INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

UN WOMEN MULTI COUNTRY OFFICE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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INDEPENDENT EVALUATION AND AUDIT SERVICES (IEAS)
Internal Audit Service (IAS)
UN WOMEN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Audit objective, scope and background

The UN Women Internal Audit Service (IAS) of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) conducted an internal audit of the UN Women Multi Country Office in South Africa (SAMCO) between March and April 2022. In addition to South Africa, the Multi Country Office includes Botswana, Namibia, Eswatini and Lesotho.

The objectives of the internal audit were to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance arrangements, risk management and control processes relating to the following areas and subareas:

- **Strategic priorities, programme planning and implementation:** strategic positioning, priorities setting, programme and project management, management of programme partners, coordination of gender mainstreaming, advocacy and resource mobilization.

- **Governance, risk management and internal controls:** office structure and delegation of authority, control environment, risk management, data quality, internal control framework and implementation of prior oversight recommendations.

- **Operations:** management of procurement, human resources (HR), finance and budget, information and communication technology (ICT), travel, assets, and safety and security.

The internal audit covered the state of governance, risk management and internal controls, based on a sample of Multi Country Office activities primarily from 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2022. Atlas-recorded expenditure for the Multi Country Office totalled US$ 2.6 million in 2020 and US$ 3.5 million in 2021. As indicated in Observation 15 and 20, there was a scope limitation relating to transactions totalling US$ 224,173, for which the Multi Country Office could not provide supporting documents. Despite several requests, SAMCO did not organize meetings with Resident Coordinator's Offices and the ministries of gender in three of the four other countries (except for Namibia) to clarify their expectations of SAMCO, which represents a limitation in assessing this criterion for the countries other than South Africa. At time of the audit, the full time SAMCO's Representative (at D1 level) was not on board but joined the office a few days after completion of the audit fieldwork. The position was vacant for almost 7 months.

IAS followed the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing* in conducting this audit. [1]

IAS conducted an anonymous survey on working environment in the office. The response rate was 60 % and the results of which have been incorporated into observations throughout the report.

Audit opinion and overall audit rating

IAS assessed the overall state of governance, risk management and internal controls in the Multi Country Office as **Some Improvement Needed** meaning that "The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were generally established and functioning but need some improvement. Issues identified by the audit do not significantly affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area" however the following areas were assessed as Major Improvement needed:

- Stakeholder expectations (UN Resident Coordinators and key national women machinery) had not been mapped in all five countries to update SAMCO's strategic priorities for the upcoming Strategic Note.

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[1] https://na.theiia.org/standards-guidance/recommended-guidance/practice-guides/Pages/Auditing-Third-Party-Risk-Management-Practice-Guide.aspx

- The current Strategic Note has not been fully aligned with annual workplans in terms of evaluability of outcome and output indicators to measure planned results and changes. Projects have been delayed due to lengthy operational processes and the COVID-19 crisis, and corporate and donor reporting has not always been timely and of high quality.

- The Multi Country Office typology has not yet been fully developed as a business model, SAMCO management has not been able to obtain additional core resources to sustain SAMCO's presence in the other four countries in addition to its physical presence in South Africa.

- While SAMCO conducted a functional analysis and has a reasonable design of its desired structure, funding was not obtained to implement this. Moreover, SAMCO would benefit from enhancing its anti-fraud programme, data and information quality (filing, workflows, systems).

- The Multi Country Office needs to strengthen its control around procurement in terms of improved documentation with complete workflow, and ensure transactions entered depict value for money.

- The Multi Country Office has not fully complied with the requirements on Information Systems Security and on capital and non-capital assets management.

- Completeness and accuracy of capital and non-capital assets could be improved.

- Filing of documents which shows complete workflow of transactions could be improved.

IAS found the following areas generally **satisfactory**:

Strategic priorities, programme planning and implementation: SAMCO had a track record of steady resource mobilization achievement with private sector donors; well defined project documents and competitive programme partner selection in most cases. UN Women was well respected in South Africa and seen as a leader for gender equality and the empowerment of women. Communication and advocacy efforts include a UN Women funded documentary receiving first prize at an International Film Festival. The Multi Country Office chairs the Gender Theme Group in South Africa with UNFPA as an alternate, and ensures effective participation in the UN Communications Group, Monitoring and Evaluation Group, UN AIDS Joint Team, and Operations Management Team in UN Country Team to drive gender mainstreaming in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) implementation.

Operations: controls over financial management were satisfactory and the Multi Country Office participated in the UN Business Operations Strategy annual review process. IAS encourages SAMCO to continue with proactive participation in the annual review process of the UN Business Operations Strategy by substantive use of common services and gender mainstreaming.

IAS identified areas with **some improvement needed**:

Strategic priorities, programme planning and implementation: (a) while SAMCO's communications and advocacy efforts seemed quite effective, without a dedicated communications and advocacy function, strategy and sustainable funding, the efforts made by the office may not be sustainable; (b) efforts have been made to enhance the coordination of gender machinery, but a dedicated coordination strategy has not been yet designed for all five countries and supported by stable funding to implement the UNCT-SWAP recommendations; (c) the resource mobilization strategy needs to be updated and finalized for the next Strategic Note, including success indicators and designated accountability; (d) SAMCO needs to enhance its monitoring, data validation and reporting framework and workflows; (e) project sustainability was not always planned and monitored; (f) beneficiary management processes, in terms of needs assessment for better project design, monitoring of projects and inputs, and potential grievance mechanisms, were not always effective; (g) there is a need for a holistic approach to managing and strengthening the capacity of programme partners.

Governance, risk management and controls: SAMCO needs to (a) proactively manage the risks for all the countries under its domain; (b) enhance its filing/archiving and workflows for timely processing of operational transactions; (c) regularly evaluate its strategic priorities and programmes; (d) and implement agreed recommendations from oversight reports.

Operations: the audit observed issues with HR compliance (recruitment and performance management of personnel; compliance with duty travel policies and

processes; financial management (staff advances); and security requirements (i.e., presenting its current security compliance status more accurately).

IAS made 23 recommendations to address the areas requiring improvement: 4 recommendations were ranked as High priority and 19 as medium priority.

The four High (Critical) priority recommendations mean that *"prompt action is required to ensure that UN Women is not exposed to high risks. Failure to take action could result in major negative consequences for UN Women."* These were addressed to the Multi Country Office and related to the following issues:

- Recommendation 1: Managing expectations and delivering results in all five countries in collaboration with the Resident Coordinator's Office and government counterparts.

- Recommendation 4: Strengthening and streamlining the theory of change in the Strategic Note and related workplans and ensuring that the Strategic Note is reviewed and evaluated regularly to be able to make any adjustments as necessary.

- Recommendation 7: Strengthening project management.

- Recommendation 12: The Representative, SAMCO to develop and present to the Regional Director, ESARO the SAMCO business model, expectations on the office's role and structure including budget proposal, after which the Regional Director, ESARO will interface with headquarters, as required, including a request for any additional budget.

The 19 Medium (Important) priority recommendations mean that *"action is required to ensure that UN Women is not exposed to risks. Failure to take action could result in negative consequences for UN Women"*.

The recommendations mainly focus on: strengthening the office's communication function; developing a coordination strategy for all five countries covered by SAMCO; finalizing resource mobilization plans for its next Strategic Note; establishing a monitoring, data collection and reporting framework, and investing in the office's monitoring and evaluation function; incorporating clear and sustainable exit strategies in project documents; continuing to conduct meetings to discuss programmatic and

budget implementation rates and risks; establishing a beneficiary management system which ensures needs assessments are conducted and that selection criteria and the process of identification and selection of beneficiaries is clear and appropriately targeted; adopting a holistic approach to managing and strengthening the capacity of programme partners; formulating a comprehensive HR strategy to fill vacant positions; reinforcing risk management culture through regular discussions at different meetings; ensuring all staff members complete mandatory training courses and performance documents; ensuring the LEADS tool is regularly updated to show accurate picture of SAMCO's projects in the pipeline; implementing a centralized electronic database for filing of key documents; conducting planned mid-term reviews and evaluations for its projects and programmes; ensuring that the personnel selection process respects the principles of transparency, competitiveness, efficiency and value-for-money; improving procurement management controls; strengthening IST controls specially information security compliance; strengthening asset management by ensuring all assets are tagged and accounted for; strengthening compliance in the travel management process; ensuring that security and business continuity planning criteria are fully complied with, or any missing elements are identified, justified for non-compliance and addressed.

Management comments and action plans

Management comments have been taken into account in this report, where appropriate. The Multi Country Office accepted the audit recommendations and provided action plans included in this report.

Lisa Sutton

Lisa Sutton, Director
Independent Evaluation and Audit Services

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DRF	Development Results Framework
EVAW	Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
ESARO	Regional Office for East and Southern Africa
FACE	Funding Authorization and Certificate of Expenditures
HR	Human Resources
IAS	Internal Audit Service
ICT	Information Communications Technology
IEAS	Internal Audit and Evaluation Services
IST	Information Systems and Telecommunications Team
OEEF	Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness Framework
PAPDU	Political Analysis and Programme Development Unit
PGAMS	Partner and Grants Agreement Management System
RMS	Results Management System
SAMCO	South Africa Multi Country Office
SPRED	Strategy, Planning, Resources and Effectiveness Division
SSA	Special Service Agreement
UN	United Nations
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNDAF	UN Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDSS	UN Department for Safety and Security
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UNSDCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
US$	United States Dollar
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment

I. BACKGROUND

The UN Women Multi Country Office (SAMCO) is located in South Africa, Pretoria and covers South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Eswatini. All the countries covered by the SAMCO are within South African Development Community and are categorized as Middle-Income Countries except for Lesotho, which is classed as a Least Developed Country. All five countries have their own UN Residence Coordinator Offices and UN Country Teams. SAMCO reports to the Regional Office for East and Southern Africa (ESARO).

At time of the audit, the full time SAMCO's Representative (at D1 level) was not on board but joined the office a few days after completion of the audit fieldwork. The position was vacant for almost 7 months. SAMCO has a Deputy Representative (at P4 level) and National Operations Manager, who both joined the office during the last two years.

The current structure of the office consists of 34 positions with 14 vacancies due to funding challenges. However, as of 2 August 2022, the HR OneApp Dashboard shows 23 personnel: 6 international professionals, 2 national officers, 4 General Service, 5 Service Contract (mainly programme associates) and 6 Special Service Agreement (SSA) contractors.

SAMCO's non-core budget increased significantly in 2021. Budget and expenditure are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: SAMCO budget [2] and expenditure, US$

OEEF / DRF	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
DRF budget target, US$	2,943,755	3,309,600	3,736,725	4,521,484	6,140,370	6,914,137
DRF actual budget US$	1,091,456	2,310,111	2,679,203	3,249,552	5,244,728	5,315,565
DRF Resource Mobilization rate, %	37%	70%	72%	72%	85%	77%
DRF expenditure, US$	2,114,359	2,605,796	3,276,070	2,866,332	3,844,198	759,933
Financial implementation rate, %	194%	113%	122%	88%	73%	14%
OEEF budget target, US$	1,054,177	1,041,477	1,352,690	1,598,645	1,790,827	1,702,089
OEEF actual budget US$	1,270,154	1,756,673	1,670,228	1,366,509	1,674,927	1,067,566
OEFF Resource Mobilization rate, %	120%	169%	123%	85%	94%	63%
OEEF expenditure, US$	297,637	447,633	816,972	568,070	603,028	57,081
Financial Implementation rate, %	23%	25%	49%	42%	36%	5%
Total Resource Management target	3,997,932	4,351,077	5,089,415	6,120,129	7,931,197	8,616,226
Total Actual budget	2,361,610	4,066,783	4,349,431	4,616,060	6,919,655	6,383,130
Total Resource Mobilization rate	59%	93%	85%	75%	87%	74%

Source: Results Management System (RMS), Project Delivery Dashboard & Atlas, 3 March 2022

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According to Project Delivery Reports dated 21 February 2022 for the period under review (2018–2021), the country field programme comprised 40 non-core funded projects with a total budget of US$ 13.3 million, funded by a range of donors, including:

- Multi-Partner Trust Fund Sustainable Development Goal fund for three projects amount to US$ 223,000.

