also noted positive results in supporting the adoption of global norms and standards and their translation in stronger national legislation and policies.

49. UN-Women’s sustained advocacy and substantive inputs on the 2030 Agenda yielded significant results. UN-Women called for the new agenda to be transformative and address the structural drivers of gender inequality. It emphasized the importance of a clear target date of 2030 to end gender inequality. The inclusion of a comprehensive stand-alone goal to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” and gender-sensitive targets across Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a solid basis from which to address gender-based discrimination and inequality in a truly transformative manner. UN-Women also supported the inclusion of specific priorities on transformative financing for gender equality in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and launched a dedicated plan on the issue at the Conference.

50. UN-Women convened over 100 multi-stakeholder consultations in support of normative outcomes and supported civil society participation. A global dialogue was

<sup>5</sup> Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)’s Evaluation of UN-Women’s Normative Support Work and its Operational Linkages, 2015 (E/AC.51/2015/9).

held with 200 civil society actors to chart a way forward for the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

51. UN-Women played a key role in directly supporting 84 national Beijing+20 reviews and the subsequent implementation of recommendations. In Malawi, UN-Women supported the drafting of an implementation plan to address gaps identified in the national report.

52. The historic Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment marked the culmination of Beijing+20 and constituted the first-ever meeting of Heads of State/Government on gender equality, a result of UN-Women's determination to mobilize decision makers at the highest level. More than 60 leaders made commitments to bridge gender gaps. UN-Women is following up on implementation. For example, in Liberia, UN-Women supported the development of an action plan on the basis of the President's commitments at the Global Leaders' Meeting.

53. UN-Women worked to mainstream gender perspectives in climate negotiations and climate finance instruments. Building on existing decisions and the Lima Work Programme on Gender, UN-Women provided technical inputs in preparation for COP-21 and at the summit. The Paris Agreement recognizes the importance of gender equality and mandates gender-responsive adaptation actions and capacity-building activities. To support implementation, UN-Women works in 15 countries on women's engagement in climate action. In addition to disaster risk management, UN-Women increasingly addresses climate change adaptation, notably in climate-resilient agriculture, and mitigation, including by promoting women entrepreneurs in sustainable energy development.

54. UN-Women supported the universal periodic review process and built national capacity for CEDAW reporting and implementation. UN-Women supported Ethiopia in preparing its periodic report. In Kyrgyzstan, the integration of CEDAW concluding observations into the national gender equality plan was supported by UN-Women.

55. UN-Women supported the visits of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice in six countries. UN-Women also coordinated a study tour of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and Dominica. Support was provided to the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for her report to the Human Rights Council on the situation of indigenous women and to CEDAW for the drafting of General recommendation 33 on women's access to justice.

56. UN-Women continues to leverage global normative frameworks to implement the gender equality agenda in countries in special situations, notably least developed countries and small island developing states. The Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway resulted in a strong framework for gender-responsive implementation. UN-Women is also working to bring attention to the situation of women and girls in the context of the midterm review of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

57. Integrating gender equality considerations as a cross-cutting issue in all sectors remains a priority. Some sectors require special attention, such as



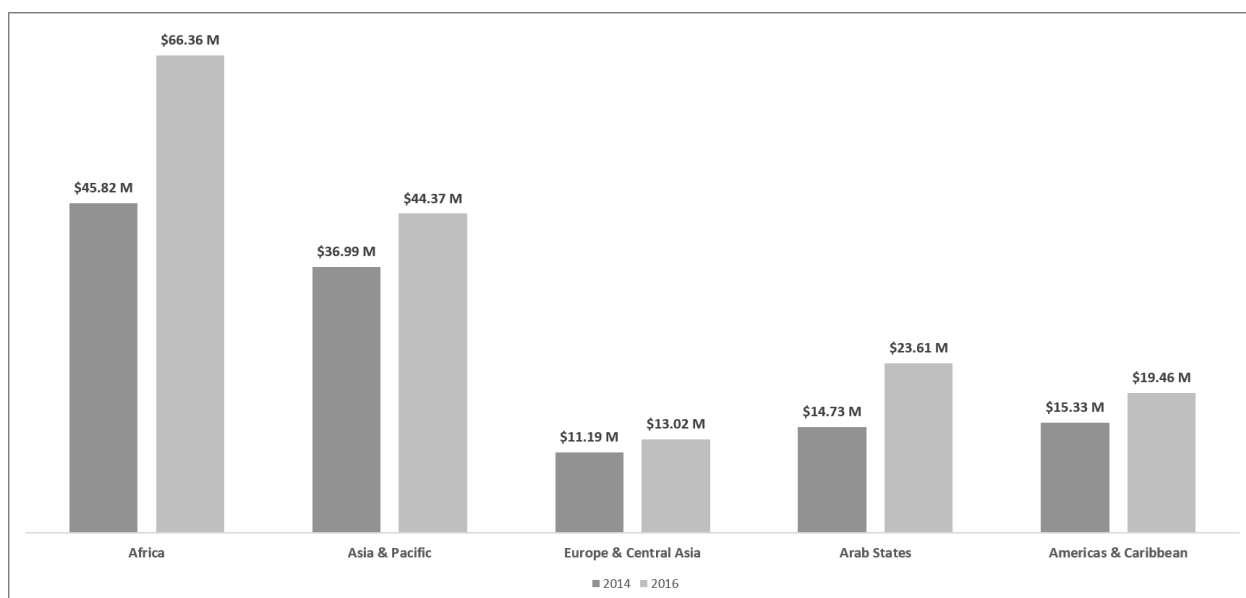
disarmament, political issues, decolonization, crime prevention, criminal justice and narcotic drugs, where gender perspectives are largely missing.

## G. Programme expenditures and type of contribution

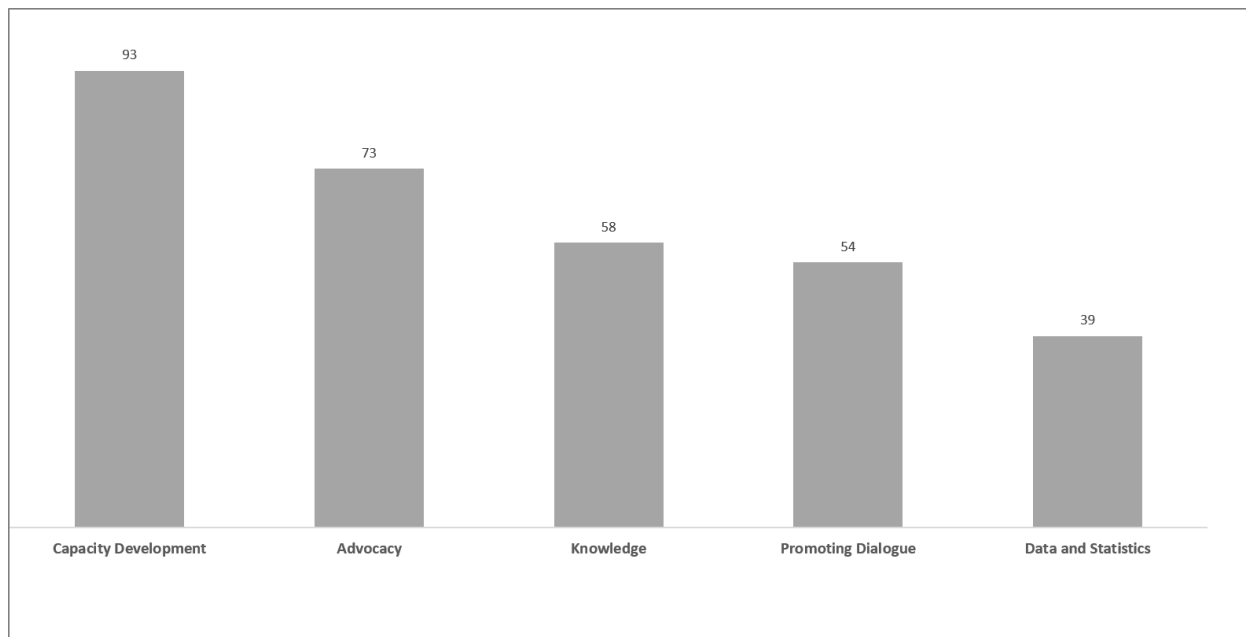
58. The highest-ever programme expenditure was registered in 2015, at \$225 million, a 20 per cent increase over 2014 (\$186 million). Total programme expenditure in the field was 34 per cent higher in 2015 than in 2014, demonstrating the continuous strengthening and increased capacity of field offices.

