



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

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**Evaluation**

## **Corporate evaluation of UN-Women's strategic partnerships for gender equality and the empowerment of women**

### *Summary*

As mandated by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) Corporate Evaluation Plan 2014-2017, the UN-Women Independent Evaluation Office undertook a corporate evaluation of the UN-Women's strategic partnerships for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, organizational efficiency, and extent to which the human rights approach and gender equality principles were integrated adequately in UN-Women's approach to its strategic partnerships across its integrated mandate: normative, operational, and coordination – at country, regional and global levels.

The purpose of this evaluation is to inform strategic decisions, organizational learning and accountability.

The primary intended users of the evaluation findings and recommendations are UN-Women's Executive Board, senior management and staff at HQ, regional and country levels.

## **A. Context for UN-Women partnerships**

1. Partnerships and other forms of cross-sector collaboration have attracted attention as global governance mechanisms and have become a predominant way of structuring UN-stakeholder relationships over the last two decades. For the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), partnerships are fundamental in the specific global context of GEEW. In particular, the ability to partner is critical to UN-Women's role in supporting the broader women's movement, which has historically led global action on gender equality and women's rights. The transformative vision of the sustainable development agenda adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015 places new demands on the scale, scope and ambition of UN-Women's strategic partnerships to achieve transformative change by 2030. In particular, the SDG Agenda sets unprecedented and ambitious goals and targets for GEEW (specifically the stand-alone gender goal 5 and GEEW targets under the other goals) that will require the commitment of a wide diversity of stakeholders for their achievement. The expanded role of non-state actors in development also opens up important opportunities for strategic partnerships.

2. The implementation of the Beijing +20 agenda and the UN Secretary General's call for the UN system to be 'fit for purpose' set sustained demands on multi-stakeholder partnerships for GEEW. Financing for gender equality has been and remains a critical gap in development and humanitarian financing. A decline in member states' funding for development, including GEEW, after the global financial crisis also encouraged UN-Women to expand its partnerships structure, to make it more strategic in order to support UN-Women in fulfilling its mandate and meeting the high expectations with substantially reduced funding.

## **B. Strategic partnerships at UN-Women**

3. Since its foundation, UN-Women has stressed the importance of working through partnerships with both right-holders and duty-bearers to deliver on its composite mandate and achieve its goal for the advancement of GEEW globally, regionally, and at the country level.

4. At UN-Women, 'partnership' spans relationships between UN-Women and other organizations strategic in moving the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda forward. UN-Women identifies a vast constituency that is affected by and contributes to gender equality and women's empowerment. These stakeholders include: women's groups and civil society, governments, national mechanisms for women's affairs, parliaments, regional organizations, businesses and foundations, national committees, goodwill ambassadors, citizens (key influencers/multipliers), and media, among others.

5. Partnerships are developed by all offices across UN-Women at global, regional and country levels. The Bureau for Intergovernmental Support, UN System Coordination, and Strategic Partnerships is a key focal point for the organizations' efforts on strategic partnerships.

6. UN-Women is still a relatively new organization that has undergone significant internal change. The current Executive Director has brought renewed and strengthened attention to strategic partnerships, in particular with non-traditional partners and the private sector. The Flagship Programming Initiatives

(FPI) launched in September 2015 are expected to shape UN-Women programming, resource mobilization and strategic partnerships in the future.

### **C. Background and objectives of the evaluation**

7. This corporate evaluation was undertaken as part of the Corporate Evaluation Plan 2014-2017. The purpose of this evaluation was to enhance UN-Women's approach to strategic partnerships with the aim of ensuring that gender equality is reached by 2030.

8. The objectives of this evaluation were to assess the relevance, effectiveness and organizational efficiency of UN-Women's approaches to strategic partnerships, and determine whether the human rights approach and gender equality principles were integrated adequately. The evaluation also aimed to identify and validate lessons learned, good practice and innovations supported by UN-Women; and provide recommendations with respect to UN-Women's strategies and approaches to strategic partnerships.

9. The evaluation covered all dimensions of UN-Women's work, namely its integrated mandate (normative, operational and coordination) at country, regional and global levels. The period under review spanned the establishment of UN-Women (2011) through the second quarter of 2016.

10. The evaluation was commissioned and managed by the Independent Evaluation Office of UN-Women and was conducted by an external independent evaluation team between November 2015 and December 2016, with the active engagement of the internal and external reference groups, and two external evaluation advisors.