- UN agency bilateral agreements include projects funded by UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA and WFP amounting to US$ 1.67 million.

- Other funding of almost US$ 11 million from a number of bilateral donors, including US$ 5.3 million from non-traditional (private sector) donors.

The current Strategic Note focused on three thematic areas: 1) Women's Leadership and Participation; 2) Women's Economic Empowerment (with a flagship on entrepreneurship and affirmative procurement); and 3) Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, including HIV infection among adolescent girls and young women. These three main thematic areas have the following outcomes:

- Outcome 1.1: Women are promoted as leaders in public and private sector institutions.

- Outcome 1.2: Women are perceived as equally legitimate and effective leaders in public and private institutions as well as public processes.

- Outcome 2.1. Sex disaggregated and gender statistics are available and accessible to all users to strengthen women's economic empowerment in sector plans, strategies, and SDG localization plans in South African Customs Union countries.

- Outcome 2.2: Public procurement is gender responsive.

- Outcome 2.3: Capacity of Women Business Enterprises and women entrepreneurs to benefit participate in the economy is strengthened.

- Outcome 3.1: Gender Based Violence (GBV) prevention strategies and action plans are implemented by UN, government and civil society in a coordinated manner and are informed by voices of women survivors of violence.

- Outcome 3.2: Favourable social norms, attitudes and behaviours are promoted at community and individual levels to prevent GBV.

- Outcome 3.3: An enabling environment for the implementation of Women, Peace, and Security Commitments (including those relating to GBV) is created in South Africa.

Atlas-recorded expenditure for SAMCO totalled US$ 3.2 million in 2019, US$ 2.6 million in 2020 and US$ 3.5 million in 2021. Overall, UN Women's direct implementation expenditures consisted of staff costs (32 per cent); other personnel costs (26 per cent); procurement of goods and services (11 per cent); personnel travel (11 per cent) maintenance, utilities and common services (8 per cent); support cost (8 per cent); learning and recruitment costs (4 per cent. In addition to above breakdown, US$ 2.1 million of expenditure was incurred through programme partners during 2019–2021.

II. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Strategic priorities, programme planning and implementation

See Background Information on Strategic Note components. The Strategic Note provided a good overview of SAMCO's background, challenges and priorities. It thoroughly discussed the lessons learned from the old Strategic Note. SAMCO's programmatic emphasis is on South Africa, while in the other four countries, it attempted to work with the Resident Coordinator's Office and other UN agencies to deliver programmes supporting national priorities relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

UN Women covers all five countries via its main office in Pretoria, South Africa with very limited (and unsustainable) presence in the other countries. Due to its specific context (middle income countries), the majority of donors are from the private sector and have diverse expectations and preferences. **Despite several requests, SAMCO did not organize meetings for the audit team with Resident Coordinator's Offices and the ministries of gender in three of the four other countries (except for Namibia) to discuss and understand their expectations of SAMCO, which represents a limitation in assessing this criterion other than in South Africa.** UN Women was a well-respected partner among various stakeholders in South Africa but because IAS was unable to meet with stakeholders in the other countries, IAS could not conclude on whether SAMCO meets key stakeholder expectations in these countries. SAMCO was seen as a leader in gender equality and the empowerment of women and actively participates and chairs the gender theme group in South Africa. SAMCO provides some support to Lesotho, Namibia, Botswana and Eswatini to ensure mainstreaming of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The funding gap for the minimal presence planned during the current Strategic Note is one of SAMCO's main challenges which has yet to be addressed. IAS recognizes that this gap should be at least initially covered from core resources as it could be difficult to mobilize non-core funding for UN Women's coordination mandate, however SAMCO's management should continue approaching donors in mobilizing funding for coordination or embed it in projects as an implementation activity. Similarly, SAMCO needed major improvement in terms of sustaining its communication achievements and efforts through consistent combined core and non-core funds and reinstating its advocacy efforts in all countries. SAMCO also needed major improvement to deliver effectively on its Strategic Note and some donor-funded projects, which was mainly due to weakened internal governance, turnover of key project personnel, ineffective procurement planning and delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic (see findings in section 'Governance, risk management and internal controls'). SAMCO needs to continue its work in coordination of gender mainstreaming in all five countries (or scope out some based on its priorities versus resource availability), to make progress on its Strategic Note and Biannual Work Plans, enhance project design and management of programme partners.

KEY OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Observation 1: Opportunities for improved gender advocacy, communication and coordination

While SAMCO is expected to coordinate gender equality and the empowerment of women agenda in all five countries, its presence in the other four countries outside of South Africa is almost non-existent. This affected UN Women's positioning and visibility in these countries in terms of strategic leadership on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Various stakeholders provided feedback on UN Women's performance in this area of its mandate, which is summarized below.

- Stakeholders acknowledged and were generally satisfied with UN Women's work in South Africa, especially its work with the Presidency and the Entity's presence in major platforms.

- UN Women's physical presence in other South African Development Community countries would allow it to better advocate for some national priorities which do not fall under the mandates of other UN agencies present in the countries. For example, prioritizing women's economic empowerment in terms of assisting governments in their efforts to advance women from informal structures to formal structures with improved capacity.

- SAMCO should more proactively brand and position the office on what it is and what it does. UN Women regional and global leadership is very small in the HIV area and there is a shortage of technical capacity at that level.

- Some stakeholders mentioned that, at times, SAMCO does not appear to be functioning in a coordinated manner; different themes are not interconnected; and most UN Women projects are short term in nature. Some stakeholders observed that operational transactions take long to process which results in delayed implementation of projects. At the same time, management reported that the SAMCO team worked according to already approved workplans. A retreat was held in May 2021 to discuss and address these silos as a collective, with a focus on teambuilding.

- As covered later in the report, stakeholders expressed concern about the quality of donor reports in terms of capturing results and stories on the ground.

IAS believes that the Multi Country Office typology has not been well defined corporately in terms of resources and the structure needed to ensure a minimal presence or alternative arrangements to meet external stakeholder expectations in all the countries covered by such an office. Some functions, such as coordination and public advocacy need initial investment in terms of minimal presence, for example, in Resident Coordinators Offices, which could then be co-funded by non-core funds in case of successful resource mobilization in those countries. The expectations of Resident Coordinators Offices and national gender dedicated institutions might not be aligned with SAMCO's capacity to manage them, at least through strategic coordination (see observation 2), communications and advocacy. At the end of the third quarter of 2020, following the UN Women change management exercises and several requests on the part of the Representative and Deputy Representative for increased core funding, SAMCO's typology was updated, but still did not fully address adequate coverage of all countries within its portfolio.

Communication and advocacy

SAMCO had several achievements and good initiatives in its communications and advocacy work. The communications function was recognized as very needed for SAMCO to ensure that its role and work (within its already limited presence) in all five countries are visible and that UN Women is positioned as the lead on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the South African Development Community. However, these efforts were not always sustained due to lack of core resources and lack of attention to budgeting through pooled non-core funding. SAMCO developed a Communication and Public Advocacy Strategy for 2018–2022, aiming to build a positive profile and create visibility for the organization. SAMCO focused on media partnerships, audio-visual content production and evidence-based knowledge products which would leverage the UN Women brand more effectively and build and sustain (where already existing) partnerships that heighten visibility. The strategy had a results-framework with key performance indicators and targets, the type of audience and list of events. In IAS' opinion, the strategy provided a strong basis for advancing visibility and advocacy.

IAS observed several achievements in communications and advocacy. As part of the partnership agreement with Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WEIGO), UN Women produced a documentary on the Johannesburg Street traders which was released in 2021. The documentary was accepted for screening at an international film festival and won first prize. Another example of SAMCO's work included efforts towards the creation and official launch of the African Women Leadership Network South Africa chapter in November 2021, including engaging national government, the private sector, civil society, non-governmental organizations, community and faith-based organizations. Knowledge products were created and shared with donors at steering committee meetings and other forums. SAMCO Representative supplemented the work of the communications consultant with appearances on various media outlets at least four times per quarter including in print and on television and radio. Other SAMCO personnel also contributed to implementation of the Communications Strategy. In addition, SAMCO benefitted from

free media coverage for example, in May 2021 in an article about the UN Women and partnership with Japan on gender-based violence.

However, due to the absence of a sustainable communications and advocacy function (A communications specialist was hired on an SSA contract), the strategy was not fully rolled out and the function could not be sustained. The communications specialist provided a proper handover note listing briefings, events, knowledge products produced and other initiatives during 2017–2019. Unfortunately, because funding for the communications post was not ensured in advance, recruitment stalled and a replacement for the communications specialist has not yet been filled. This has interrupted good progress made, with a risk to the sustainability of the function's achievements and investment.

Recommendation 1 (High):

The Representative, SAMCO to ensure close working relationships with the UN Resident Coordinator Offices of all five countries under the Multi Country Office in addition to interacting with key national counterparts; map their expectations; and decide on how to address these expectations in the office's upcoming Strategic Note.

Recommendation 2 (Medium):

The Representative, SAMCO to:

(a) Ensure that the communications function is properly funded through non-core or core funding (i.e., make a case for further funding) and reinstate the communications and advocacy efforts, revisiting its strategy and monitoring its effectiveness through regular reporting against the key performance indicators and targets.

(b) Include the other four countries in communications and advocacy strategy and related initiatives to ensure that SAMCO is regularly visible and advocating for gender equality and the empowerment of women despite its limited presence in these countries.

Observation 2: Gender Coordination Strategy

SAMCO management recognized the importance of coordination efforts in its offices in leveraging and advocating for gender equality and the empowerment of women; supporting Resident Coordinator Offices in advancing the UNCT System Wide Action Plans (SWAPs); and positioning UN Women in UNCTs as main coordinator of gender mainstreaming. While a longer-term solution to fund its coordination network in all five countries was being considered, a consultant was hired to support SAMCO as a mitigating action.

The main focus of SAMCO's current coordination work stemmed from the Evaluation of the United Nations South Africa Strategic Cooperation Framework 2013–2017, which mentioned that there was increased understanding that strengthening the capacity of UN Women to provide coordination support to the UN system, is likely to be achieved not only through assessing the performance of UNCT against the gender scorecard indicators, but also putting in place effective mechanisms and resources to provide capacity building with hands-on learning and role-specific engagements with inter-agency working groups, including UN Communications Group, M&E Group, Results Groups, OMT and the Gender Theme Group.

SAMCO's main focus was on gender mainstreaming the UNDAF/UNSDCFs in each of the countries and coordinating the UNCT-SWAP. SAMCO also had regional programmes such as women, peace and security in South Africa, Namibia and Lesotho, women's economic empowerment Accelerating Women Owned Micro Enterprises (AWOME) and Regional HIV. Management decided to enhance its coordination in one country at a time, due to capacity gaps and decided to begin with Namibia, with support from the Resident Coordinator, followed by Lesotho, Botswana and then Eswatini. Management intended to recruit a Gender Coordinator in each office, using a cost-sharing modality. This occurred in Namibia and Botswana but was discontinued due to funding limitations.

The coordination activities reported by SAMCO include:

- South Africa: Five Result Groups under the new UNSDCF (2020–2025) were trained in applying the UNCT Gender Marker, through hands-on mentoring and

desk review of joint work plans.