59. Figure 8 shows the regional distribution of expenditure. Programmatic expenditure is weighted more heavily to least developed countries (LDCs), at slightly below 40 per cent. UN-Women is present in 32 of the 48 LDCs and approximately one third of countries in which UN-Women operates are LDCs.

**Figure 8**



60. In line with the QCPR, UN-Women primarily focuses on developing national capacities (Figure 9). Funds dedicated to capacity-building represented 45 per cent of programme funds (39 per cent in 2014) and covered 93 countries. UN-Women approaches capacity-building through a combination of approaches, such as training, advocacy and dialogue, the deployment of specific expertise, and South-South and triangular cooperation.

**Figure 9**

### III. Assessment of organizational effectiveness and efficiency

61. At the midpoint of the strategic plan, organizational performance shows progress, with targets for 25 of the 38 indicators achieved or on track. UN-Women's experience in institution-building, as a product of UN reform and a merger of four UN entities, has been unprecedented. After five years, UN-Women has built effective systems for performance management and reporting, financial accountability, audit, human resource management, risk management, operational infrastructure and has a strong independent evaluation function. In 2015, UN-Women received a fourth unqualified audit report.

62. UN coordination, strategic partnerships, advocacy, communications and the knowledge-hub function have continued to support the delivery of development results.

#### A. UN coordination

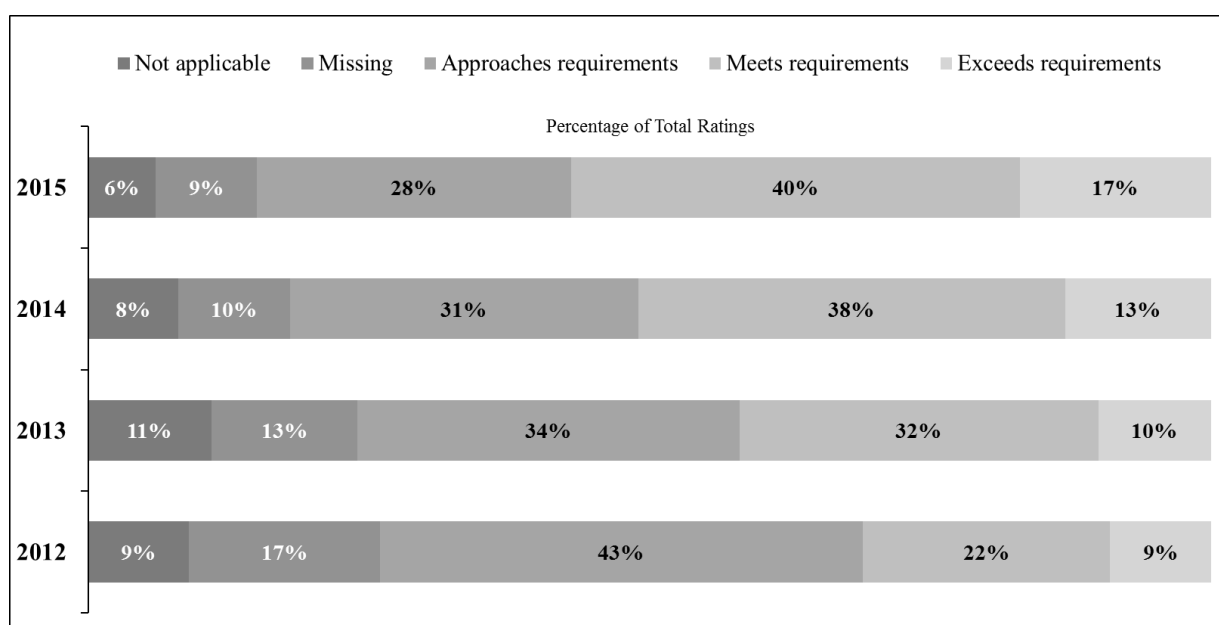
63. UN-Women has successfully leveraged inter-agency mechanisms, including the Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its three pillars, as well as the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, to bring greater attention to and integration of gender perspectives in system-wide priorities and processes. As an active member of the technical support team, UN-Women significantly contributed to the integration of gender perspectives in the post-2015 development agenda.

64. UN-Women actively participated in developing strategic guidance by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). As the co-chair of the programme and communication and advocacy working groups, UN-Women led the development of new programming guidance for United Nations Development Assistance

Frameworks (UNDAFs)<sup>6</sup> and the prioritization of joint communications strategies within UNDAFs. The percentage of UNDAFs featuring gender equality results at the outcome level has increased from 45 per cent to 61 per cent since 2011.

65. Sixty-four entities submitted reports on the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP), with a 15 per cent increase in entities meeting or exceeding requirements since 2013 (Figure 10). UN-Women provided expertise on gender parity and organizational culture to 10 entities. Twenty-one entities used gender equality markers to track financial allocations and expenditures, up from 11 entities in 2013. Several Member States expressed interest in adapting the UN-SWAP to national institutions and to promote interministerial accountability.

**Figure 10**



66. The development of joint programmes and initiatives, such as the joint programme on essential services for women and girls subject to violence and the joint UN framework to prevent violence against women, supported coordination for substantive results. Member States rated gender equality among the top two areas in which the contribution from the UN development system is most significant (E/2016/8).

67. UN-Women supported the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution on gender mainstreaming (E/RES/2015/2) and promoted gender mainstreaming in a number of areas. As co-sponsor of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and a member of the H6 partnership, UN-Women integrated gender perspectives in the UNAIDS 2016-2020 Strategy and the Secretary-General's Global Strategy on Women's, Children's and Adolescent's Health. UN-Women drew attention to the issue of women and girls with disabilities in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

<sup>6</sup> To be finalized by end 2016.

68. UN-Women supported the UNESCO-led process to review progress towards Education For All and to ensure that the new Education 2030 agenda gives appropriate attention to the empowerment of women and girls. UN-Women also developed a joint programme with UNESCO, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Bank to empower adolescent girls and young women by improving education opportunities and supporting activities that create an enabling environment, greater inter-ministerial coordination, changes in attitudes, and the application of ICTs.

69. At the country level, UN-Women leveraged the collective strength of UNCTs, including by leading or co-leading 62 per cent of Gender Theme Groups. In Uruguay, building on each entity's expertise, the group chaired by UN-Women conducted a comprehensive gender analysis of legislation across sectors. In Malawi, UN-Women contributed to reducing transaction costs and eliminating duplication through the development of a joint workplan between the UN and the Government.

70. In Asia-Pacific, UN-Women led the establishment of working groups for regional coordination and joint support to UNCTs in areas such as humanitarian action and extremism leading to discrimination against women. In Europe and Central Asia, through a regional partnership between UN-Women, UNDP and UNFPA, the capacity of 34 gender experts was strengthened to support UNCTs in mainstreaming gender in UNDAFs in the context of the SDGs.

71. UN-Women will develop a new generation of SDG-aligned UN-SWAP and is piloting the UN-SWAP roll-out at the field level by revising the gender scorecard. UN-Women will build on the findings of the ongoing evaluation on the coordination function to strengthen its coordination mandate at all levels.

## B. Partnerships

72. Since its inception, UN-Women has worked with civil society in multiple ways, ranging from joint advocacy and capacity support to grant-making and fostering dialogue. To date, a total of 39 civil society advisory groups have been established to support alliance-building and advocacy. The groups have been instrumental in informing UN-Women's strategies and in facilitating coalition-building and joint work.