### **D. Evaluation methodology**

11. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the UN-Women Evaluation Policy and the United Nations Evaluation Group Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System. The evaluation approach was three-pronged, comprising utilization-focused, theory-driven and gender responsive and human rights-based approaches.

12. The evaluation established three main lines of evidence: i) Assessment of UN-Women's overall approach to partnerships; ii) Portfolio Analysis that included an in-depth analysis of 35 strategic partnerships at field and global level; and iii) Case studies of selected strategic partnerships in Kenya, Georgia, India, Egypt, and Brazil.

13. The evaluation team reviewed more than 500 documents; consulted 261 stakeholders (212 women and 49 men) at the global, regional and country levels; launched a survey via the UN-Women Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) Twitter account which resulted in 1,650 Twitter followers and more than 600 people accessing a discussion on GEWE partnerships. Data were analyzed using a combination of established qualitative methodologies, and key stakeholders actively contributed to the review and validation of evaluation findings, at the global, regional and country levels.

### **E. Key findings and conclusions**

Based on the 19 findings of the evaluation (see annex 1), the following 8 conclusions have been developed.

## **EFFECTIVENESS**

**Conclusion 1: UN-Women strategic partnerships have contributed significantly to advancing gender equality and empowerment of women in the framework of the UN-Women Strategic Plan. At their most effective, strategic partnerships have extended the reach, credibility, and influence of UN-Women and its partners.**

14. The most significant added value of strategic partnerships has been in extending UN-Women's reach, influence and access to constituencies, and in leveraging interactions between operational and policy work. UN-Women worked with partners from all sectors to help influence the main frameworks that will shape the work of the UN system over the next 15 years, including the SDGs, the Global Leaders' Commitment to ending discrimination against women by 2030, and the new urban agenda.

15. Strategic partnerships have contributed to the achievement of expected results, such as strengthening capacities and awareness among rights holders and duty bearers in favour of GEEW, gender mainstreaming in partners' and third parties' policies and programmes, and changed behaviours in favour of GEEW. Overall, the evaluation found that, wherever it is established, a formalized partnership governance framework correlates with partnerships that achieve higher-level results, such as mainstreaming gender in partners' policies and practices. As might be expected, there is less evidence at country and regional levels of partnerships contributing to complex and ambitious changes at this stage. The evaluation concurs with the Mid Term Review of the Strategic Plan conducted in 2016 that there is a need for greater focus and coordination, including among global actors, in support of the gender equality agenda, and to implement global GEEW standards (including the SDGs) at the national level.

16. Achieving higher-level results requires UN-Women to overcome hindering factors to strategic partnerships, especially: resource constraints that limit the core capacity of the organization leading to time-pressure on over-stretched UN-Women staff; short-duration and project-based nature of many partnerships; internal coordination within the structural elements of the entity; and reliance on the capacity (and energy) of individuals.

## **RELEVANCE**

**Conclusion 2: UN-Women efforts have focused on growing and diversifying its partnership base. These have resulted in important contributions to advancing the GEEW agenda, particularly in relation to mainstreaming gender into the new set of global and national development frameworks. While appropriate during its initial years, delivering on the promise of Agenda 2030 and other frameworks now requires a focus on fostering a shared UN-Women vision for strategic partnerships, and consolidating a coherent and flexible organizational approach to implementing this vision.**

17. UN-Women demonstrates a strong organizational commitment to working in partnership. UN-Women's partnerships have reached a variety of partners, opened doors to untraditional partners, and have been shown to be individually relevant in the current global context. Pragmatic approaches to partnerships and a responsive culture have enabled UN-Women to innovate and maximize the

potential of limited resources. Many achievements have been built through strategic partnerships with established actors, including all the processes related to normative gains in Agenda 2030 and HABITAT III.

18. Whilst UN-Women's partnerships increase its reach and influence, they also carry risks for UN-Women's reputation and the sustainability of results that are not yet managed in a consistent way. The evaluation has identified an urgent demand for a more consolidated organizational approach for strategic partnerships that involves a common definition, rationale, principles, and indicators for engagement with (and across) diverse groups and in diverse contexts.