- At the multi-country level, SAMCO supported the development and validation of **UNCT-SWAP reporting** and action plans for the UNCTs and Gender Theme Groups in **South Africa in 2020**, and in **Botswana, Eswatini and Lesotho** between July and December 2021. The action plans were presented to and endorsed by UNCTs in the supported countries. The action plans specifically focused on enhancing the Gender Theme Groups' coordination capacities, particularly effective coordination of gender equality work across UN agencies.
  - UNCT SWAP for South Africa showed that 1 out of 15 indicators missed the minimum requirements; 7 were approaching minimum requirements; and 6 met minimum requirements. In total, 42 recommendations were made in the action plan, where 4 recommendations were assigned to SAMCO to lead, while others included the Gender Theme Group that SAMCO chairs.
  - In Botswana, UNCT SWAP did not meet two requirements, three were approaching, four were met and six had exceeded the requirements. Thirty recommendations were raised, mainly to the Gender Theme Group.
  - In Eswatini, UNCT SWAP did not meet two requirements, eight were approaching, five had been met and none were exceeded. Thirty-one recommendations were raised, mainly to the Gender Theme Group.
  - In Lesotho, the situation was most problematic. UNCT SWAP did not meet five requirements, six were approaching, four had been met and none had been exceeded. Thirty-five recommendations were raised.
  - Namibia: No work was carried out on the scorecard. The country gender profile was being developed at the time of audit.

Moreover, SAMCO had already summarized **expectations from Gender Theme Groups such as convening capacity, analytical-technical capacity, normative capacity and bridging capacity,** which should be reflected in SAMCO's coordination strategy to strengthen the Gender Theme Groups. SAMCO also identified dimensions with glaring data gaps and areas where support is required from headquarters and the Regional Office in capacity building on gender mainstreaming in the Business Operations Strategy (see also Observation 13), such as incorporation of gender parity targets in common HR and procurement services; tracking earmarking and spending on gender

equality monitoring and evaluation groups in planning and overseeing thematic evaluation of UN's contributions to gender equality and the empowerment of women; and steeping up the composition and coordination role of Gender Theme Groups during UNCT re-configuration exercises.

In its annual workplan for 2022, SAMCO planned several strategic initiatives such as UNCT support on implementation of UNCT-SWAP recommendations for South Africa, Eswatini, Lesotho and Botswana and to facilitate development and implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategies for the respective countries. SAMCO also aims to: ensure that ongoing capacity building activities are organized to enhance the capacity of Gender Theme Groups, monitoring and evaluations groups and other inter-agency groups on gender equality and the empowerment of women; continue to chair the Gender Theme Group with UNFPA as an alternate; and ensure effective participation in the UN Communications Group, Monitoring and Evaluation Group, UN AIDS Joint Team and Operations Management Team in South Africa to drive gender mainstreaming in UNSDCF implementation and others.

IAS' personnel survey suggests there is a need to improve coordination and better management of relationships with UN entities and international non-governmental organizations. UN Women could strengthen its work within the UN system to ensure active participation, visibility and effectiveness.

IAS commends SAMCO for accelerating its work on strategic coordination and stresses that implementation of planned activities should be embedded into its coordination strategy and workplans. Adequate resources and proper staffing are also required to sustain these ongoing efforts. IAS has been informed that the new Representative has commenced engagement with respective Resident Coordinators and key stakeholders under the SAMCO portfolio.

Recommendation 3 (Medium):

Based on SWAP scorecards and recommendations, the Representative, SAMCO to develop a coordination strategy for all five countries covered by SAMCO, including leading on recommendations and enhancing Gender Theme Groups.

Observation 3: Strategic Note design and related work planning process needs to be streamlined

SAMCO's Strategic Note priorities were mainly focused on South Africa (probably due to the physical location of the office) while the priorities of the other countries were discussed only as short statements. It appears that the Strategic Note might have been prepared without adequate local needs and priorities assessments of the four other countries to map them with UN Women's approaches and feasibility of UN Women's programming. The indicators did not have specific targets for all five countries, which impacted reporting on the expected changes in those countries. Moreover, the Strategic Note cycle was not aligned with South Africa's UNSDCF (2020–2025). In addition, office has not done the mid-term review which would identify and correct the problem in coherence between the SN and the workplans.

The evaluability of the Strategic Note's results would be difficult due to the following:

- Most annual milestones were absent, making it difficult to measure progress over the last five years. Several targets in the annual workplans for 2018–2020 were reduced without justifications (they were perhaps too ambitious from the outset).
- The related output indicators did not always clearly show their contribution or association with the outcome indicator on changes or expected results. Some output indicators were process or activity-oriented (training, workshops) but did not measure how these activities had changed women's lives.
- After the 2017 annual workplan (which was based on the original Strategic Note), the annual workplans for 2018–2020 (2021 was not available in the UN Women Results Management System [RMS]) were not clearly linked to the original Strategic Note, and many output indicators were added during 2018, 2019, and 2020, with some only measured once. For example, outputs increased from 23 in 2017 to 115 in 2020 and outcome indicators increased from 8 in 2017 to 15 in 2020. On a positive note, based on a sample reviewed, project indicators could be matched with those in the Strategic Note. A new outcome, Outcome 6 (global norms policies and standards) was added in 2020 with several output-level indicators. The outcome on Women's Leadership was discontinued in terms of

funding from the budget but planned to be embedded into other priorities. These revisions were not updated in the current Strategic Note.

The 2022 workplan did not meet the corporate deadline, causing a delay in the core allocation for the office.

On a positive note, the IAS survey suggests that the majority of personnel feel that SAMCO's work aligns, to a great extent, with the most pressing needs of women and girls in South Africa. Some personnel responding to the IAS survey suggested that gender-based violence, women's economic empowerment and HIV could be SAMCO's main areas of focus. Management recognized the importance of these points and planned to address them in the development of the new Strategic Note.

Recommendation 4 (High):

The Representative, SAMCO to address the following lesson learned from the Strategic Note cycle:

(a) The theory of change in the Strategic Note should be coherent and aligned with annual workplans during the Strategic Note period. No major changes in the results framework should be allowed without proper justification, approval and update of the Strategic Note.

(b) The Strategic Note should be reviewed and evaluated regularly to revisit its theory of change for any adjustments required.

(c) SAMCO's implementation approach in terms of capacity and minimal presence in the four South African Development Community countries should be addressed.

(d) The Strategic Note should be based on a needs assessment from all five countries covered by the office, which could then be mapped to SAMCO's capacity and theory of change.

(e) The Strategic Note needs to have better visibility in the other four South African Development Community countries, e.g., with dedicated outputs and indicators.

Observation 4: Resource mobilization strategy needs to be formalized and strengthened

While SAMCO was working without an approved resource mobilization strategy, its efforts have been very successful, especially in the most recent years. Chart 1 shows that the Development Results Framework (DRF) has been steadily growing. In 2022, to date, the mobilization rate is slightly lower than 2021; however, SAMCO reportedly has several project proposals in the hard pipeline, but LEADS do not reflect this data.

IAS noted that most SAMCO projects are ending in 2022, while the project pipeline is not sufficient to sustain the current staffing structure. IAS' survey of personnel also highlighted the opportunity to engage more proactively with private sector donors for long-term, sustainable funding opportunities.

The draft resource mobilization strategy, while high level and brief, appears to provide a good high-level vision. Its approach documented in the resource mobilization strategy appears reasonable; however, it requires both communications and monitoring and evaluation capacity to proactively measure and report on the results to existing and potential donors; a minimal presence in the other four South African Development Community countries; It should be supported by a detailed action plan to be regularly monitored. A potential issue with the sustainability of this strategy is the sustainability of funding for the partnership function – currently one personnel cover the function on a one-year temporary assignment contract.

Chart 1: DRF versus OEEF target versus actual budget and implementation (Data extracted on March 3rd, 2022, Note: delivery for 2022 is only until March 3rd, 2022)
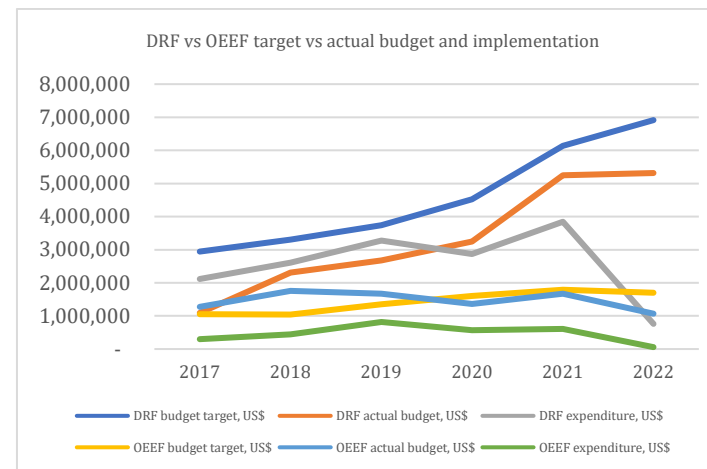
Moreover, when the same statistics are viewed by funding source, IAS noticed a significant reduction in the already small core funding allocation (from US$ 734,000 in 2017 to US$ 448,384 in 2022) which might not correspond to SAMCO's needs, especially its coverage of five countries.

Recommendation 5 (Medium):

To ensure that SAMCO's resource mobilization strategy is effective, the Representative, SAMCO to:

(a) Finalize SAMCO's resource mobilisation action plan for five years with success indicators, assigning accountability among team members and monitor its implementation through regular reports supported by data against planned indicators.

(b) Request that all project pipelines are recorded in LEADS in a timely manner and that LEADS is used to measure the effectiveness of resource mobilization efforts.

Observation 5: Need for a dedicated monitoring and evaluation function and an adequate monitoring and evaluation framework to enable SAMCO to monitor results, and collect and validate data for its reports

Although SAMCO regularly reported on Strategic Note progress through its quarterly and annual reports, which complied with corporate requirements, the office doesn't have a regular monitoring and evaluation function to support its programmes.

Monitoring and evaluation

No mid-term review of the current Strategic Note or evaluation of the previous Strategic Note were conducted. The mid-term review was not conducted due to the COVID-19 lockdown in South Africa, followed by the departure of the former Representative. The current Strategic Note is ending in 2022 and there is an urgent need to conduct a timely evaluation to contribute to the formulation of the next Strategic Note. The Independent Evaluation Service of UN Women was planning to conduct a country portfolio evaluation, to enable the office to use the evaluation results in development of new SN. It is also important that the new Strategic Note is aligned with the UNSDCF in South Africa (2020–2025) and the UNSDCFs in the other four countries, both in content and timeframe as a key corporate requirement.

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plan is at very high level with only one line for monitoring activities without covering all projects. Moreover, the plan did not focus on systematic measuring of the Strategic Note indicators' performance against their original targets; as a result, the annual reporting process is not embedded into programmatic and operational work – data collection often occurs close to corporate deadlines, often with delays. IAS was not able to assess the data validation process because supporting documents for the sampled data in annual reports were not provided in time for finalization of this report.

IAS' survey suggests there is a need for more clear linkages between annual workplan activities within the various thematic and programmatic areas with specific indicators.

Annual reporting on Strategic Note implementation

The annual report follows the key standard questions and provides an overview of the annual progress made, providing data on the results achieved. At the same time, lessons learned from the previous Strategic Note had not yet been addressed and represent the main challenge to successful finalization of the ongoing Strategic Note.

IAS made the following observations:

- Not all the originally planned areas were properly advanced – reporting on Governance and Leadership indicators appeared to be left out after two–three years, while it was one of the main elements for the other four countries where some work continued (e.g., during elections).

- Regarding annual reporting, due to the absence of some elements in the result framework or changes in targets from the original Strategic Note, it was difficult to assess whether expected change has materialized. Some indicators had different measuring units, e.g., the original target was in a percentage, while actual progress was reported in numerical data which is not comparable. Progress on some indicators has been slower compared to the original five-year target. Evaluability was not possible because the original Strategic Note indicators were not maintained throughout the period, and a significant number of indicators were added later but only for one or two years. Some key performance indicators are new or revised without revisiting the Strategic Note (see observation 3).