73. UN-Women launched a new strategy for civil society advisory groups in 2015, with a focus on creating networks for advocacy and joint action. UN-Women also sought to expand constituencies and foster alliances with other social justice movements, such as environmental and youth movements.

### **Expanding constituencies and target groups**

The **engagement of men and boys** and fostering greater male responsibility for the achievement of gender equality has been an important focus, with unprecedented attention to the issue brought by the HeForShe campaign and Goodwill Ambassador Emma Watson. Over 700,000 men have signed up to the campaign. A new website focusing on concrete commitments has been launched, localized actions took place in more than 50 countries and over 200 HeForShe Student Associations have been established. Through its IMPACT 10x10x10 initiative, HeForShe worked with CEOs to tackle structural barriers to gender

equality in their companies and sectors, engaging more than 90,000 employees and half a million students worldwide.

UN-Women also worked on engaging men and boys in 64 countries, using innovative approaches such as art therapy and sports to challenge gender stereotypes and promote non-violent masculinities. In Tonga, as part of a transformational leadership programme, male participants developed action plans to address their own attitudes and behaviours that support violence. Comprehensive research on men's attitudes and practices related to gender equality is currently ongoing in the Arab States. Findings will inform actions to engage men and boys in challenging patriarchal structures.

In 2015, UN-Women launched a strategy for **youth engagement**, participation and intergenerational partnership. The strategy builds on work in over 30 countries. In Tanzania, young women aspirants and candidates received training in public speaking, leadership and campaigning skills ahead of the elections. In Jordan, UN-Women supported the establishment of youth councils to promote female youth leadership and employment. UN-Women's partnership with the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts spanning 30 countries is on track to train over 3,000 youth leaders and peer-educators to prevent violence against women and reach an estimated 800,000 children and youth by the end of 2016.

UN-Women engaged with faith-based groups to create a shared commitment to respect women's rights. In Mali, UN-Women partnered with religious women leaders to counter violent extremism. Collaboration with the South Sudan Council of Churches facilitated women's engagement in peace negotiations. In Myanmar, UN-Women advocated with Buddhist monks to encourage voting for women candidates and support a 30 per cent quota in women's representation.

74. UN-Women engaged with the private sector, emphasizing its role and responsibility in advancing women's empowerment. Signatories to the Women Empowerment Principles surpassed 1,000 companies. In China, India and Turkey, UN-Women partnered with major companies, including India's largest employer, to support business practices that advance gender equality. A new corporate strategy seeks to leverage the potential for transformation of the private sector.

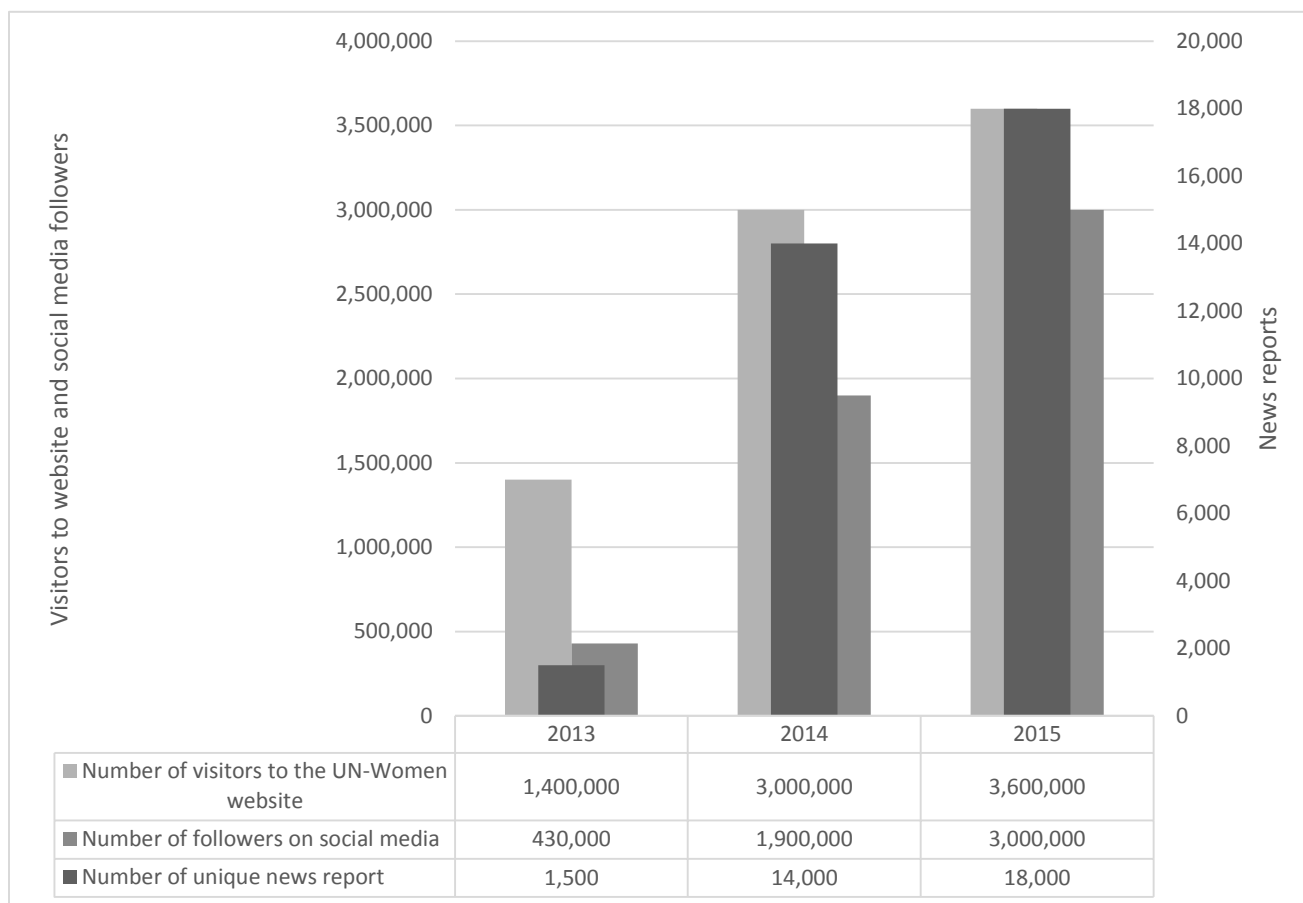
75. UN-Women also collaborated with regional organizations — such as the African Union — on multiple initiatives, including the Campaign to End Child Marriage. UN-Women convened stakeholders to generate momentum for the 2015 African Union's Year of Women's Empowerment. UN-Women also collaborated with the European Union on policy dialogue, joint advocacy and joint programming. This included work towards the SDGs, the new EU Gender Action Plan and a *comic&cartoon* competition for youth.

76. UN-Women partnered with athletes and sports federations, from South Asia Goodwill Ambassador tennis-woman Sania Mirza to the Georgian Rugby Union. UN-Women launched an innovative partnership with the Valencia Football Club. UN-Women developed a partnership with the International Olympic Committee, leading to a programme on leadership skills of adolescent girls in Brazil, ahead of the Olympic Games in 2016. UN-Women also advocated for the inclusion of gender equality provisions in the FIFA reform package.

### C. Advocacy and communications

77. Through its public advocacy, including highly visible campaigns, UN-Women has significantly contributed to increasing attention and commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment and to movement-building. There has been a major increase in UN-Women's communication reach in the last two years (Figure 11).

Figure 11



78. The Beijing+20 campaign reached over 340 million people on social media and generated nearly 8,000 media reports. UN-Women established the Beijing+20 Media Compact, an editorial partnership with 35 international media organizations. Bolstered by the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality, the [Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality](#) campaign generated unprecedented pledges, with 91 Governments making commitments.

79. The Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign and the "[Orange the World](#)" initiative reached 310 million people on social media. More than 3,000 articles covered the campaign in 80 countries and public events were organized in over 70 countries. In Georgia, the first-ever men's movement to stop violence against women was established in support of the UNiTE campaign. In

Nigeria, the campaign led to the establishment of a gender office in the Nigerian police force and the appointment of the first female force public relations officer.