19. Greater attention should be paid to: a) balancing the organizational focus on engaging in new partnerships to meet emerging priorities with the need to maximize existing partnerships; b) prioritizing and linking partnerships; c) addressing uneven approaches to identifying and managing reputational risk based on lessons from experiences; and, d) strengthening experience at the country level in navigating inherent tensions between different types of stakeholders, different partnership objectives, and different perspectives of women's empowerment and women's rights.

20. The evaluation points to the need for stronger internal clarity on strategic partnerships, to ensure that UN-Women continues to engage in the most relevant and invests over time in the most strategic partnerships to advance GEEW globally, regionally and at the country level.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY**

**Conclusion 3: UN-Women's organizational structures, operations systems and approach to risk were not originally designed with the explicit aim of supporting strategic partnerships. Consequently, multiple non-coordinated poles of responsibility for partnerships at HQ and a wide range of different practices in field offices now exist. While some aspects that support the prioritization, assessment of risk and operationalization of strategic partnerships have been developed, there is still a need for a comprehensive policy framework towards strategic partnerships.**

21. There are many different aspects to strategic partnerships that help to explain what works, where, for whom, and why. To date, despite effective partnering by UN-Women on many fronts, several aspects have limited the realization of a coherent, effective and shared policy framework for operationalizing strategic partnership. These include: 1) limited financial resources and human capital 2) multiple non-coordinated poles of responsibility for partnerships; 3) the expectation that partnership management is everybody's responsibility with limited dedicated capacities.

22. UN-Women's structures, systems and processes (i.e. Programme Operations Manual, OEEF, results tracking systems, due diligence) have a major impact on UN-Women's ability to work in partnership. They were not originally designed with the implications for partnership fully in mind. In particular, SPD's roles, responsibilities and resourcing have not been clearly spelled out in relation to whether and how it will support the rest of the organization with the planning, coordination and operationalization of strategic partnerships.

23. To date, flexibility and dedication of individual staff at all levels has been required to navigate management systems to meet the requirements of strategic partnerships. In the absence of agreed guiding principles, UN-Women is also reliant on extensive engagement by UN-Women's leadership to select, design and

set the tone of strategic partnerships on a case-by-case basis. Continuous negotiation of roles and responsibilities for each partnership is a barrier to a shared organizational vision, incentive structure and resource-allocation model for strategic partnerships.

24. A sufficiently equipped and authorized Strategic Partnerships Division has the potential to provide the necessary coordination and strategic policy framework for UN-Women's strategic partnerships. Such a framework is required to balance the current management incentives (i.e. for resource mobilization and spending) with recognition for managers who contribute to establishing catalytic partnerships that deliver results over a long-term time horizon.

## **GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACHES**

**Conclusion 4. The stated objectives of UN-Women's strategic partnerships are consistently aligned to GE and HR principles outlined in CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. However, in field operations, the modalities of partnership available to UN-Women offices warrant being adjusted to better suit the needs of smaller partners, especially rights holders' organizations, and to fully reflect UN-Women's feminist values.**

25. The aims of individual partnerships consistently reflect the priorities, principles and objectives of normative human rights instruments at both global and country level. Globally, UN-Women continues to build on the Commission of the Status of Women to convene traditional allies as well as new and emerging constituencies (including faith-based organizations, youth, academia and goodwill ambassadors).

26. However, UN-Women's operations rules and tools, while conducive at the global level to establishing long-term partnerships, are not especially suited to provide flexible partnership entry points and modalities for smaller rights-holders' groups at country level. The Joint Inspection Unit<sup>1</sup> has made the case for developing a small-scale funding agreement and, possibly, a grant mechanism to better serve this constituency as part of a broader policy framework for partnerships. The evaluation has found significant evidence to support the urgency of this case.

27. In addition to the refinement of fiduciary accountability implied by these alternative partnership modalities, the evaluation also concludes that application of feminist values to strategic partnership governance requires that future partnership agreements establish mutual accountability for performance to equalize power relations, especially between UN-Women offices and strategic implementing partners.