- Reporting was submitted with delay, e.g., quarterly reports and the annual report for 2021. Response to comments from the Regional Office was also slow.

- Quarterly reporting at Q4, 2021 indicated that many activities were not tracked or did not have data. Notably, the number of activities had increased every year (from total 83 in 2017 with 22 on track, to 200 in 2020 with 55 on track). Results reporting or outcomes of implemented activities was not discussed.

Management indicated that it recognized the need for capacity building in these areas, and three training sessions were held in 2021, specifically on RMS, results-based and donor reporting.

Recommendation 6 (Medium):

The Representative, SAMCO to establish monitoring, data validation and reporting framework and workflows, and invest in the office's monitoring and evaluation function and capacity. In particular:

(a) The monitoring and evaluation function should provide a quality control for result frameworks during project design.

(b) The monitoring and evaluation function should validate data reported by programme teams for their accuracy and completeness by monitoring activities (post-implementation reviews, impact assessments, contacting a sample of beneficiaries, etc).

Observation 6: Programme and project management should be enhanced in terms of governance, design, risk management and oversight

SAMCO established a project management structure with two strategic themes led by a Programme Management Specialist reporting to the Deputy Representative. Two other themes from the Strategic Note do not have a coordinator.

South African stakeholders interviewed by IAS acknowledged the importance of UN Women's presence in the country and its pivotal role. UN Women programmes have created demand in the field which can be further scaled up and strengthened.

Project design and budgeting

Planned activities were not always well-conceptualized and carefully selected to lead to expected change, nor was their feasibility in terms of corporate policies assessed. For example, the Climate Smart Agriculture project included plans to construct greenhouses and packing houses; however, UN Women does not have demonstrated expertise in construction activities nor a dedicated construction policy. Authorization for the construction took almost a year from the start of the process until the issuance of the purchase order. UN Women also did not have expertise to design and oversee

the construction. The construction of greenhouses was significantly delayed due to issues with planning; approvals of technical specifications and tender documents; issues with procurement where SAMCO had to twice re-tender as only one vendor had initially replied to the tender. IAS also noticed that the bidder raised the price between the two bids. The initial plan was to construct four greenhouses and two packing houses, but after the tender exercise, project management realized that the budget was only sufficient to construct two greenhouses (US$ 140,000 for both) and one packing house (US$ 50,000).

An evaluation of the above project also noted its unrealistic targets "A three-year project needs to have realistic targets. The project seemed to have very ambitious targets (sometimes of up to 10,000 women farmers) without the necessary strategies to reach those farmers within the short duration."

Beneficiary needs assessment

Project documents did not always include community needs assessment. Prior to conceptualizing a project, the project cycle and leave no-one behind principles require that targeted groups are consulted to understand their needs and build the project to address them – this did not always occur in the interventions reviewed. IAS' visit to one of the sites revealed that the greenhouse would not address beneficiary needs.

IAS called another group of beneficiaries (reaching only two of eight, so conclusions are very limited) to discuss the training on macadamia seeds provided by UN Women's partner. The two beneficiaries stated that in general they were satisfied with the training; however, one did not have her own land to plant (the beneficiary used the community land and had to share the harvest).

Independent field monitoring, for example, by a monitoring and evaluation officer, could improve the potential for beneficiaries to raise concerns and grievances.

Project delivery

Most SAMCO projects were suffering in terms of project delivery. Overall, according to the project delivery report (April 2022) project financial implementation in 2021 was 64 per cent. This figure excludes the rephasing in October 2021 of US$ 1.68 million which would reduce project financial implementation even more.

Delays in project delivery were partially linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and political situation in South Africa, and partially with SAMCO's delivery capacity, especially in terms of hiring of consultants, procurement delays and shortage of personnel. The office managed to increase its total resources and budget from 2020 to 2021 but could not maintain its delivery by engaging the workforce it needed. In addition, there were delays due to the lack of availability of key stakeholders and delays in getting the required inputs (e.g., construction materials) for a major project.

Quality of delivery and value for money

As one sample project reviewed during the audit, the quality of construction for the unfinished greenhouse, as observed by IAS during its fieldwork, was not satisfactory. Concerns were raised about the quality of construction of greenhouse both by beneficiaries and the local authority department. IAS also visited the site and observed that the quality of construction was below standard. The investment made under this project does not appear to have been cost-effective and did not provide good value for money. If SAMCO had recruited a local engineer or asked a specialized UN agency to assist with design and construction, this may have helped to mitigate the risk of substandard quality and delayed construction. Management informed that an engineer will be providing scope for this work to be completed by the builder.

Vacant positions in the organization chart

There were a number of vacant positions within the programme team. The focal point for the Climate Smart Agriculture project recently resigned which may create further gaps in staffing requirements. SAMCO's monitoring and evaluation position has been vacant for a considerable amount of time and, as a result, monitoring and evaluation activities have not been formalized and documented. Capacity in the operations team is also quite limited compared to programme needs. See observation 9 for more details.

Quality and timeliness of donor reports

As of 25 May 2022, SAMCO's reporting commitments dashboard suggests that of 42 donor reports due between 2019 to 2021, 27 (or 64 per cent of total reporting requirements) were submitted with a delay; 12 of which related to 2021.

Several stakeholders interviewed mentioned the need for SAMCO to provide regular updates on the progress of individual projects or thematic areas (including result-focused financial reports, comparison of planned with actual results and costs, and budget utilization) and to give donors the opportunity to provide feedback, and then following up on recommendations.

Review of progress reports submitted to donors indicates that, in general, UN Women is capturing and reporting information at the activity level rather than at output and outcome levels.

Project monitoring and evaluation

There was no dedicated monitoring and evaluation function and framework in the office, and monitoring was being carried out by project managers, which might be an incompatible responsibility where the projects have direct implementation components. The draft evaluation of the Climate Smart Agriculture project noted "*Without a clear and comprehensive M&E framework, with a clear results framework to inform baseline survey, monitoring the progress made and evaluation of achievement of results, it is very difficult to undertake a project evaluation in an objective manner*". The data collection and validation process are not documented, and data reported by programme partners is not independently reviewed and validated.

Risk management

Risks and issues identified during monitoring and follow-up actions agreed were not followed up systematically and documented. The activity analysis report showed significant over and underspend within line items which shows potential issues with planning and/or budget management.

IAS was informed that SAMCO made positive progress in the following areas:

- Programme and operations meetings are currently held on a bi-weekly basis to address financial delivery with clear actions to be addressed at subsequent meetings.
- Programme Lead meetings are currently held on a bi-weekly basis to address the content of the new Strategic Note to be crafted within the next six months.

- Tailored meetings are held between thematic teams and the Operations team to address team-specific bottlenecks on a monthly basis (additional meetings are convened as needed).

Recommendation 7 (High):

The Representative, SAMCO to strengthen project portfolio management, in particular:

(a) Conduct a stocktake of all donor requirements, especially those that are non-standard and include them in regular meetings, including processes for monitoring, data collection and validation, issues encountered and potential solutions.
(b) Submit timely and accurate donor reports and obtain donor feedback. In addition, ensure donor requests in terms of project progress and financial data are addressed in a timely manner.

Recommendation 8 (Medium)

The Representative, SAMCO to ensure the quality assurance of the project design process in terms of feasibility, relevance, sustainability and other key requirements and that clear sustainability and exit strategies are incorporated in project documents, which should be revisited and necessary adjustments made during implementation.

Recommendation 9 (Medium):

The Representative, SAMCO to establish an adequate beneficiary management process, including:

(a) Conduct a needs assessment and ensure that selection criteria and the process for identification and selection of beneficiaries is clear.
(b) Design interventions keeping in mind value for money for beneficiaries.
(c) Regularly monitor and ensure post-implementation impact assessments independent from partners are carried out to ensure beneficiary satisfaction with SAMCO's interventions.

(d) Establish a grievance mechanism and appropriate measures so that beneficiaries are aware of how to report potential complaints.

Recommendation 10 (Medium):

The Representative, SAMCO to ensure that:

(a) Monthly programme management meetings are continued to discuss risks, issues, financial and programmatic delivery, and that clear action points arise from the meetings which are followed up subsequently.
(b) Budget and expenditure are tracked at activity level to show transparency and accountability.
(c) A proactive and result-oriented schedule of communication is agreed with key donors.

Observation 7: Programme partner management (capacity assessment, building and monitoring) needs to be strengthened

SAMCO used the PGAMS system (launched in February 2020) to log partner agreement-related documents and data. However, the data in the system was not complete, especially partner reports and FACE forms which were not always uploaded.

As per the OneApp PGAMS Dashboard as of 3 August 2022, SAMCO had 22 partner agreements with 19 partners worth US$ 2.43 million. Sixty-three per cent of the partner agreements were with the local civil society organizations, thirty five percent with government entities and almost two percent with UN entities.

Selection process – SAMCO generally adopted adequate methods of contracting programme partners through competitive bidding. Most are long-term partners of the office and have been frequently selected for implementing contracts with SAMCO. In one case, the partner was directly selected because the office already had an agreement with another partner under the same management selected by SAMCO at an earlier time. One of the partners was selected based on the UNFPA Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer assessment.

Capacity assessments – Capacity assessments were not regularly carried out and therefore no comprehensive capacity development plans were prepared and followed up with programme partners.

Monitoring and FACE forms – Monitoring of projects has been a concern due to the lack of a dedicated monitoring and evaluation function, as well as COVID-19 restrictions. Partners noted infrequent monitoring visits by UN Women. There was no systematic follow up on agreed actions during the monitoring visits by programme staff. There have also been delays in liquidation of partner advances, an amount of US$ 17,050 was outstanding between a 13 to 24-month period. SAMCO developed a standard operating procedure for liquidation of partner advances and rolled it out in April 2022; however, it had yet to be operationalized.

Communication

There were issues with communication between UN Women and programme partners, they were not always kept informed about personnel transitions due to turnover. IAS' personnel survey also suggested there is a need for closer coordination and engagement with programme partners.

Training

SAMCO's programme partners have not been trained on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption.

IAS was informed that in the first quarter of 2022, partner capacity building commenced on UN Women systems and procedures, led by SAMCO's Operations Manager. This capacity building training targeted partners selected for partner audit and onboarding of new partners. Programme leads have also been encouraged to participate in ongoing corporate capacity building sessions on PGAMS organized by headquarters.

(a) Expanding the programme partner database to include new programme partners in addition to current long-term partners. This could be done through developing a long-term partnership strategy.
(b) Incorporating capacity gaps identified during assessment and monitoring visits and subsequently addressing these gaps through a detailed capacity development plan.
(c) Timely liquidation of advances to partners.
(d) Establishing a mechanism of regular communication with programme partners.
(e) Training programme partners on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, anti-fraud and anti-corruption.

Recommendation 11 (Medium):

The Representative, SAMCO to ensure that the office adopts a holistic approach to managing and strengthening the capacity of programme partners by:

B. Governance, risk management and internal controls

See Background section for statistics. The latest organization chart contained 34 positions, of which 14 appeared to be vacant. SAMCO was in the process of recruiting to fill these positions, which related to the next phase of a large programme and the commencement of a new programme. The SAMCO Representative post had been vacant for seven months – the new Representative joined in April 2022. The Deputy Representative and the Operations Manager were also relatively new. The management team consists of the Representative (D1), Deputy (P4), Operations Manager (NOC), Programme Specialist in Women's Economic Empowerment (NOC), women's economic empowerment and ending violence against women programme specialists (two P3s on temporary assignment funded by non-core). The office assigned strategic priorities to thematic coordinators funded from institutional budget or non-core funds. The office also had a Strategic Partnership position (P3/Temporary Assignment) to assist with resource mobilization.