80. UN-Women also partnered with the Geena Davis Institute of Gender in Media to conduct the first-ever global study on female characters in popular films, which revealed discrimination and stereotyping of women and girls by the film industry.

81. A new communications strategy places emphasis on creating opportunities for public engagement and continued visibility for UN-Women, particularly in the context of SDG implementation. UN-Women will continue to seek greater engagement with mainstream media to reach an ever larger public.

#### **D. Knowledge-hub**

82. UN-Women's global reports have generated and disseminated knowledge on the gender equality agenda. The launch of *Progress of the World's Women* was complemented by a series of policy briefs to shed light on previously neglected areas. UN-Women's knowledge platforms on women's economic empowerment and ending violence against women have attracted more than 300,000 and 3 million visitors respectively.

83. The UN-Women Training Centre has developed 27 courses and trained 26,011 participants from 183 countries. UN staff from 65 entities have undertaken training courses devised by UN-Women, including *I Know Gender*.

84. UN-Women contributed to the development of the SDG global indicator framework on the basis of a position paper on the issue.<sup>7</sup> UN-Women continued its contribution to the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) Initiative, which piloted standards to measure asset ownership and entrepreneurship from a gender perspective.

85. In line with the QCPR, UN-Women supports South-South and triangular cooperation through exchange visits, best practice adaptation, peer-to-peer education and trainings-of-trainers. In 2015, more than 100 initiatives were supported. For example, Southeast Asian judiciaries developed a protocol for compliance with international human rights obligations and the promotion of gender-responsive judicial decision-making for the ASEAN region, based on an exchange with Mexican judges.

86. To strengthen its knowledge-hub function, UN-Women will deepen its engagement with academia, strengthen networks of thinkers and practitioners, draw more systematically on expertise from UN-Women's offices, and more closely link its training and research functions.

#### **E. Results-based management, systems and accountability**

87. UN-Women continued to implement its 10-step strategy for strengthening results-based management. The roll-out of a state-of-the-art results management system (RMS), as the corporate instrument through which planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting takes place, represented a major milestone in 2015.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/9/indicators-position-paper>.

88. UN-Women embarked on a business-process re-engineering initiative focused on strengthening its ability to mobilize and deliver non-core funds, manage accountability and risk, create lasting impact and honour commitments to donors and beneficiaries.

89. UN-Women's enterprise risk management framework is now embedded into the Entity's governance structure and 88 per cent of risk registers have been submitted to date.

90. In 2015, UN-Women became the first entirely cloud-based UN agency. Integration with the RMS and enterprise resource planning system enabled the development of corporate dashboards to support management decision-making.

91. UN-Women's global security compliance survey reported a 90 per cent compliance rate.

92. Staff appointments grew by 30 per cent over two years, mainly in the national professional category in field offices. A rotation policy was adopted to support staff mobility, provide career opportunities and encourage staff retention. Staff representatives developed proposals to respond to the 2014 workforce survey. The launch of a new e-recruitment system is imminent.

93. In addition to its fourth unqualified audit opinion, UN-Women registered a steady decline in the number of internal and external audit recommendations and an increase in their implementation rate. In 2015, UN-Women passed a rigorous assessment of its systems, controls, rules and procedures to fulfil the requirements of the European Commission.

## **F. Evaluation**

94. According to several assessments, UN-Women's evaluation function is well-developed and resourced.<sup>8</sup> Since 2014, four corporate evaluations, three reviews and two meta-analyses of 48 evaluations managed by UN-Women have been undertaken. Eighty-one per cent of corporate and decentralized evaluations were externally assessed as 'good' and 'very good' in 2015.

95. UN-Women's commitment to leveraging evaluation lessons and findings to improve programmes increased in 2015, with three quarters of field offices utilizing evaluation findings. As Chair of the UN Evaluation Group, UN-Women led efforts on gender-responsive evaluation, including by actively advocating for the integration of gender perspectives in national evaluation systems.

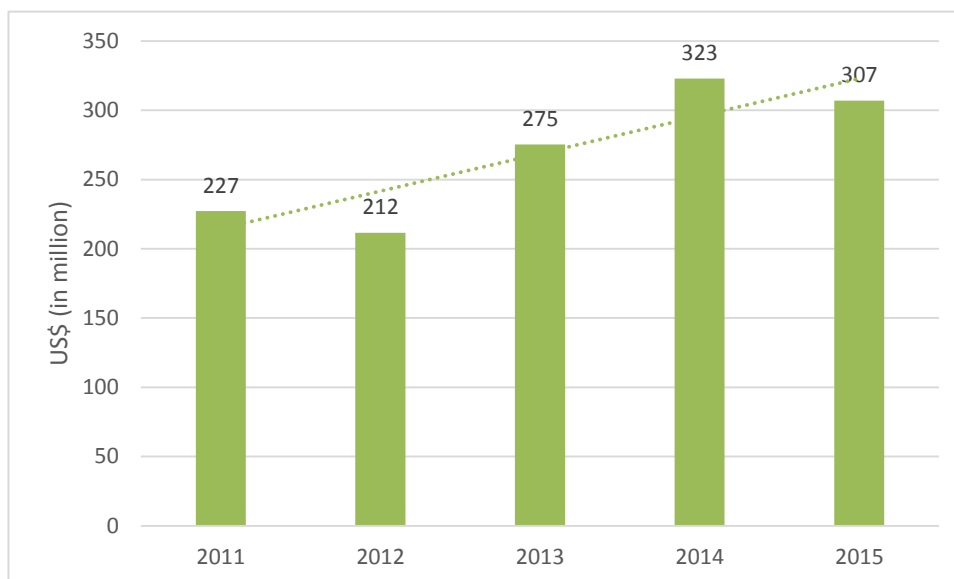
## **G. Resource mobilization**

96. Despite continued challenges, trends over the last five years show a steady growth in voluntary contributions (Figure 12).

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<sup>8</sup> See [UNEG Professional Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of UN-Women, 2014](#), the [Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network \(MOPAN\) assessment of UN-Women, 2014](#).



**Figure 12**

97. A record 146 countries contributed to core resources in 2015, demonstrating the broad support that UN-Women enjoys, including from beyond the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Total voluntary contributions reached \$307 million. Core resources reached \$136.1 million against the \$180 million target, due to exchange rate losses and competing priorities of major donors. On the positive side, non-core resources continued to grow, reaching \$170.9 million, a 7 per cent increase over 2014.<sup>9</sup> Private sector contributions reached \$11.8 million in 2015, a 31 per cent increase on the previous year, bolstered by the first-ever business and philanthropy leaders' forum in 2015.

98. In line with the QCPR, UN-Women engaged in the Structured Dialogue on Financing with the Executive Board to discuss strategies to finance the strategic plan and improve the overall adequacy of resource flows. The strategic brief on resource mobilization (UNW/2015/10) and the briefing on financing the strategic plan including its flagship programme initiatives (UNW/2016/CRP.1) outline related strategies.

#### **IV. Analysis and lessons learned**

99. Based on an analysis of results to date and a review of independent evaluations and assessments, this review has identified a number of findings on the relevance of the strategic plan, enablers of results, programmatic and operational issues, and resource constraints. This section outlines these lessons, paying particular attention to factors that have enabled or hindered progress.

<sup>9</sup> Annex III contains detailed financial results.