## **PARTNERSHIP WITH CIVIL SOCIETY**

**Conclusion 5: Civil society and the women's movement have been and will continue to be essential strategic partners to UN-Women. UN-Women must continue to see partnerships with civil society within the broader picture of building an inclusive movement for GEEW. Looking forward, ensuring that this approach is clear at all levels of UN-Women and emphasizing the**

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<sup>1</sup> Joint Inspection Unit, *Review of the management of implementing partners in the United Nations System Organizations*, 2013; Accessible at: [https://www.unjiu.org/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU\\_REP\\_2013\\_4\\_English.pdf](https://www.unjiu.org/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2013_4_English.pdf)

**importance of mutual accountability in partnerships with civil society are the two main priorities.**

28. This evaluation has reconfirmed the criticality of UN-Women's relationship with women's civil society to advancing GEEW within the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the Beijing Platform for Action. UN-Women's convening power offers a significant comparative advantage for establishing multi-stakeholder partnerships by creating inclusive spaces, facilitating open dialogue and enhancing coordination of the gender equality movement. Some strategies have already emerged to leverage this comparative advantage, such as the new CSAG strategy and Flagship Programming Initiative.

29. Making these spaces effective, however, would require aspects of the relationship between UN-Women and the women's movement to be revisited, including ensuring a mutual accountability framework. The central challenge of continuing this strategic shift to movement-building is, therefore, to ensure that women's civil society not only has a platform to speak with other actors, but has the resources, capacity, authority and political backing to do so effectively. Addressing this challenge can only be done with the women's movement, not for it.

30. Despite these challenges, the evaluation identified a number of good practices and promising opportunities that can be built upon. For instance, direct and open dialogue between the leadership of UN-Women and women's civil society has led to mutual understanding and the formation of influential coalitions (such as for Rio+20 and Financing for Development). The Civil Society Advisory Group structure continued to grow and to evolve by listening to women's organizations. And, finally, the UN-Women Fund for Gender Equality (FGE) and the UN Trust Fund for Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) were valuable ambassadors for UN-Women's commitment to strengthening women's movement as an indispensable actor in its own right.

## **PARTNERSHIP WITH PRIVATE SECTOR**

**Conclusion 6: There has been a rapid evolution of UN-Women's approach to corporate partnerships; and some innovative methods are being used to build brand recognition, engender the footprint of the corporate sector, and to fundraise for GEEW. These efforts have resulted in many successes and lessons, but also to substantial reputational risks. Given the contributions of these achievements and risks to UN-Women delivering its ambitions, the number of private sector specialists is far below the level required to address all of the demands placed on them.**

31. A major feature in the changing nature of strategic partnerships over the course of the time period covered by this evaluation has been the high-level organizational focus on expanding the number, scale, and depth of UN-Women's partnerships with corporations. This intentional strategy has sought to massively expand the reach of UN-Women's influence through both the corporate 'footprints' (employees, supply chain, customers) of these strategic partners and the financial resources, capabilities, and access that they might contribute to support UN-Women's Strategic Plan.

32. All UN entities face a potential conflict of interest inherent in fundraising from the corporate sector whilst also holding it to account for human rights norms and standards covered by their mandates. UN-Women is cognizant of these challenges and engaged in active internal debate on how best to address them. It has a due diligence system for the selection of private sector partners, and

increasingly involves active participation of interested parties across the entity in the design of corporate strategies. UN-Women's leadership is also committed to engaging corporate partners to secure effective stewardship of women empowerment principles in their own business (and increasingly their supply chain), and to support enhanced standards and norms in the business sector.

#### **PARTNERSHIP THROUGH UN COORDINATION**

**Conclusion 7: UN-Women's relationships with UN entities (through UN coordination) provide an important means for coordinating more effective strategic partnerships outside of the UN. However, inconsistencies between the priorities and operational systems of different UN entities at the country level means different members of the UN Country Team are frequently found to be maintaining separate bilateral (and sometimes competitive) relationships with a single strategic partner, resulting in inefficiencies.**

33. Whilst UN-Women effectively enters into country-level partnerships with UN entities to deliver UNDAF results, the evaluation found limited evidence of UN agencies collaborating in managing relations with non-UN strategic partners (such as coordinated relationships with a non-UN organization, common support to a CSO through a joint programme, or leveraging the strategic partnerships held by other UN entities to advance GEEW). More often, different members of the UN Country Team were found to be maintaining separate bilateral (and sometimes competitive) relationships with the same strategic partner. Whilst there was no clear evidence of this resulting in duplication, more frequent joint management of relations and programming with strategic partners (such as major CSOs in a country) would help to enhance synergies and reduce transaction costs.