SAMCO's headquarters is in Pretoria, South Africa without any presence in the other four countries covered by the office. In the past SAMCO had a gender adviser in Botswana; however, the position could not be sustained due to lack of funding. SAMCO has smaller staffing resources compared to other UN Women Multi Country Offices (Caribbean and Pacific), but its coverage is less extensive. In comparison, the Fiji Multi Country Office has a physical presence in seven offices and a total presence in 14 offices with a workforce of 56 (22 staff plus 34 personnel as per OneApp Dashboard). The Caribbean Multi Country Office covers 22 countries and territories in the region and has 53 personnel. The Multi Country Office typology is not yet clearly defined in the UN Women Policy, Procedure and Guidance; therefore, expectations to cover several countries are not fully aligned with standard funding, structures and staffing, while operational arrangements depend on individual approaches adopted by the heads of these Multi Country Offices. In 2022, IAS audited the Multi Country Office in Fiji, which is one of UN Women's largest offices. Comparing challenges in two of three Multi Country Offices, IAS is raising a corporate recommendation in its report on the Fiji office related to better defining the expectations, structure and resourcing of such offices.

IAS assessed that, overall, SAMCO's internal governance, organizational structure, and data and knowledge management needs some improvement. SAMCO needs to have a strong risk management system, set up an effective and robust control environment and culture, ensure data inserted into corporate systems is complete and accurate and prior oversight review recommendations are timely implemented.

IAS noted a good practice in assigning strategic priorities to the thematic coordinators funded from institutional budget or non-core funds. The Strategic Partnership position (P3 on Temporary Assignment) assists with resource mobilization. However, the key challenge in aligning SAMCO's structure and funding with expectations to effectively represent UN Women in all five countries (or clearly define why not) needs to be addressed in SAMCO's new Strategic Note.

Filing of supporting documentation needs major improvement. IAS did not receive complete supporting evidence for its sampled transactions in HR, procurement and travel.

KEY OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Observation 8: There is a need to strengthen internal governance

The capacity to effectively deliver on UN Women's mandate and stakeholders' expectations in all 5 countries has been recognized as one of the main challenges by the external and internal stakeholders interviewed. This view is supported by IAS. SAMCO management acknowledges its capacity gap which since 2017 was recognized in the Strategic Note as a lesson learned from the previous Strategic Note. However, this has not yet been fully addressed due to either lack of management attention to mitigating actions, lack of corporate investment in the Multi Country Office typology or insufficient strategic thinking on pooled funding through better use of core and institutional budget funds and better project cost budgeting during project design, which might be difficult

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in the context of middle-income countries. This has been improving as management started budgeting for some positions (communications and monitoring and evaluation). The Multi Country Office typology has not been fully defined at the corporate level in terms of expectations, role and structure including sufficient core or institutional budget funding to maintain a minimal presence in all or focused countries. As a result, several Multi Country Offices have struggled to ensure that all countries under their purview are sufficiently covered in priorities planning and implementation, especially in the areas of gender equality and the empowerment of women coordination, advocacy and communications.

Vacant unfunded positions

After a functional analysis conducted remotely in 2020 with the help of the headquarters Change Management unit, the proposed structure to implement SAMCO's mandate in all five countries consists of 34 positions. At the time of the audit, there were 14 vacancies: four national gender advisers in the four countries of SAMCO's domain headed by an Intergovernmental and Coordination Specialist (South African Development Community Liaison Functions) and key roles such as a communications and monitoring and evaluation officer. For most of the vacant positions, funding arrangements have not yet been established.
While foreseen in the current Strategic Note and in the functional analysis, the structure for UN system coordination in SAMCO as a whole has not yet been funded; there were intermittent but not sustainable interim arrangements. Without a minimal presence in the other four countries of the South African Development Community or a strategic decision to officially reduce its current geographic coverage, the office is unable to fully deliver on its UN system coordination mandate. Moreover, external stakeholders raised concerns about SAMCO's ability to process operational transactions in a timely manner and capture results-based data due to lack of monitoring and evaluation personnel. Concerns were also raised about the office's capacity to properly capture and highlight results, which may be due to the lack of full-time communication personnel.

Significance reliance on short term consultants

SAMCO relies significantly on short-term, non-staff personnel contracts which are extended several times (in one case seven times) for several years. This occurs due to

difficulties in finding a funding solution for more sustainable contractual arrangements. There were also issues in properly handing over responsibilities during the management transition, which increased the risk of lost knowledge and business continuity issues.

The office issued almost 213 purchase orders between 2019 to 2021 for 73 SSA personnel (US$ 2 million). The cost of non-staff personnel is the office's second highest cost after its staff cost (annual average of 26 per cent or US$ 800,000 in 2019–2021, excluding partners' expenses on personnel).

Balancing staffing in programme and operations

The Strategic Note and related workplans included two areas: Leadership and Global Norms. The Leadership area has been discontinued, while Global Norms was added later –none had a thematic lead. There was an HIV specialist while there is no HIV theme in the Strategic Note, instead HIV is embedded in other themes. The new Strategic Note priorities should be assigned to the coordinators with clear roles and accountability.

The Women's Economic Empowerment area has six personnel, while the accumulated actual budget for 2017–2020 was US$ 4.6 million (target of US$ 9.5 million) and delivery for the same period US$ 3.1 million (68 per cent). The Ending Violence Against Women area has three personnel, while the accumulated actual budget is US$ 2.8 million (target of US$ 3.5 million) and delivery of US$ 1.6 million (58 per cent). Considering that SAMCO covers five countries, the Programme unit might be quite limited in number and technical skills to deliver and monitor the programme effectively and sustainably.

The operations team consists of Operations manager, three personnel in logistics and an executive assistant. With one administrative associate on prolonged leave, the Operations Manager is left with two associates for administration and finance with five countries to support. Twenty-four per cent of personnel is employed in operations. The procurement focal point is responsible for multiple tasks, such as procurement, travel, facilities management, asset management as well as general administrative duties. As a result, the function of procurement does not receive the required level of attention.

Personnel surveyed by IAS indicated issues with work overload; need for additional support; better workflows for processes and transactions; need to reduce work in silos; to share knowledge from missions; and to better align operations and programme teams for common objectives.

Recommendation 12 (High):

The Representative, SAMCO to develop and present to the Regional Director, ESARO the SAMCO business model, expectations on the office's role and structure including budget proposal, after which the Regional Director, ESARO will interface with headquarters, as required, including a request for any additional budget. In particular, the following areas should be strengthened:

(a) If SAMCO is expected to maintain a minimal presence as Non-Resident Agency (NRA) in all or focused countries under its coverage, this should be funded through core budget, or the organization needs to decide not to have a minimal presence but manage all interventions from South Africa with dedicated staffing and accountability for coordination and normative work in all five countries.

(b) Planning and Coordination Specialist, and Advocacy and Communications function for SAMCO which would need to be (co)funded from core funds.

(c) Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist which would need to be funded from pooled non-core funding (direct project costing is imperative).

These measures would help to form SAMCO's priorities, role, structure and accountability for the effectiveness of the office's mandate.

Recommendation 13 (Medium):

The Representative, SAMCO to ensure a comprehensive HR strategy is formulated and all vacant positions are filled on a timely basis. More sustainable HR contractual arrangements should also be sought to ensure business continuity and value-for-money.

Observation 9: Embedding risk management in decision-making and programme and project management

SAMCO updated its risk register annually: the latest register listed 15 risks in various categories. During the audit, nine of those risks were pending approval in the system.

The risk register appeared more like a risk register for the South Africa office, rather than one that took into consideration the risks associated with all five offices; therefore, mitigation measures were limited. Risks and mitigating actions were defined broadly and at a high level. Mitigating actions did not always address root causes, or it was not clear how the actions would be validated or how they would address the risks. For example, project-specific risks such as late delivery and late procurement were identified but the mitigating actions were not sufficient and effective enough to ensure projects were completed on a timely basis. On a positive note, the personnel survey highlighted resource mobilization, procurement, staff turnover and time constraints as key risks which were already reflected in the risk register.

SAMCO management recognized the late approval of risks in the risk register, and as 1 June 2022 all identified risks had been approved. The risks also include project risks, particularly infrastructure procurement activities, which have now been captured, monitored and approved.

Recommendation 14 (Medium):

The Representative, SAMCO to:

(a) Reinforce and embed risk management culture through regular discussions at project and management meetings.

(b) Develop and update the risk register jointly with key managers to accompany SAMCO's workplans and the management team to review the register on a regular basis for its completeness and effectiveness.

(c) Assign clear accountability for risk management in managers and thematic leads' Terms of Reference and Performance Management and Development, monitoring this accountability while retaining overall risk owner accountability at the Representative level.

Observation 10: Strengthening the working and control environment, and fraud prevention

Based on the office's training register, at the time of the audit only 42 per cent personnel had completed mandatory online ethics training. Responses to the IAS survey suggest:

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- 75 per cent of respondents feel confident in their knowledge and skills of the thematic or operational area in which they work to fulfil their duties.

- Personnel indicate that they need additional support from the Regional Office and headquarters in terms of processing procurement. Other areas where support is requested include HR and finance, strategic planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

- Almost 25 per cent of personnel were not satisfied with the support they received from other colleagues, while 27 per cent were not satisfied with headquarters support mechanisms and 16 per cent were not satisfied with regional support.

- 42 per cent of personnel felt overloaded with additional responsibilities.

- The majority of respondents felt that SAMCO effectively adapted its programme to the changing context, including COVID-19.

- 58 per cent of personnel responded that risks regarding fraud and other type of misconduct were not discussed often in the office.

Recommendation 15 (Medium):

The Representative, SAMCO to:

(a) Reinforce fraud and corruption awareness, particularly ensuring that the mandatory ethics and fraud prevention online training is completed by all personnel; refresher fraud prevention training is conducted periodically; and ethical issues and policies are discussed during staff meetings and the annual leadership dialogue workshop.

(b) Validate mandatory training compliance during the performance management process for both staff and non-staff personnel.

Observation 11: Data, knowledge and records management needs improvement

SAMCO's data, knowledge and records management needed improvement. IAS noted:

- No centralized records management system (e.g., in a shared drive) was used. There was no mechanism to track the status of procurement and other operational transactions and determine the lead time for each transaction. In the absence of a tracking system, it is difficult to ascertain responsibility in case of delay in processing of transactions and to address bottlenecks.

- Numerous personnel indicated long delays in processing and approvals of requests for various operational services (see observation 8). Personnel indicated a need for defined workflows and business processes; clarified roles and accountability; timely decision taking by leadership; realistic and agreed objectives about areas of responsibilities; and enhancement of procurement and recruitment functions to address programme needs.

- The LEADS system is not being updated on a timely basis and does not show any recent leads. As SAMCO relies on non-core funding, it is imperative to keep the system updated and follow up on all opportunities.

- Data on mandatory training compliance has not been properly reflected in corporate systems.

- RMS also suggested that the 2021 annual report has not been uploaded in the system.

- The HR personnel dashboard still included the former Representative in the SSA category.

- The HR personnel dashboard includes 23 personnel, while the training dashboard has 21 personnel (former Representative was still counted), and the organization chart has 20 filled positions.

IAS was informed that Terms of Reference for additional support for electronic filing have been developed to strengthen the documentation process. Documentation and archiving of files will therefore be carried out electronically and physically. Management will also implement an access-controlled feature for documentation and archiving.

Recommendation 16 (Medium):

The SAMCO Representative to ensure that:

(a) A centralized electronic filing system is fully operational, especially for operations and programmes, with focal points for data entry into corporate systems; a proper handover process during personnel departures; and a tracking system for requests for operational support are in place.

(b) Corporate deadlines for reporting and monitoring are met. RMS is updated on a timely basis to reflect compliance with corporate requirements

(c) Workflows with clear lines and responsibilities are in place to improve the timeliness of operational transactions

(d) LEADS is regularly updated to provide an accurate picture of SAMCO's upcoming funding opportunities.