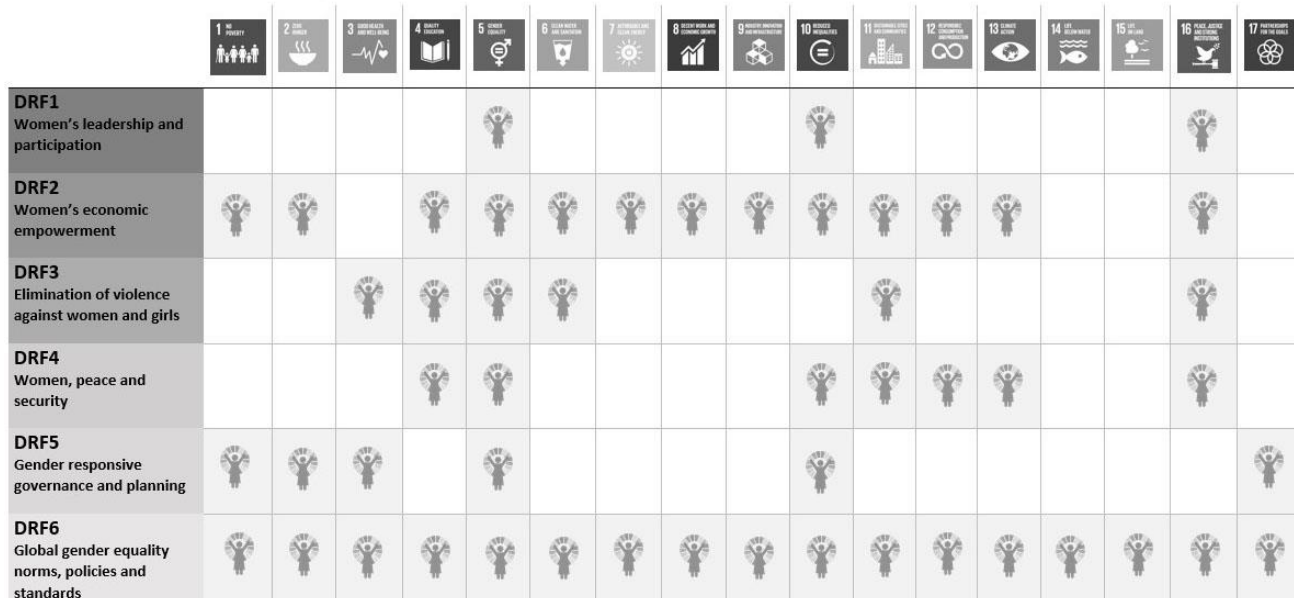
## A. Relevance of the strategic plan

100. Two years after its adoption, UN-Women’s strategic plan continues to be relevant and contributes to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Analysis shows that it also effectively supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

101. Several independent evaluations and assessments have confirmed the relevance of the strategic plan, its impact areas and results framework.<sup>10</sup> The steady progress registered against targets also reinforces the conclusion that UN-Women’s approaches and strategies are effective and achieving the intended results. Evaluations have also emphasized the strong alignment of UN-Women’s programming with national priorities and the high level of national ownership for UN-Women programmes.<sup>11</sup>

102. The strategic plan supports the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, including priorities identified in the 20-year review, and synergistically contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. As it was aligned with UN-Women’s position paper on the post-2015 development agenda,<sup>12</sup> an important input to the development of the 2030 Agenda, the strategic plan and its impact areas also significantly contribute to the achievement of multiple SDGs (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Contribution of the Strategic Plan to the SDGs



<sup>10</sup> Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network’s Assessment of UN-Women (MOPAN), 2014; Corporate Evaluation of the UN-Women’s Contribution to Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE), 2015; Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)’s Evaluation of UN-Women’s Normative Support Work and its Operational Linkages, 2015; and Meta-analysis of Evaluations Managed by UN-Women, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Meta-analysis of Evaluations Managed by UN-Women, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/post-2015/un-women-position>.

103. The strategic plan has allowed for sufficient flexibility to adapt to emerging issues, such as climate change or migration. As described in impact 6, UN-Women has been able to mainstream gender perspectives in climate action. Similarly, UN-Women has responded to the increasing challenge of migration in various ways. As part of the Global Forum on Migration and Development and through its participation in the Global Migration Group, which UN-Women chairs in 2016, UN-Women promoted a gender-sensitive response. UN-Women supported women migrant workers' rights in countries as diverse as Mexico, Moldova and the Philippines. UN-Women also advocated for a gender-responsive approach to the asylum-seekers crisis in Europe and produced a gender assessment of the refugee and migration crisis in the Balkans to inform policies in the region. UN-Women's multi-country resilience programme in the Sahel, which seeks to address food insecurity, climate vulnerability and political instability, also contributes to reducing voluntary migration and adapting to climate change.

104. Given the continued relevance of its strategic plan, UN-Women does not propose changes in thematic focus based on this review. UN-Women suggests adjustments to 16 targets and 30 indicators in the results framework (Annex II), largely to correct the fact that some targets were conservative and could not take into account the potential country coverage of UN-Women's presence, as well as the greater-than-anticipated level of demand for UN-Women's support.

105. The continued relevance of the strategic plan provides a strong basis for the localization of the SDGs and their implementation at the national level.

## **B. Successfully leveraging the triple mandate**

**106. UN-Women's ability to leverage its triple mandate of normative support, UN coordination, and operational activities has been an enabler of success and represents a major asset. More can be done to take full advantage of synergies across mandates and build greater capacity for UN coordination, especially at the country level.**

107. The ability of UN-Women to combine its mandates synergistically has enabled the achievement of transformative results. UN-Women has been particularly successful in strengthening global frameworks and translating them into national and regional standards. UN-Women's normative and coordination mandates have also contributed to elevating issues within UN country teams and strengthening national dialogue in support of gender equality.<sup>13</sup>

108. Leveraging the triple mandate has been particularly fruitful in multisectoral areas, such as ending violence against women and girls, or women, peace and security, as described in section II. Successful examples are characterized by a common vision based on a solid theory of change that encapsulates the contributions of all partners.

<sup>13</sup> Draft evaluation of UN-Women's Contribution to United Nations System Coordination on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (GEEW), 2016; Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)'s Evaluation of UN-Women's Normative Support Work and its Operational Linkages, 2015; Thematic Evaluation on the Contribution of UN-Women to Prevent Violence against Women and Expand Access to Services, 2013; The Contribution of UN-Women to Increasing Women's Leadership and Participation in Peace and Security and in Humanitarian Response, 2013.

109. Evaluations have noted the added value of joint gender programmes in enhancing results by creating shared understandings, partnerships and a common discourse in support of gender equality; increasing visibility for gender issues on the national agenda; and extending UN-Women's reach into new sectors.<sup>14</sup> There is also some evidence that Delivering-as-One and the roll-out of the Standard Operating Procedures have enabled UN-Women to leverage its mandate more effectively and to play a greater catalytic role in country. In these countries, UN-Women has been particularly successful in influencing joint plans, such as UNDAFs, and joint programmes.

110. There is scope for greater synergies and a more integrated and systematic approach. Reporting systems need to better capture the complementarity of UN-Women's functions. Greater capacity and resources are required for UN coordination, especially at the field level, as well as tangible joint products and incentive-based mechanisms to support UN-Women's coordination role, particularly in specialized sectors.

### C. Strong partnerships as results enablers

**111. UN-Women's partnership with gender equality advocates has played a key role in achieving results. The importance of engaging the non-committed is also essential to transformative change. There is a need for greater focus and coordination, including among global actors, in support of the gender equality agenda.**

112. Catalysing action through partnerships is essential to scaling up results, especially in a resource-constrained environment. UN-Women has successfully partnered with gender equality advocates from civil society and other sectors in support of its mandate.

113. UN-Women's convening role and its ability to build and coordinate multi-stakeholder coalitions have been recognized by Governments and civil society alike as a major asset. All impact areas in the strategic plan include the engagement of women's organizations as an important strategy, particularly to changing laws and policies.

114. UN-Women's unique relationship with the women's movement was identified as a major asset by several partners consulted for this review. Civil society partners emphasized how essential UN-Women's support is to amplifying the role and influence of civil society, including grass-roots organizations and marginalized groups. They also highlighted the need for stronger and more inclusive collaboration and more meaningful engagement in the face of new challenges.