34. The evaluation found limited evidence of country-level strategic partnerships (designed before the Flagship Programme Initiative) having been designed to maximize the advantage of UN-Women's UN coordination role to promote such integration. Maintaining strategic partnerships through UN coordination were found to be subject to several practical barriers that need to be overcome (i.e., the auditing requirements of different UN entities for PCAs are not aligned; the underlying theories of change used by UN entities operating in the same space emphasize different approaches).

#### **PARTNERSHIP WITH MEMBER STATES**

**Conclusion 8: All relationships with member states have strategic implications. UN-Women would likely benefit from having a more coordinated approach to working in partnership with the various agencies of member states with which it engages at global, regional and country level.**

35. Partnerships with member states are already pursued through building relationships with regional and sub-regional groups that operate at the UN, as well as groupings like the Non Aligned Movement and the G77 and China. Partnerships are also pursued by UN-Women with intergovernmental organizations such as the League of Arab States, EU, African Union, Organization of Islamic Conference and ASEAN, among others.

36. Member states have a unique role and relationship with regard to UN-Women – providing the mandate, accountability and majority of the Entity's resources. All relationships with member states therefore have strategic implications. It was also found that UN-Women often maintains multiple avenues



and levels of partnership with different parts of a member state's bureaucracy, including its delegations, development agencies, and national women's machinery (either directly through programme offices or indirectly through intergovernmental forums or UN-Women National Committees).

37. Whilst these multiple connections might be brought together within the framework of a strategic partnership to advance a particular agenda, no clear model for such a strategic partnership between UN-Women and a member state was found to exist. Establishing more clearly defined strategic partnerships with member states that are party to multi-stakeholder partnerships could make a significant contribution to UN-Women's ability to pursue structural transformation.

## F. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following 8 recommendations are based on the evaluation framework, the analysis that informed findings and conclusions, and discussions held with stakeholders.

**Recommendation 1: Establishing a sufficiently resourced, integrated, and commonly agreed framework for strategic partnerships needs to be a central part of UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2021.**

38. In support of this, three priority actions are recommended: a) Establish a strategic partnership policy framework with a clear definition, vision, set of principles and vocabulary for partnerships; b) Publish a clear statement of the risk appetite regarding performance, fiduciary and reputational risks from partnering, including establishing acceptable boundaries for innovation. This should be combined with the promulgation of the organizational risk management system at all levels, and c) Commit sufficient staff time and attention to establishing partnership roadmaps for each strategic partnership.

**Recommendation 2: Within the proposed framework for strategic partnerships, clarity must be established regarding roles and responsibilities within the current UN-Women structures that will best support strategic partnerships; and the corresponding importance of leadership capacities, skills and knowledge for partnership working must be explicitly recognized.**

39. Within the regional architecture and at HQ level, the evaluation recommends three actions to address the organization's capabilities to develop and manage strategic partnerships:

1. In the short-term, establish strategic partnership focal points in all parts of the Regional Architecture and in each HQ section, with responsibility for coordinating strategic partnerships in liaison with the Strategic Partnership Division;
2. Leverage and extend the use of existing corporate relationship management (CRM) software, to create a system by which all contact with a partner organization is visible to other staff members of UN-Women, linking it to the results tracking and financial reporting systems. Each UN-Women business unit should be aware of the interactions between a partner and other business units in UN-Women.
3. Specific skills, knowledge and practices are required by leaders at all levels of the organization if UN-Women is to effectively work through partnerships. In the medium term, establish a set of competencies, components of

leadership training programmes, and certifications focused on strategic partnership management for UN-Women staff members. Ensure that these are specified in appropriate terms of reference, including directors, representatives and their deputies, and recognize the practice of these competencies in the staff review process.

**Recommendation 3: Undertake a systematic process of integrating strategic partnership considerations in the day-to-day workflow and tools used by leaders, managers and staff at all levels.**

40. It is recommended that, while developing the overall framework for partnerships, UN-Women undertakes a review of operations tools, rules and processes to assess their impact on and relevance to strategic partnerships. Prior to such a review, three priority areas should be addressed:

41. **Operational tools and modalities for strategic partnerships.** UN-Women has already explored options for adjusting partnership modalities in line with recommendations from JIU and others. The evaluation recommends that UN-Women moves forward with revising partnership modalities with a view to fostering long-term gender-responsive partnerships in the field by implementing the JIU<sup>2</sup> recommendation to consider (i) “developing and adopting small-scale IP agreements in line with appropriate delegation of authority”; and (ii) “whether a grant agreement would be useful in addition to such a small-scale agreement.” In addition to establishing a new small-scale funding agreement and/or grants mechanism that is appropriate to supporting small CSOs, UN-Women is recommended to amend the existing PCA to include a mutual accountability framework (with monitoring tools) in which UN-Women and strategic implementing partners share accountability for both processes and results.