(e) Data on HR and mandatory training is complete and accurate.

Observation 12: Need for follow-up and sustained implementation of relevant previous oversight recommendations

SAMCO has not previously been audited despite being a large office.

In 2020, UN Women's outsourced programme partner audit services provider performed audits of four partners in SAMCO area of operations which resulted in four projects having financial audit findings amounting to US$ 5,973. As of the date of this report, these findings have not been closed.

IAS noted that, considering SAMCO is a large field office, it has not been evaluated to a great extent. The mid-term review for the ongoing Strategic Note has not been conducted. Recommendations made against the mid-term review of the NAMA Women Advancement Establishment (NAMA) project pertaining to SAMCO have been implemented or are ongoing. The Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) project's evaluation which started in 2021 has still not been finalized at the time of audit field work the project was supposed to end on 30 June 2022.

Management was in consultation with the Regional Office to obtain support for the Strategic Note Evaluation. Terms of Reference for the evaluation were being finalized. Independent Evaluation Service of IEAS was planning to conduct a country portfolio evaluation of SAMCO this year. In addition, a national consultant funded from the Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness Framework will be recruited to support the year end evaluation of the Strategic Note.

Recommendation 17 (Medium):

The Representative, SAMCO to establish mechanisms to ensure regular evaluation of its key priorities and programmes, and a consistent and close monitoring of agreed actions from oversight reports to ensure that all findings/recommendations are implemented on a timely basis.

C. Operations

See Background section for more details. According to the Atlas Purchase Order report, SAMCO raised 230 purchase orders between 2019 and 2021 for procurements of goods and services; 802 purchase orders for travel-related expenses; and 213 purchase orders for short-term consultants.

Ninety-eight per cent of purchase orders issued by SAMCO are within the US$ 50,000 limit meaning that the office can fulfil its needs through micro purchasing (120 purchase orders for US$ 254,000) or request for quotation (105 purchase orders for US$ 1,785,000). IAS assessed that, overall, SAMCO's procurement, ICT, asset management and travel management needs major improvement. For procurement, SAMCO needs to strengthen its capacity, timely planning for procurement, and expand its vendor database. SAMCO needs to strengthen its asset management by ensuring all assets are tagged in a timely manner; there is a list of assets with programme partners; and zero value items are properly disposed of. SAMCO should consult the Information Security Compliance manager at headquarters to ensure it is meeting requirements to ensure its information is secure from cybersecurity vulnerabilities. Management was in the process of recruiting a UN Volunteer HR Assistant to support this function with expected onboarding in August 2022. SAMCO needed some improvement in HR, financial management and safety and security management.

KEY OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Observation 13: Proactive participation in the United Nations Business Operations Strategy

The UN Business Operations Strategy, is an instrument to enhance collaboration in UN support services at the country level and improve cost-efficiency, reduce duplication, and decrease administrative and transaction costs. The success of the Business Operations Strategy is dependent on collaboration of all UN agencies. The UN in South Africa developed its Business Operations Strategy in 2021 under the guidance of the Resident Coordinator and led by the Operations Management Team's (OMT) Business Operations Strategy task force with collaboration of other working groups, where the SAMCO Operations Manager is an active participant. The Business Operations Strategy focused primarily on efficiency gains and the reduction of costs which is particularly important for UN Women being a smaller agency. The common costs UN Women paid for SAMCO to UNDP in 2021 amounted to approximately US$ 120,000, which include ICT, security and utilities. SAMCO does not participate in the Business Operations Strategy in the other four countries under its purview. However, SAMCO's review related to the SAMCO's coordination role (see observation 2) recognized that the

Business Operations Strategy represents a good entry point for mainstreaming gender in internal UN processes such as procurement, recruitment, etc.

According to the UN's Business Operation Strategy document for South Africa, the top five common services, by expected total future benefits, selected for collaboration in the current Business Operations Strategy cycle include management of common premises (US$ 3,263,275) and cleaning services (US$ 456,784) within administration; help desk (US$ 2,545,275), operational and security telecommunication services (US$ 1,748,645) and mobile phone services (US$ 690,051) within common ICT. As of April 2022, information from the Business Operations Strategy dashboard showed a stocktake of common services had identified a total of 20 existing common services. All services in the Business Operations Strategy will have a lead agency, for the moment UN Women is not leading on any specific service. In terms of actions to be taken, a total of 18 common services (90 per cent) are to be "continued as it is", one is designated to "modify" and one to "scale-up". Moreover, BOS document stated that during an initial opportunity analysis *22 common services* were identified to be included as future cooperation in BOS; however, according to the Business Operations Strategy platform, as of April 2022 most of the services have been fully achieved.

The annual review of the Business Operations Strategy was being finalized during the audit field work and all agencies were required to revisit their data. As of the date of the

audit, the deadline for the review had already passed but the Business Operations Strategy had not been signed due to delays in the quality assurance process.

The Business Operations Strategy status report as of April 2022 suggested:

(a) There were four common services with several activities in progress or not started – the end date of the agreed framework was in 2021. Moreover, Energy Consumption, Measurement & Monitoring has not started.

(b) Only 8 of 21 common services have been fully implemented mainly because they already existed. While travel is reported as implemented, the new long-term agreement has not yet been finalized.

(c) The Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer was another important practical area for effectiveness which had not yet been fully implemented.

(d) There were no common services for procurement, HR rosters etc

IAS was informed that UN Women has completed its data input for the Business Operations Strategy as of 8 June 2022. One agency has not completed its data input, which has affected the status of the Business Operations Strategy.

Advisory Note:

IAS encourages SAMCO to proactively participate in the Business Operations Strategy annual review process through substantive use of common services (procurement and long-term agreements, HR roster**,** Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer or programme partner capacity building) and by providing data on the actual benefits realized. The Business Operations Strategy also needs to be gender mainstreamed in terms of gender-responsive procurement and other initiatives.

Observation 14: Procurement process often did not always comply with procurement policy and needed improvement

During the audit period, micro-purchasing (generally, under US$ 5,000) and requests for quotation (generally, between US$ 5,000 and US$ 50,000) were used (see Operations summary for statistics).

SAMCO did not have dedicated procurement personnel. Procurement responsibilities were performed by an administrative associate who was also responsible for facilities, travel and asset management.

Procurement management required significant improvement to increase transparency and efficiency, strengthen controls and fraud prevention as detailed below.

E-Procurement

SAMCO did not use the e-Procurement system mandated since April 2020 for all competitive procurements above US$ 5,000.

Planning and timeliness

As per OneApp data on 3 August 2022, SAMCO's actual procurement significantly exceeded its planned procurement for 2021: actual procurement of almost US$ 2.06 million against planned procurement of US$ 733,500. Procurement planning was not adequate, which may have contributed to project implementation delays. Procurement of greenhouses and a packing house for the CSA project took almost one year to complete.

Filing of documents

Documents are not filed in a systematic manner; therefore, it is difficult to establish a complete audit trail of documents and workflow. Approved purchase requests, original quotations and assessment forms were missing in multiple cases which shows a lack of attention to detail as well as incomplete procurement documentation. IAS selected a sample of 34 purchase order transactions amounting to US$ 1.1 million for its review. As of date of the report finalization, supporting documents for seven transactions amounting to US$ 143,301 have not been provided to IAS.

From the review of documents provided IAS noted that:

- In one case the amount of the final purchase order was above the threshold of micro purchasing but was still pursued without any proper justification.

- Vendor assessments were not regularly carried out to assess the performance and quality of deliverables.

- IAS' survey suggested that the majority of personnel were not satisfied with the

support received from the local procurement function and would like to see improvement.

Long-term agreements and market survey

The long-term agreement list used by SAMCO was limited. Qualified vendors were limited in the vendor database; therefore, SAMCO worked with only one bid on multiple occasions. A market survey had not been recently conducted to obtain more qualified vendors in the vendor database.

IAS was informed that the following positive actions have already been taken or are in the process of being implemented:

- Prioritization of the development of procurement plans for Q1 and Q2 2022.

- Recruitment of a procurement associate for the office, with onboarding anticipated in September 2022.

- Conduct of market awareness and virtual training through a harmonized and collaborative approach with the Women's Economic Empowerment unit with particular focus on targeting women-owned business through the "buy from women" platform.

Recommendation 18 (Medium):

The Representative, SAMCO to

(a) Establish an electronic filing system with a checklist used to ensure its completeness.

(b) Ensure that detailed procurement plans (on a three or six-month rolling basis) are prepared for SAMCO and each project, project managers are held accountable if there are significant deviations from the plan and that the plans are proactively used by the procurement function to track and monitor procurement.

(c) Consider consolidating recurring procurement (e.g., office supplies, printing, hotels) and establish or explore with UNCT long-term agreements to eliminate frequent small purchases through request for quotation.

(d) Conduct market awareness and virtual training on e-procurement for vendors to enhance understanding of the system and how UN procurement works.

(e) Strengthen the Procurement function by ensuring a stable workforce to carry out the function and ensure that adequate training and oversight are provided to the procurement personnel.

(f) Conduct regular market surveys and piggyback on the updated vendor listing of other UN agencies.

Observation 15: HR management requires major improvement

During the audit field work, the HR focal point was on long-term leave and the HR function was managed by a consultant at the Regional Office. The lack of operational capacity in SAMCO led to recruitment delays that were visible to different stakeholders interviewed by IAS. Management recognized that because of weak HR capacity, oversight and management of HR processes had not been effective.

Selection

IAS review of six HR recruitment files showed the following:

- Recruitment of fixed term staff complied with policies and procedures.

- In other cases of selection of a service contractor, Temporary Assistant and consultants on Special Service Agreement it was noted that in general no other means of selection, other than desk review were used, e.g., no testing or interview of short-listed candidates. While this is generally allowable per corporate policy, enhancing the process with other means of selection could help to increase and demonstrate transparency and fairness. In some cases, it was not clear whether the vacancies were advertised.

- In several cases, recruitment processes were lengthy. In one case the recruitment process was quite a sophisticated desk review with several panels and took nine months, with the candidate, who was already performing the job but on different contractual arrangement was recruited to the position. This may indicate a need for better HR planning during the project induction phase and streamlining

efficiency of the recruitment process.

- In one case (not related to fixed-term staff recruitment, which the audit sample showed was well done), after the initial review (long-list) the panel evaluated and placed the candidate at third place while another panel through another desk review placed the same candidate in first place. Without other testing of the shortlisted candidates, the desk reviews might be seen as too subjective, and it was not clear why the two panels had different results.
- In most cases, the negotiation or justification of fees for consultants was not available (e.g., linked to the expected position or to the previous contract). Fees (mainly lumpsum or monthly fees) have significantly varied.
- One individual on SSA had worked for SAMCO for 34 months without mandatory breaks.

IAS' survey suggests that staff recruitment is a major challenge and delays are often observed in recruitment of new personnel.

Conflicts of interest / Outside activities

Review of documentation suggested that a UN Women staff member might have been involved in outside activities without obtaining prior approval.

Completeness of personnel files

The completeness of personnel files varied and not all documents expected to be present in the files were available, for example, performance evaluations prior to contract extension or reference checks. Where performance evaluations were available, in some cases the performance objectives were not always clear.

Performance management

According to Performance Management and Development compliance data provided by the office for 2020 and 2021, many staff members had not completed their performance evaluations.

Mandatory training

Review of data provided by the office pertaining to mandatory training suggests SAMCO is not fully compliant in this area, see Table 2 below. However, the current dashboard also had problems with the accuracy of data. If this is the case, SAMCO must contact HR to correcting the compliance with mandatory training data.