115. Assessments underlined the importance of transforming "non-committed power holders" to ensure lasting change.<sup>15</sup> UN-Women has sought to expand its reach to constituencies beyond traditional allies, particularly in the last two years. As described in section III, UN-Women has engaged men and boys, faith-based organizations, youth and the media in various ways. This is particularly essential to addressing social norms and gender stereotypes that hold back progress, a point that

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<sup>14</sup> Joint Evaluation of Joint Programmes on Gender Equality in the United Nations System, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Meta-analysis of Evaluations Managed by UN-Women, 2014.

has also been emphasized by the Commission on the Status of Women. Going forward, UN-Women will further solidify this emphasis.

116. Private sector partners consulted for this review noted that UN-Women has been successful at building partnerships based on substance and common goals and that leverage expertise and reach in support of results. They called for UN-Women to play a greater bridging role between the private sector, civil society and Governments to build a common vision in support of gender equality.

117. Challenges include a level of fragmentation in the work of gender equality advocates, calling for greater focus and coordination to scale up results. Also, the expansion of constituencies and target groups can create debate among closest allies, thus requiring careful calibration and balancing.

#### **D. Programmatic focus and operational effectiveness**

**118. Despite its successful delivery of results overall, UN-Women needs to improve its programmatic focus to use its limited resources strategically. This needs to be undergirded by robust operational systems that enable UN-Women to deliver on time, on scope and on budget.**

119. Several evaluations have found that UN-Women has been largely successful in delivering planned activities and outputs, as well as securing positive benefits for target groups and in changing national policies and programmes.<sup>16</sup> This finding is confirmed by the achievement of many targets in the results framework.

120. Yet, UN-Women's programme delivery is hampered by weaknesses in project design, often linked to overambitious objectives and unclear theories of change, as well as excessively short time frames and the limited scale of many projects.<sup>17</sup> UN-Women identified the need to consolidate a large number of small-scale, short-duration, UN-Women-only projects into a small number of larger, multi-stakeholder transformative programmes. Country-level interventions tend to be thinly spread across several impact areas, even when resources are limited, requiring clearer guidance to ensure greater selectivity in programming priorities.

121. UN-Women's programming needs to be supported by effective operational systems that allow UN-Women to deliver on time, on scope and on budget. Despite gradual improvements, UN-Women still faces operational bottlenecks, cumbersome procedures or unclear processes that can result in delays in fund disbursement, reporting or other challenges. The swift roll-out of the regional architecture and effective decentralization of the organization requires greater decentralization of business procedures. These challenges call for a thorough review of business processes.

122. In addition, given the long-term nature of changes at the impact level and related attribution issues, indicators in the results framework tend to be process-based or focus on the broader enabling environment, such as legislative change. In developing the new strategic plan, and building on SDG indicators and the experience of implementing Flagship Programming Initiatives, it will be important

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

for UN-Women to identify product indicators that can measure the impact of its interventions more directly.

## **E. Resource constraints**

**123. UN-Women continues to be hampered by resource constraints that prevent sustainability and scaling-up of successful interventions. Ensuring adequate financing will be critical to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. UN-Women can do more to track resource gaps and quantify its implications.**

124. Several evaluations and assessments have emphasized that the resource gap has constrained UN-Women's ability to fully deliver on the strategic plan and represents a threat to programme sustainability.<sup>18</sup> The strong political commitment by Member States to gender equality and to UN-Women has failed to translate into commensurate financial commitments. UN-Women is facing increasing demand for its support and the ambitious 2030 Agenda also calls for a significant increase in resources. As part of the Structured Dialogue on Financing, UN-Women outlined some of the risks of not securing a critical mass of resources ([UNW/2015/10](#)). It also noted the need to increase the predictability, flexibility and overall quality of non-core resources.

125. UN-Women's normative support functions have increased to support intergovernmental processes, including thematic ones and their follow-up. The volume of work related to servicing and providing substantive support to intergovernmental bodies, particularly the Commission on the Status of Women, has also increased. Voluntary contributions have been drawn to support this work. It is essential to ensure that normative functions are adequately funded from assessed contributions.

126. There is a need to invest in systems to better cost and track resource gaps and demonstrate how they negatively impact on results delivery. Building on system improvements, UN-Women will improve in this area, including to better inform the Structured Dialogue on Financing.

## **V. Strategic initiatives**

127. To address these lessons, UN-Women is enhancing its programming modalities, business processes, organizational design, and financing and innovation strategy, while taking into account the evolving development landscape, with particular attention to ongoing processes related to SDG implementation. This section describes strategic initiatives that will be instrumental to implementing the strategic plan, contribute to the accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

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<sup>18</sup> Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)'s Evaluation of UN-Women's Normative Support Work and its Operational Linkages, 2015; Draft evaluation of UN-Women's Contribution to United Nations System Coordination on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (GEEW), 2016; Meta-analysis of Evaluations Managed by UN-Women, 2014.

## A. Gender-responsive localization of the SDGs

128. As mentioned in section IV, the strategic plan contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Commission on the Status of Women reiterated the commitment in the 2030 Agenda to cohesive sustainable development strategies to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, gender mainstreaming into all government policies and programmes, and gender-responsive data, indicators, follow-up and review at all levels. UN-Women's supporting role was also reinforced.

129. Together with the UN system, UN-Women supports Member States to integrate the SDGs into their development plans, budgets, institutional arrangements, and statistical systems. UN-Women's priority is to ensure that these localization processes fully support a gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

130. As part of UNCTs, UN-Women will leverage expertise in gender-responsive planning and budgeting to integrate the 2030 Agenda into national planning processes in a gender-responsive manner and translate the SDGs into development strategies and fiscal plans that benefit women and girls. UN-Women will continue to focus on supporting national gender equality mechanisms, while promoting a whole-of-government approach. UN-Women will support the roll-out of gender indicators through technical support and capacity-building for gender statistics and an open, inclusive and transparent engagement with civil society, especially women's organizations, in follow-up and review processes.

131. At the global level, UN-Women will build multi-stakeholder coalitions to accelerate progress on specific targets in SDG 5, such as closing the gender pay gap or unpaid care work. It will also leverage the UN-SWAP, and its coordination mandate, in support of joint action. UN-Women will support follow-up and review processes, including in the context of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. A new biennial report and an interactive online platform will provide a global snapshot of progress made on gender equality commitments.

132. To ensure that no one is left behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and in line with the strategic plan's principles of inclusiveness and focusing on the poorest and most excluded groups, UN-Women will tackle the root causes of multiple and intersectoral discrimination and structural inequalities.

## B. Programming modalities: Flagship Programming Initiatives

133. Flagship Programming Initiatives (FPIs) respond to a number of lessons learned in the last two years. They reflect an evolution in UN-Women's programming modalities and aim to consolidate a large number of small-scale, short-duration UN-Women only projects into a small number of larger multi-stakeholder transformative programmes. In 2015, UN-Women developed 12 FPIs fully aligned with the strategic plan and the 2030 Agenda (Annex VII).

134. Guided by international agreements, FPIs enable UN-Women to fully leverage its unique composite mandate, as well as to strengthen normative-operational linkages, in support of transformative change. Based on comprehensive theories of change, FPIs provide a common platform for UN-Women and partners to map

ongoing activities contributing to gender equality in a specific area and to identify areas to be addressed.

135. The theories of change represent an assessment of which overall activities must be undertaken by all partners to deliver transformative results in the lives of women and girls, why they must be implemented, and how they must be operationalized. As such, FPIs are high-impact, scalable, multi-stakeholder programmes that fully leverage partnerships in support of results.

136. The FPIs allow UN-Women to operationalize a human rights approach to development, operate across the crisis-development continuum, and support Member States, upon request, to address global development challenges, including climate change. As they address multiple SDGs in a synergistic manner, the FPIs are not only instrumental to achieving gender equality; they also contribute to achieving other goals.

137. For example, UN-Women's FPI on Women's Access to Land and Productive Resources for Climate-Resilient Agriculture will simultaneously contribute to the economic empowerment of women farmers, improve the resilience of communities to climate change, and enhance food security. By addressing the gender gap in terms of access to land, finance, information, technologies, labour and markets for climate-resilient agriculture, the productivity of women farmers could increase by up to 20-25 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and positively impact on at least one third of the 169 SDG targets.