42. **Indicators for partnership in the strategic plan integrated framework.** Both parts of the integrated framework, the development results framework (DRF) and the organizational effectiveness and efficiency framework (OEEF), should be amended to reflect the findings of this evaluation.

43. **Monitoring and reporting requirements for partnerships.** The following changes are recommended:

- a. Strategic partnerships and strategic implementing partners that are (or may be) covered by multiple governing documents (for example a series of MOUs or a series of PCAs) should include within their results frameworks cumulative outcome indicators that are designed to capture the long-term contribution of the partnership to its ultimate goal (and not only outcomes that can be achieved within the timeframe covered by each individual agreement);
- b. Take concerted steps to minimize the burden of reporting and auditing on women’s civil society organizations through the adoption of more nuanced risk-based requirements;
- c. Consider commissioning an annual survey of all UN-Women partners and partnerships to collect data on perceptions, the functioning of partnerships, lessons and hopes.

**Recommendation 4: Further leverage UN-Women’s experience in using strategic partnerships to convene and mediate between different world views**

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<sup>2</sup> Joint Inspection Unit, *Review of the management of implementing partners in the United Nations System Organizations*, 2013; Accessible at: [https://www.unjui.org/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU\\_REP\\_2013\\_4\\_English.pdf](https://www.unjui.org/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2013_4_English.pdf)

**by shaping multi-stakeholder spaces/platforms for dialogue and innovation; this requires changes in incentive structures from both donors and within UN-Women systems.**

44. At the global level, UN-Women has made effective use of multi-stakeholder strategic partnerships to advance its normative agenda. Yet country case studies and partnership mapping reveals that most partnerships (in terms of numbers) are currently bilateral. This creates a challenge in focusing management time on a few more strategic partnerships, something that the flagship programmes initiative should help to address. In the future, it is recommended that a greater proportion of partnerships should be held within multi-stakeholder platforms, shaping these to allow for creative tension and innovation to further enhance returns.

45. UN-Women should consider where progress can be achieved by **combining bilateral partnerships into multi-stakeholder partnerships, winding down partnerships that are not working as planned, and carefully considering the cost-benefits of additional partnerships**. Priority should be given to partnerships that integrate multiple dimensions of UN-Women's mandate.

46. The current incentive structures in the donor system and in UN-Women work against fully adopting such an approach: bilateral partnerships are more predictable and efficient regarding fundraising for UN-Women, spending according to plans, and achieving outputs. As a consequence, partnerships are likely to remain fragmented without an explicit change in these incentive structures.

47. UN-Women can do its part by revisiting its own incentives structures, especially for country representatives, to recognize and reward managers for progress towards two new objectives: a) Demonstrating a contribution towards a sustainable outcome that is beyond the ability of UN-Women or its partner to achieve if acting alone, and, therefore, indicates the realization of an effective strategic partnership; and, b) Demonstrating the generation of an innovative approach to advancing women's human rights by a diverse multi-stakeholder partnership, thereby indicating an ability to creatively manage tensions between partners with different world views.

**Recommendation 5: Extend UN-Women's global approach to movement-building to country-level work with CSOs to address the core capacity of women's organizations to hold governments to account for national implementation of international GEEW commitments, especially Agenda 2030.**

48. This evaluation has reconfirmed the criticality of UN-Women's relationship with women's civil society to advancing GEEW within the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the Beijing Platform for Action. At the country level, UN-Women needs to work with women's civil society to continue the strategic shift away from focusing on bilateral implementing partnerships towards movement-building in a way that addresses genuine concerns over insecure resources, overstretched capacity, and reducing political space for action, by:

1. Supporting country offices, regional offices and global units to establish multi-year funding pipelines and to advocate to donors on the importance of providing strategic partners from civil society with core (unearmarked) funds;
2. Providing regular opportunities for structured and open dialogue between the leadership of UN-Women and women's civil society;
3. Building the ownership and commitment of the leadership of the Trust Funds (both within UN-Women and the wider UN system) as a visible model that

symbolizes UN-Women's commitment to protect and build the women's movement as an independent actor with inherent value.