Table 2: Compliance with mandatory training (as of the date of audit)

Training	*Percentage completion*
BSAFE	**53%**
Ethics and Integrity at the United Nations	**42%**
Fraud and Corruption Awareness and Prevention	**89%**
I Know Gender: An Introduction to Gender Equality for UN staff	**37%**
Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse	**42%**
United Nations Course on Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority	**47%**
United Nations Human Rights Responsibilities	**21%**
UN Women Information Security Awareness	**26%**

Source: provided by the office

IAS was informed that management was recruiting a UN Volunteer HR Assistant to support this function, with expected onboarding on 1 August 2022. Handover and training will be carried out in consultation with the Regional Office. A dedicated OneDrive will be created and incorporated with the Regional Office's SharePoint to ensure the completeness and availability of documents. Management will address the formalization of SSA fees through the UN OMT and HR Working Group. Currently in South Africa this is fragmented and requires harmonization to determine remuneration scales appropriately. Management will also use the UN Consultancy Roster currently managed and coordinated through the OMT Working Group with the aim to incorporate it within SAMCO. Management will review Performance Management and Development compliance for 2021 and 2022.

Recommendation 19 (Medium):

The Representative, SAMCO to ensure that the personnel selection process is risk focussed, respects the principles of transparency, competitiveness, efficiency and value-for-money. In particular:

(a) Establish an electronic filing system and ensure a checklist is used for completeness.

(b) Introduce testing or interviews for shortlisted individual consultancy, temporary assistance and service contractor candidates in addition to desk reviews.

(c) Document fee negotiation and justify value-for-money related to hiring individual non-staff personnel.

(d) Ensure all personnel engaging in outside activities request authorization and obtain prior approval in writing.

(e) Where possible, invest in establishing a roster for consultants who could be used without a lengthy recruitment process, when needed.

Observation 16: Strengthening ICT management

SAMCO uses the services of UNDP for its ICT needs. UNDP provides the necessary support in terms of network connectivity and day-to-day ICT support to the office. SAMCO also relies on cloud-based computing for its data: there is no local physical server.

The ICT InfoSec Compliance Dashboard, which provides compliance status based on self-assessment against key controls to mitigate cybersecurity risks, suggested that relevant information was not uploaded in the system; therefore, it shows an overall compliance rate of just 24 per cent and end-point managed compliance rate of 0 per cent.

This seems to suggest that the office's networks and data are vulnerable to security threats and sensitive information may be leaked or lost.

Management expressed willingness to look for an ICT associate under the cost-recovery

modality.

Recommendation 20 (Medium):

The Representative, SAMCO to coordinate with the InfoSec Security Officer at headquarters and IST in the Regional Office for assistance to address InfoSec Security compliance.

Observation 17: Strengthening travel and hospitality management

A review of a sample of transactions noted that:

- SAMCO could not provide supporting documents for 11 of 39 transactions in IAS' sample of travel and hospitality expenditure amounting to US$ 80,872. Quality and completeness of supporting documents for other transactions varied

- IAS noted that Mission and Leave Plans and security clearances were not always attached with travel vouchers.

- For expenditure of over US$ 29,000 relating to a SAMCO retreat, comparative statements from different hotels were not attached with the payment voucher.

These issues were primarily due to records for travel transactions being largely paper-based and probably poorly filed: they were also not easy to find based on IAS' requests. The Atlas Travel module has not been rolled out to field offices, and all travel claims had to be monitored manually after travel advances were issued. The Operations team was understaffed and overworked.

Management has shown willingness to strengthen controls around Mission and Leave Plans and accountability to ensure adequate planning for missions. Month-end closure (Travel Management) will be used to monitor F10 for timely settlement of missions undertaken.

Observation 18: Strengthening asset management

According to the SAMCO assets in-service report, the office has 45 assets with a net book value of US$ 86,724. IAS conducted a physical inventory of the assets selected from the asset list and found several discrepancies:

- The assets in-service report was not updated with the most recent additions and disposals. Some of the assets physically present in the office did not appear in the in-service report and have not been tagged. This seems to suggest that assets have not been charged to correct account codes.

- There were many zero-value items, some date back to 2005 and 2006, which have not been disposed.

- One electronic item with a total cost of US$ 18,360 was included in the in-service report, but it appeared that multiple assets had been accounted for together under one asset ID.

- SAMCO did not provide a list of non-capital assets, which suggests it has not been maintained. As per the Account Activity Analysis from January 2019 to February 2022, an amount of US$ 207,862 has been charged to accounts where non-capital assets could have been charged.

- SAMCO had no inventory of UN Women-funded assets held by programme partners (normally purchased by partners). From January 2019 to February 2022, a total amount of almost US$ 225,000 has been charged to accounts where partner-related assets could be charged.

SAMCO has developed Terms of Reference for an asset management consultant and had also concluded an agreement with the Regional office for a detailed mission for two–three weeks to support the office in its asset management duties.

Observation 19: Strengthening safety and security management

IAS' review of documentation, physical inspection and discussions with personnel noted that overall safety and UN security management in South Africa, including the Business Continuity Plan, is managed satisfactory. SAMCO is located in premises provided by the government and shared with other UN agencies, including the UN Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) and shares security services.

IAS noted the following improvements needed:

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- Not all criteria from the annual Safety and Security compliance survey have been fully complied with, while the survey for compliance stated a 100 per cent compliance rate. For example, some provisions for disabled access are not fully complied with; drivers do not have radios in the vehicles; and not all personnel have BSAFE training (53 per cent as per SAMCO's Learning Management System record).

The annual safety and security compliance survey should clearly reflect these issues by using different categories such as not applicable, or not compliant with justifications. SAMCO needs to take more care in completing the Safety and Security annual survey because it might create a risk of false positive assurance that the office fully manages security risks while some areas are still left not fully addressed.

- No additional safety and security training had been conducted recently. Management intends to liaise with UNDSS to organize a refresher course on safety.

- While the Business Continuity Plan requires it, SAMCO does not have satellite phones or alternate internet connections.

Recommendation 23 (Medium):

The SAMCO Representative to establish a process that ensures all security and business continuity criteria are fully complied with, and that any missing elements are identified, justified for non-compliance, or addressed. A peer review by UNDSS could be carried out to ensure that data on safety and security are accurately reported.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

Observation	Recommendation	Responsible Unit	Priority	Action Plan	Implementation date
1. Opportunities for improved gender advocacy, communication and coordination in the country	1. The Representative, SAMCO to ensure close working relationships with the Resident Coordinators Offices of all five countries under the Multi Country Office in addition to interacting with key national counterparts; map their expectations; and decide on how to address these expectations in the office's upcoming Strategic Note.	South Africa Multi Country Office	High	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. SAMCO incoming Representative, has meet with and discussed their expectations of all 5 RCs since April 2022. SAMCO is developing of SAMCOs new SN, as part of this process, RC expectations will be mapped, providing the framework for future engagement. In order to meet the expectations of RCs and UNCTs, SAMCO will attend to the response to Recommendation 12, as SAMCO does not currently have a structure, staffing nor finances to meet the request of UNCTs/RCs.	31 January 2023, Rec 12 will be attended to.
	2. The Representative, SAMCO to (a) Ensure that the communications function is properly funded through non-core or core funding (i.e., make a case for further funding) and reinstate the communications and advocacy efforts, revisiting its strategy and monitoring its effectiveness through regular reporting against the key performance indicators and targets. (b) Include the other four countries in communications and advocacy strategy and related initiatives to ensure that SAMCO is regularly visible and advocating for gender equality and the empowerment of women despite its limited presence in these countries.	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. SAMCO has recently filled a 12-month SC Communications Analyst position cost-shared across projects (non-core). The new team member commences on 1st October 2022. SAMCO currently have funds for the position for 12 months only, sourced from non-core. The existing SAMCO Communications and Advocacy strategy (including all countries within SAMCO portfolio), will be updated by the Communications Analyst, in collaboration with the ESARO Communications team. In order to fund this role longer-term, SAMCO will attend to the response to Recommendation 12, as SAMCO does not currently have finances to support this position longer term. In addition, 1 Communications Analyst will be inadequate to cover the function across the 5 SAMCO countries.	31 January 2023, Rec 12 will be attended to.
2. Gender Coordination Strategy	3. Based on SWAP scorecards and recommendations, the Representative, SAMCO to develop a coordination strategy for all five countries covered by SAMCO, including leading on recommendations and enhancing Gender Theme Groups.	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. SAMCO is in the process of creating and filling a 12-month Coordination Analyst SC position cost-shared across projects (non-core). SAMCO currently have fund for the position for 12 months from non-core. Once a Coordination Analyst has been onboarded, the Coordination Strategy (including all countries within SAMCO portfolio), will be updated by the Coordination Analyst, in collaboration with the ESARO Coordination team (aligned to the Regional Coordination Strategy and the new SN). In order to fund this role longer-term, SAMCO will attend to the response to Recommendation 12, as SAMCO does not currently have a finance to support this position longer term. SAMCO will need further coordination capacity to facilitate and support SWAP scorecards and to engage in and enhance GTGs, beyond 1 new SC Coordination Analyst, the one position will not be able to effectively serve the needs of 5 RCs and 5 UNCTs.	31 January 2023, Rec 12 will be attended to. Coordination Analyst in place and Coordination Strategy developed by 30 April 2023.
3. Strategic Note design and related annual work planning process needs to be streamlined	4. The Representative, SAMCO to address the following lesson learned from the Strategic Note cycle: (a) The theory of change in the Strategic Note should be coherent and aligned with annual workplans during the Strategic Note period. No major changes in the results framework should be allowed without proper justification, approval and update of the Strategic Note. (b) The Strategic Note should be reviewed and evaluated regularly to revisit its theory of change for any adjustments required. (c) SAMCO's implementation approach in terms of capacity and minimal presence in the four South African Development Community countries should be addressed. (d) The Strategic Note should be based on a needs assessment from all five countries covered by the office, which could then be mapped to SAMCO's capacity and theory of change. (e) The Strategic Note needs to have better visibility in the other four South African Development Community countries, e.g., with dedicated outputs and indicators.	South Africa Multi Country Office	High	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. The new SN will be developed by Dec 2022 as required by corporate processes. a) The BWP 2023 – 2024 will be aligned to the new SN. b) A mid-term review of the SN will be undertaken as required by corporate processes. c) SAMCO will attend to the response to Recommendation 12, which will define the presence and funding for SAMCO outside of our current sole office presence in Pretoria, South Africa. d) A formal needs assessment has not been conducted and will not be conducted before the SN is developed and finalised in Oct-Dec 2022. However, the CPE will take place in Q4 2023/Q1 2024 and will serve as an opportunity to review the trajectory of implementation of the SN, and course correct as needed. e) The new SN will have dedicated outputs and indicators covering all 5 SAMCO countries. Some outputs and indicators may be common to a number of the 5 countries.	a) 31 December 2022 b) 2024 c) 31 January 2023 d) Q4 2023/Q1 2024 e) 31 Dec 2022
4. Resource mobilization strategy to be formalized and strengthened	5. To ensure that SAMCO's resource mobilization strategy is effective, the Representative, SAMCO to: (a) Finalize SAMCO's action plan for five years with success indicators, assigning accountability among team members and monitor its implementation through regular reports supported by data against planned indicators. (b) Request that all project pipelines are recorded in LEADS in a timely manner and that LEADS is used to measure the effectiveness of resource mobilization efforts.	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. SAMCO will review existing draft RM Strategy and update the strategy in consultation with ESARO's RM team. a) The revised SAMCO RM Strategy will include indicators and assigned accountability and a monitoring framework. b) LEADS updates will form a standing agenda item on fortnightly Programme Management Meetings, ensuring timely recording.	a) 31 January 2023
5. Need for a dedicated monitoring and evaluation function and an adequate M&E framework to enable the Multi Country Office to monitor results, and collect and validate data for its	6. The Representative, SAMCO to establish monitoring, data validation and reporting framework and workflows, and invest in the office's monitoring and evaluation function and capacity. In particular: (a) The monitoring and evaluation function should provide a quality control for result frameworks during project design. (b) The monitoring and evaluation function should validate data reported by programme teams for their accuracy and completeness by monitoring activities (post-implementation reviews, impact assessments, contacting a sample of beneficiaries, etc)	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. The recruitment process for a 12-month SC Monitoring and Reporting Analyst is underway. Interviews have been concluded and a candidate has been selected. The position is funded by non-core, funds are available for 12 months only. In the interim, prior to the onboarding of the M&R Analyst, ESARO are providing direct support on development of SAMCOs M&E framework during the new SN development process. a) This will be included in the M&R Analyst's workplan. b) This will be included in the M&R Analyst's workplan.	31st April 2023