138. The FPIs constitute a key part of UN-Women's financing strategy, as they enable access to high-quality non-core funding, allow donors to earmark funds at the thematic level, and complement country-level allocations.

### **C. Operational support: business processes re-engineering**

139. To support its programming, UN-Women requires effective and efficient operational systems and business processes to ensure that it can deliver on time, on scope and on budget. In light of the regional architecture, UN-Women also needs to match its systems and processes with the decentralized nature of the organization in order to ensure transparency and accountability.

140. UN-Women launched a business-process mapping and re-engineering initiative to identify bottlenecks, streamline systems and processes and design optimized, efficient and effective delivery platforms. This initiative will strengthen a culture of results-based management, accountability and improved stewardship of resources. UN-Women has started work on three workstreams: donor reporting; project design; and fast-track procedures for humanitarian response. UN-Women will also assess which operational capacities it can entrust to other UN entities, ensuring that it can have a differentiated operational presence depending on its engagement at the country level. It will join, where appropriate, common UN operational centres to achieve economies of scale.

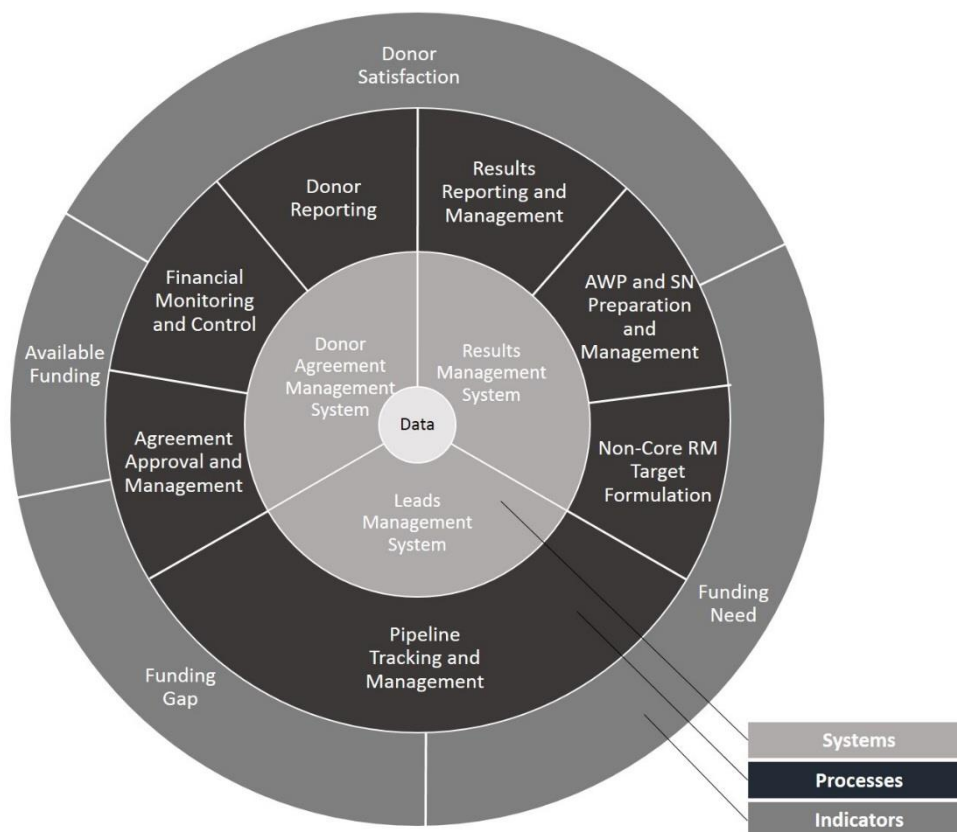
141. UN-Women is investing in programme management systems to improve key functions and support decentralized decision-making. A comprehensive IT programme management architecture, based on a single-point-of-data source, will include critical elements such as systems for programme resource mobilization planning, pipeline management and contract management (Figure 14). These



systems will also help ensure UN-Women's compliance with the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).

142. UN-Women will invest in capacity-building and staff training to ensure that staff receive the technical skills and tools necessary to leverage new operational systems and effectively develop and implement the FPIs.

**Figure 14**



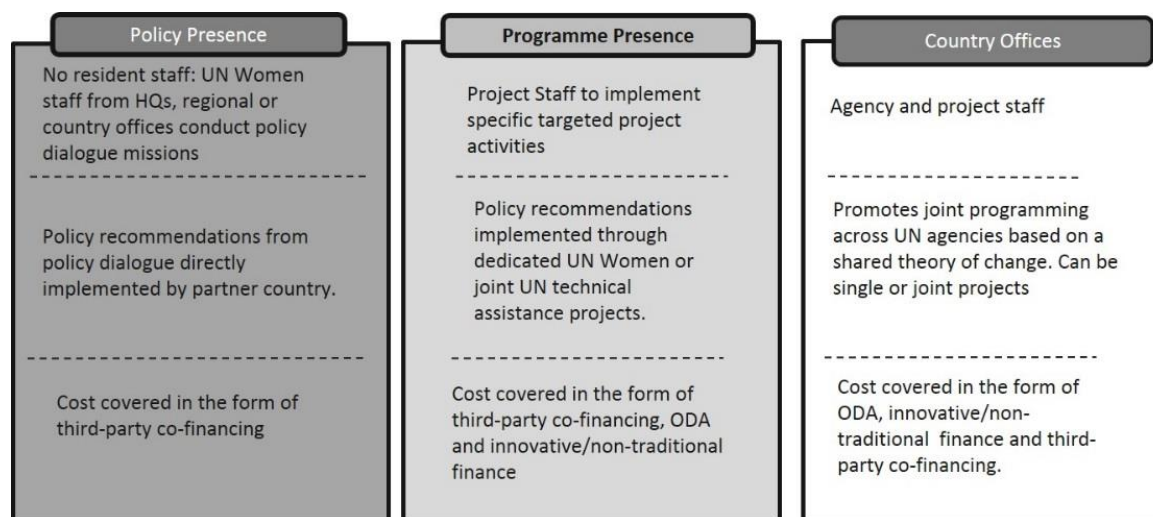
#### **D. Organizational design: delivering on the universal mandate**

143. Given its universal mandate, UN-Women is well positioned to respond to the universal nature of the 2030 Agenda. Following the swift roll-out of its regional architecture, UN-Women has a diversified country presence, with regional, multi-country and country offices, as well as programme presences. UN-Women has also delivered in a number of ways in countries where it does not have a presence (see Box).

144. Based on the ongoing evaluation of the regional architecture, UN-Women will further adapt its organizational design to respond to the universal nature of the SDGs. UN-Women will tailor its normative, coordination and operational role to each context. Figure 15 outlines the different types of presence that can support the implementation of the strategic plan.

145. The FPIs will be instrumental in helping UN-Women to identify gaps and determine the level of support and therefore the type of presence required in support of results.

**Figure 15**



### Delivering on the universal mandate

Even where it does not have a presence, UN-Women delivers on its universal mandate in various ways through:

- Support to strengthening global norms and standards that apply to all countries and their translation into effective policies and programmes by providing thought leadership, the exchange of best practices, engagement with civil society, and enhancing review mechanisms.
- Advocacy in support of gender equality by national committees.
- Technical assistance in non-programme countries, upon request. In 2015, UN-Women collaborated with Sweden to define features of a feminist government, leading to the adoption of an action plan on a feminist foreign policy.
- The *Safe Cities* initiative recently expanded to six cities in high-income countries.<sup>19</sup>
- UN-SWAP has been used as a model for the United Kingdom National Health Service.
- Awareness-raising and building support through advocacy and campaigns. UN-Women supports actions around the world for the 16 days of activism to end violence against women. HeForShe undertook its first *GetFree University Tour* reaching over 110,000 students in the United Kingdom and France.

<sup>19</sup> Dublin, Winnipeg, Sakai, Reykjavik, Brussels, and New York.