**Recommendation 6: Address the dual relationship with private enterprises and public companies as both funders and a target of advocacy by establishing clearer coordination between the policy, programme and private sector teams to ensure an integrated approach to managing strategic partnerships and gradually diversifying relationships beyond corporations to individual donors and foundations.**

49. UN-Women's corporate partnerships are making an important contribution to extending influence and advocacy for GEEW into new spaces. However, they require significant human resources to steward, and the legacy of structural decisions during UN-Women's foundation means that a need exists for greater transparency around roles, incentives and responsibilities for fundraising and programming activities. While defining the appropriate roles and responsibilities as outlined under recommendation 2, for the corporate sector engagement, UN-Women should consider the following:

- d. Move responsibility for the WEPs and other substantive functions to the Bureau of Policy and Programme to strengthen work on supporting demand and capacity for internal change in the discourse and practice of the corporate sector;
- e. Enable the Strategic Partnerships Division to coordinate communication with corporate partners by integrating inputs and requests from across the house;
- f. Disaggregate and articulate different types of corporate partnerships, with appropriate levels of due diligence processes established for each category. Establish pre-approved mechanisms for engaging 'corporate friends of UN-Women', such as through signing-up to campaigns or running employee-giving schemes that require lower levels of due diligence and that can be approved by regional offices (thereby relieving pressure on the central HQ due diligence function);
- g. Strengthen support to National Committees, and field offices to diversify corporate partners and to place greater emphasis on building relationships with individual donors and foundations.

**Recommendation 7: Identify and address barriers to country-level UN coordination of relationships with strategic partners that work with multiple UN entities.**

50. UN-Women has an important leadership role to play in joint action with other UN entities to address practical barriers to UN coordination of strategic partnerships, especially with regard to advancing GEEW through the implementation of Agenda 2030. Exercising this leadership role effectively requires greater internal UN-Women coordination between partnerships, coordination, intergovernmental and programme teams, to be able to:

1. Harmonize the Flagship Programme theories of change with the key models and theories of sister agencies to better provide the basis for joint programmes and advocacy initiatives;
2. Encourage, through UN-Women's presence in the UN Country Team, joint management of relations and programming with strategic partners that are common to multiple UN entities to maximize synergies and benefit from the comparative advantage of other entities;
3. At the global level, strengthen the roles and responsibilities of the UN-Women Working Group on Agenda 2030 comprising representatives from

partnerships, coordination, intergovernmental, executive offices and programme teams.

**Recommendation 8: Establish a model for a strategic partnership between UN-Women and the various agencies within a member state that supports coordination between the role of that state in intergovernmental processes, regional mechanisms, global and local donorship, and the global economy.**

51. UN-Women often maintains multiple avenues and levels of partnership with different parts of a Member State's bureaucracy, including its delegations, development agencies, and national women's machinery. On some occasions there is scope to more precisely define how these multiple connections might be appropriately coordinated within the framework of a strategic partnership. It is also necessary to explore how the work of UN-Women National Committees and Groups of Friends can better complement the role of UN-Women offices.

## Annex A: List of evaluation findings

**Finding 1 – Internal Clarity:** Driven by its mandate and the need to be effective despite a large funding gap, UN-Women has had an organizational focus on growing partnerships since its inception. As part of this effort, many innovations have been tested at all levels of the organization. These innovations have been built on common sense, opportunity, pragmatism, individual expertise, and good will. A shared organizational approach that can pull together all this experience into a coherent framework for strategic partnership has yet to fully emerge.

**Finding 2 – Overall Approach:** UN-Women staff members are forging complex and ground breaking partnerships in contexts that involve profound differences in world views about gender equality. The need for a shared vision and clear principles for prioritizing strategic partnerships within UN-Women makes it difficult for staff to focus their limited time and resources to maximize the impact of these efforts.

**Finding 3 – Fit for 2030:** Since 2011, UN-Women has established over 1,000 partnerships covering a broad and inclusive range of partners. Whilst many of these are integral to UN-Women achieving its goals to advance GEEW, the uniqueness of each partnership arrangement combined with the large number of partners and persistent funding gap (that restricts UN-Women’s human resource capacity) means that an urgent need exists to consolidate, systematize and/or prioritize partnership management.

**Finding 4 – UN-Women as a relevant partner for GEEW:** UN-Women brings technical strengths, its unique UN gender mandate, and convening power to mobilize diverse stakeholders behind partnerships for GEEW. UN-Women is seen as a relevant partner for GEEW, especially for the UN, governmental partners, wider civil society and the private sector.

**Finding 5 – Composite Mandate:** UN-Women’s partners consider its composite mandate to be an important comparative advantage. Most strategic partnerships have integrated multiple elements of the mandate, especially operational and normative. However, outside of partnerships specifically with UN entities, country-level partnerships have not fully leveraged UN-Women’s coordination role within the UN system to fully benefit from this element of the mandate.

**Finding 6 – Contributions to Intended Results:** Strategic partnerships have contributed to results larger than the sum of their parts. Good progress has been made in achieving planned results and signs show that many are on track to contribute to transformative change. Contributions have also been made to strengthening capacity to advance GEEW within the partner organizations, third parties and UN-Women itself.

**Finding 7 – Contributions to UN-Women’s Strategic Plan:** Clear evidence exists of strategic partnerships contributing to all six of UN-Women’s Strategic Plan Impact Areas.

**Finding 8 – Organizational Targets:** UN-Women is on track in achieving its organizational targets concerning strategic partnerships. However, the current institutional measure of success for strategic partnerships reflects a focus on quantitative increases and is insufficient to incentivize the pursuit of catalytic outcomes.

**Finding 9 – Partnerships with Key Constituencies:** UN-Women has established a wide and diverse base of strategic partnerships across all of its key constituencies, more or less effectively responding to diverse and sometimes conflicting expectations and using innovative and at the same time evolving partnership structures and mechanisms.

**Finding 10 – Enabling and Hindering Factors:** Strategic partnerships are most effective when long term engagement and commitment to GEEW in both partners is complemented by clarity between partners and responsiveness to the relevant contexts and mutual needs. The main limiting factors are the constant time-pressure of under-resourced UN-Women teams and, as a result, short-term objectives, fractured working arrangements, insufficient internal communication, and reliance on the capacity (and energy) of a few individuals.

**Finding 11 – Governance and Accountability:** UN-Women can build on the lessons of the recent past to establish clear ways of negotiating and managing strategic partnerships to make them accountable and sustainable.

**Finding 12 – Human Resources:** UN-Women’s leadership, both globally and at the decentralized level (e.g., directors and representatives), plays a central role in fostering strategic partnerships, pursuing innovation, and successfully dealing with problems.

**Finding 13 – Structures:** The Strategic Partnerships Division is insufficiently equipped and authorized to provide the necessary leadership and coordination of the overall portfolio and approach to strategic partnerships in UN-Women. Continuous negotiation of roles and responsibilities for each partnership is a barrier to a shared organizational vision, incentive structure and resource-allocation model for strategic partnerships.

**Finding 14 – Learning:** Strengthening UN-Women’s systems for identifying opportunities and learning about how to make partnerships more effective can make a contribution to the gender equality movement as well as the organization.

**Finding 15 – Partnership Mechanisms:** UN-Women is continuing to develop a spectrum of partnership mechanisms covering the full range of its normative, coordination and operational spheres. Staff awareness about how to use these mechanisms, along with clear policies for prioritizing partnerships and managing risks, are also necessary.

**Finding 16 – Alignment with Norms:** UN-Women’s strategic planning processes ensure programmatic alignment with normative instruments on GEEW at both global and country level. The reality of a partnership approach requires UN-Women to continuously leverage its convening power so as to mediate the different power dynamics of its diverse constituencies. This has been done in a pragmatic and responsive way, but clear institutional direction is still needed.

**Finding 17 – Root Causes:** Partnerships are critical to UN-Women’s ability to leverage transformational changes, address underlying causes, work with marginalized groups, and influence the structural dominance of patriarchy. UN-Women’s rules and regulations are not well aligned to supporting long-term partnerships with small rights-holders’ groups.

**Finding 18 – Structural Transformation:** High numbers and diversity of strategic partners are posing challenges in terms of negotiating power within and across partnerships. Stakeholders emphasize the importance of equality in feminist partnerships, which could be improved through greater use of mutual-accountability frameworks.

**Finding 19 – UN-Women Trust Funds:** The UN-Women Fund for Gender Equality (FGE) and the UN Trust Fund for Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) are valuable ambassadors for strategic partnerships with civil society that strengthen women’s organizations as indispensable actors in their own right.