- The promotion of gender-responsive policies and practices in the private sector, including through the Women's Empowerment Principles.

## E. Financing strategy

146. In order to close its resource gap, UN-Women will continue its efforts to meet resource targets approved by the Executive Board for the institutional budget.

147. Core resources provide UN-Women with the institutional capacity which not only underpins UN-Women's normative and coordination functions, but also provide the necessary foundational and investment resources to leverage non-core resources. UN-Women aims at having at least 15 donors contributing \$10 million or more per year to core resources. The development of a productive engagement and multi-year partnership frameworks that allow for greater predictability and sustainability of financing will be a priority. UN-Women will leverage its growing network of liaison offices to solidify gains and expand its reach with traditional and emerging donors. UN-Women will also engage Member States and relevant General Assembly bodies to ensure that normative support functions are adequately resourced from assessed contributions.

148. UN-Women will also focus on attracting high-quality, soft-earmarked non-core resources, through its Flagship Programming Initiatives and by continuing to promote the successful experience in direct funding of strategic notes at the country level. System enhancements will improve stewardship of resources, pipeline management and donor reporting.

149. UN-Women will seek innovative sources of financing, including with the private and philanthropic sectors. Capitalizing on the high visibility of its campaigns, particularly HeForShe, UN-Women will build greater capacity for crowdfunding and leverage individual public giving, including through cause-marketing and associated strategies.

150. As they could represent as much as 20 per cent of delivery in support of the SDGs, UN-Women will work more systematically to fully leverage UN pooled funding mechanisms (UN Trust Funds, Joint Programmes). Together with partners, UN-Women has also launched its own instrument, the Global Acceleration Instrument on Women, Peace and Security, to steer resources directly to women's organizations and the UN system for conflict prevention, resolution and recovery efforts. In addition, a number of joint programmes will support the implementation of the FPIs.

151. UN-Women adopted a new cost-recovery policy to ensure proper recovery of direct and indirect costs, applying the harmonized framework approved by Executive Boards of Funds and Programmes. In line with the QCPR and Executive Board decision 2013/2, the implementation of the cost-recovery policy ensures the consistent application of the principle that core resources should not subsidize programmes and projects funded from non-core resources. This requires ensuring that all direct costs are budgeted in respective budgets in addition to the cost recovery fee of 8 per cent to support costs that cannot be traced unequivocally to specific projects and programmes.

## F. Fostering innovation

152. Achieving gender equality requires transformation of social structures, value systems, institutions, behaviours and practices. Innovative approaches that disrupt “business as usual” can significantly help to leapfrog progress. Evaluations have found that UN-Women has been successful in supporting the development of innovative models to enhance inclusion.<sup>20</sup>

153. UN-Women supports open innovation, as well as targeted innovation in support of transformative results. Open innovation promotes the engagement of a broader base of partners and individuals to generate ideas and solution-building. HeForShe partner universities are holding *ideathons* to identify salient issues around gender equality and develop workable solutions that the universities commit to support. UN-Women has also instituted a cohort of internal champions that are prototyping innovations in various areas, from engaging home-based women in the sharing economy, to behavioural therapy trials to prevent violence against women, to using service journey mapping and insights into the uptake of technology among rural women.

154. UN-Women also supports design-thinking processes to reframe problems and find solutions. UN-Women supported design-thinking in Moldova, where a government innovation lab worked in partnership with women’s organizations to co-produce services to end violence against women.

155. In addition to open innovation, UN-Women also proactively targets barriers and issues where progress is slow and where more dramatic departures from traditional programmatic and policy work are required. SDG 5 called for the enhancement of the use of technology to promote women’s empowerment. Targeted innovation is being pursued for programmatic innovation by leveraging ICTs and new business models to scale up impact; operational innovation in support of business processes; and financial innovation to deepen financial intermediation services for women.

156. For example, UN-Women aims to leverage cloud-based, mobile and block chain technologies to establish enterprise platforms and connect women in business and agriculture to global supply chains, providers of goods and services, information, and financing. UN-Women will also continue to develop innovative approaches to partnerships and convening stakeholders, creative ways of generating and capturing knowledge, and behaviour change initiatives.

## VI. Conclusion and outlook to the new strategic plan

157. As demonstrated by this midterm review, the first two years of the implementation of the strategic plan have been largely successful. UN-Women’s relevance and impact have been confirmed through the assessment of results to date,

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<sup>20</sup> Corporate Evaluation of the UN-Women’s Contribution to Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE), 2015; Thematic Evaluation on the Contribution of UN-Women to Prevent Violence Against Women and Expand Access to Services, 2013; Evaluation of the Contribution of UN-Women to Increasing Women’s Leadership and Participation in Peace and Security and in Humanitarian Response, 2013.

lessons learned from evaluations and external assessments, as well as UN-Women's own analysis.

158. At the same time, UN-Women's performance has been marked by a number of challenges, including significant resource constraints. This review has provided an honest reflection on the evolving landscape in which UN-Women operates, as well as achievements, challenges and proposed responses. A series of key initiatives to adapt UN-Women's programming modalities, business processes, organizational design, financing and innovation strategies have been proposed in this report. In particular, the Flagship Programming Initiatives represent a new, innovative and integrated mechanism for UN-Women's successful delivery of transformative results.

159. The new development agenda presents UN-Women with major opportunities, supported by the stocktaking exercise of Beijing+20 and other normative developments. UN-Women is uniquely placed to galvanize the UN system, draw on the expertise and collective energy of its wide network of partners, and mobilize a global movement to drive change for women and girls and ensure increased resources.

160. To scale up its impact, UN-Women needs to play a strong role to enable the transformation of global commitments into action, especially at the country level, in order to affect the lives of women and girls, remove the barriers to their growth, and fully unlock their potential as change agents. The final two years of the strategic plan are also the first two years of the 2030 Agenda. They will be critical to ensure that a strong basis is in place to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment by 2030.

161. Lessons from this review will feed into the next strategic plan, 2018-2021. A detailed road map for its development will be presented to the Executive Board later in 2016. The development of the next strategic plan will provide an opportunity to explore in greater depth some topics that emerged during this review but could not be comprehensively addressed, such as opportunities to better reflect UN-Women's triple mandate in the strategic plan, enhancing indicators and aligning them with the SDGs and FPIs, as well as reflecting on cross-cutting strategies that need to be systematized, such as addressing gender stereotypes and social norms across impact areas. The launch and ongoing development of more robust systems and tools for programming and reporting will also be instrumental in informing the development process for the next strategic plan.

## VII. Elements for a decision

162. The Executive Board may wish to:

(a) *Take note* of the report on progress made on the strategic plan, 2014-2017, including the midterm review of the strategic plan; *welcome* the progress made in the implementation of the strategic plan; and *commend* UN-Women on its strong performance to date;

(b) *Recognize* the contribution made by the implementation of the strategic plan and UN-Women's central role in support of the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and its follow-up and review;

(c) *Commend* UN-Women on successfully leveraging its composite mandate and scaling up its operations to translate normative achievements into programmatic results; *recognize* that the scale and scope of UN-Women's normative support functions have increased; and *recognize* UN-Women's critical role in UN coordination;

(d) *Approve* the revised development results framework and organizational effectiveness and efficiency framework, its revised targets and indicators;

(e) *Endorse* strategic initiatives described in the report; *take note* of the Flagship Programming Initiatives; and *encourage* Member States and UN entities to partner with UN-Women in their implementation;

(f) *Take note with concern* of the ongoing funding gap in core resources, and *encourage* all countries in a position to do so to increase their voluntary contributions, especially to regular resources, to ensure the full and effective implementation of the strategic plan, 2014-2017;

(g) *Call upon* UN-Women and contributors to non-core resources to ensure that all associated costs of achieving development results are charged as direct costs to the respective projects and programmes so that core resources do not subsidize non-core programmes and projects, and *further call upon* contributors to non-core resources to enable the planning and budgeting of such direct project costs as an integral part of non-core contributions.

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