Observation	Recommendation	Responsible Unit	Priority	Action Plan	Implementation date
reports					
6. Project management needs to be enhanced (project governance, risk management and oversight)	7. The Representative, SAMCO to strengthen project portfolio management, in particular: (a) Conduct a stocktake of all donor requirements, especially those that are non-standard and include them in regular meetings, including processes for monitoring, data collection and validation, issues encountered and potential solutions. (b) Submit timely and accurate donor reports and obtain donor feedback. In addition, ensure donor requests in terms of project progress and financial data are addressed in a timely manner. (c) Enhance funding pipeline and ongoing portfolio management by assigning formal accountability to update the LEADS system in a timely manner for projects in the pipeline.	South Africa Multi Country Office	High	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. a) Conduct stocktake. b) Establish tracking table designed to facilitate monitoring of donor reporting (incorporating internal clearances and RO review deadlines), monitor through fortnightly programmes meetings. c) Formal accountability to update LEADS will be assigned, and LEADS will be monitored at fortnightly programme team meetings.	a) 31st January 2023
	8. The Representative, SAMCO to ensure the quality assurance of the project design process in terms of feasibility, relevance, sustainability and other key requirements and that clear exit strategies are incorporated in project documents, which should be revisited, and necessary adjustments made during implementation.	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	All existing project documents with duration beyond December 2022, and all new project designs, will be revisited accordingly.	28 February 2023
	9. The Representative, SAMCO to establish an adequate beneficiary management process, including: a) Conduct a needs assessment and ensure that selection criteria and the process for identification and selection of beneficiaries is clear. b) Design interventions keeping in mind value for money for the end beneficiary. c) Regularly monitor and ensure post-implementation impact assessments independent from partners are carried out to ensure beneficiary satisfaction with SAMCO's interventions. d) Establish a grievance mechanism and appropriate measures so that beneficiaries are aware of how to report a complaint.	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. SAMCO will establish a beneficiary management process; conduct needs assessment; establish interventions and grievance mechanisms accompanied by appropriate measures for reporting of complaints.	30 June 2023
	10. The Representative, SAMCO to ensure that: a) Monthly programme management meetings are continued to discuss risks, issues, financial and programmatic delivery, and that clear action points arise from the meetings which are followed up subsequently. b) Budget and expenditure are tracked at activity level to show transparency and accountability. c) A proactive and result-oriented schedule of communication is agreed with key donors.	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. a) Programme Management meetings held fortnightly as a full team with clear action points to address delivery bottlenecks. b) At least 3 times a week, morning 'stand-up meetings' held with all staff to address issues related to SAMCO delivery dashboard. c) Fortnightly individual thematic programme and operations meetings held with clear action points, specific to the respective team – including tracking of budgets and expenditure. d) Communication schedule to be established in agreement with respective donors.	31 December 2022
7. Programme partner management (capacity assessment, building and monitoring) needs to be strengthened	11. The Representative, SAMCO to ensure that the office adopts a holistic approach to managing and strengthening the capacity of programme partners by: a) Expanding the programme partner database to include new programme partners in addition to current long-term partners. This could be done through developing a long-term partnership strategy. b) Incorporating capacity gaps identified during assessment and monitoring visits and subsequently addressing these gaps through a detailed capacity development plan. c) Timely liquidation of advances to partners to avoid any financial loss. d) Establishing a mechanism of regular communication with programme partners. e) Training programme partners on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, anti-fraud and anti-corruption.	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. a) Expand partner database upon finalization of SAMCO's resource mobilization strategy. b) Capacity development plan finalized. c) Liquidation of advances addressed as standing item during all staff 'stand-up meetings '(held at least 3 times per week) to identify bottlenecks and solutions with timeframes. d) Programme Managers to establish regular communication mechanism with partners. e) Partner capacity development training conducted by SAMCO for all existing partners on all pertinent issues (including on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, anti-fraud and anti-corruption).	a) 31 March 2023 b) 31 March 2023 c) 31 March 2023 d) 31 March 2023 e) 31 April 2023
8. There is a need to strengthen governance to achieve SAMCO's objectives	12 The Representative, SAMCO to develop and present to the Regional Director, ESARO the SAMCO business model, expectations on the office's role and structure including budget proposal, after which the Regional Director, ESARO will interface with headquarters, as required, including a request for any additional budget. In particular, the following areas should be strengthened: a) If SAMCO is expected to maintain a minimal presence as RNA in all or focused countries under its coverage, this should be funded through core budget, or the organization needs to decide not to have a minimal presence but manage all interventions from South Africa with dedicated staffing and accountability for coordination and normative work in all five countries. b) Planning and Coordination Specialist, and Advocacy and Communications function for SAMCO which would need to be (co)funded from core funds. c) Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist which would need to be funded from pooled non-core funding (direct project costing is imperative). These measures would help to form SAMCO's priorities, role, structure and accountability for the effectiveness of the office's mandate.	South Africa Multi Country Office	High	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. Business model and funding request to be presented to ESARO will include: a) Core budget request for dedicated staffing for coordination and normative work in all 5 countries. b) Core budget request for Planning and Coordination capacity covering all 5 countries, and adequate staffing for Advocacy and Communications function. c) SAMCO will proceed with onboarding a M&R Analyst on a 12-month SC contract with non-core funding.	Presentation to ESARO by 31 January 2023
	13. The Representative, SAMCO to ensure a comprehensive HR strategy is formulated and all vacant positions are filled on a timely basis. More sustainable HR contractual arrangements should also be sought to ensure business	South Africa Multi Country	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. HR strategy to be designed within the context of the development of the new SN, with support from ESARO.	31 March 2023

Observation	Recommendation	Responsible Unit	Priority	Action Plan	Implementation date
	continuity and value-for-money.	Office			
9. Embedding risk management in SAMCO's decision-making and programme management	14. The Representative, SAMCO to: a) Reinforce and embed risk management culture through regular discussions at project and management meetings. b) Develop and update the risk register jointly with key managers to accompany SAMCO's workplans and the management team to review the register on a regular basis for its completeness and effectiveness. c) Assign clear accountability for risk management in managers and thematic leads' Terms of Reference and Performance Management and Development, monitoring this accountability while retaining overall risk owner accountability at the Representative level	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. a) Risk management to be standing item on agenda of fortnightly Programme and Operations meetings. b) Risk registers to be developed during the SN development process, with support from ESARO. c) Risk management to be included in TORS and Performance Management of DCR, OM, and all Programme Managers.	a) 31 December 2022 b) 31 January 2023 c) 30 November 2022
10. Strengthening the working and control environment, and fraud prevention	15. The Representative, SAMCO to: a) Reinforce fraud and corruption awareness, particularly ensuring that the mandatory ethics and fraud prevention online training is completed by all personnel; refresher fraud prevention training is conducted periodically; and ethical issues and policies are discussed during staff meetings and the annual leadership dialogue workshop. b) Include mandatory training compliance in the Performance Management and Development and performance of non-staff personnel.	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. a) All personnel to have completed all mandatory courses. All completed certificates uploaded in Agora. b) Mandatory training compliance will be included in the Performance Management and Development of non-staff personnel.	a) 31 March 2023 b) 28 February 2023
11. Data, knowledge, and records management needs improvement	16. The Representative, SAMCO to ensure that: a) A centralized electronic filing system is fully operational, especially for operations and programmes, with focal points for data entry into corporate systems; a proper handover process during personnel departures; and a tracking system for requests for operational support are in place. b) Corporate deadlines for reporting and monitoring are met. RMS is updated on a timely basis to reflect compliance with corporate requirements c) Workflows with clear lines and responsibilities are in place to improve the timeliness of operational transactions d) LEADS is regularly updated to provide an accurate picture of SAMCO's upcoming funding opportunities. e) Data on HR and mandatory training is complete and accurate.	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. a) Finalise recruitment for 2 consultants on data management support the centralisation electronic filing. Initial recruitment for a period of 6 months. b) Tracking tool developed to facilitate monitoring of reporting in RMS. c) SAMCO will engage ESARO to conduct support mission on finalizing GST activation to improve timeliness of operational transactions. d) LEADS to be revisited every fortnight at programmes meeting. e) Update of staff validation in line with month end closure and year end closure.	a) 31 March 2023 b) 31 March 2023 c) 31 March 2023 d) 31 March 2023 e) 31 January 2023
12. Need for follow-up and sustained implementation of relevant previous oversight recommendations	17. The Representative, SAMCO, to establish mechanisms to ensure regular evaluation of its key priorities and programmes, and a consistent and close monitoring of agreed actions from oversight reports to ensure that all findings/recommendations are implemented on a timely basis.	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. Continue to hold: - Weekly management meetings. - staff meetings every fortnight. - programme team meeting every fortnight. - programmes and operations team meeting every fortnight. - at least 3 mornings 'stand-up meetings' every week. - programme managers 1-day meetings every quarter.	31 October 2022
14. Procurement process often did not comply with procurement policy and needed improvement	18. The Representative, SAMCO to a) Establish an electronic filing system with a checklist used to ensure its completeness. b) Ensure that detailed procurement plans (on a three or six-month rolling basis) are prepared for SAMCO and each project, project managers are held accountable if there are significant deviations from the plan and that the plans are proactively used by the procurement function to track and monitor procurement. c) Consider consolidating recurring procurement (e.g., office supplies, printing, hotels) and establish or explore with UNCT long-term agreements to eliminate frequent small purchases through request for quotation. d) Conduct market awareness and virtual training on e-procurement for vendors to enhance understanding of the system and how UN procurement works. e) Strengthen the Procurement function by ensuring a stable workforce to carry out the function and ensure that adequate training and oversight are provided to the procurement personnel. Conduct regular market surveys and piggyback on the updated vendor listing of other UN agencies.	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. a) Finalise recruitment for 2 consultants on data management support the centralisation electronic filing. Initial recruitment for a period of 6 months. b) Quarterly procurement plans are prepared and uploaded on SharePoint. Review of the plans are done at fortnightly regular programme and operations meetings. c) Establish a dedicated procurement post (at procurement associate level), to strengthen the procurement function and ensure adequate training is provided. The role will facilitate d) and f).	a) 31 March 2023 b) 31 January 2023 c) 30 April 2023
15. HR management requires major improvement	19. The Representative, SAMCO to ensure that the personnel selection process is risk focussed, respects the principles of transparency, competitiveness, efficiency and value-for-money. In particular: a) Establish an electronic filing system and ensure a checklist is used for completeness. b) Introduce testing or interviews for shortlisted individual consultancy, temporary assistance and service	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. a) Engage ESARO HR consultant on mission to SAMCO to establish filing system and other identified mechanisms. b) SAMCO to introduce testing and/or interviews in addition to the desk reviews for recruitments.	a) 31 March 2023 b) 31 October 2022 c) 31 October 2022

Observation	Recommendation	Responsible Unit	Priority	Action Plan	Implementation date
	contractor candidates in addition to desk reviews. c) Document fee negotiation and justify value-for-money related to hiring individual non-staff personnel. d) Ensure all personnel engaging in outside activities request authorization and obtain prior approval in writing. e) Where possible, invest in establishing a roster for consultants who could be used without a lengthy recruitment process, when needed. (a)			c) Assess risk, and adjust steps based on assessment. d) Ensure full documentation of fee negotiation and justification of value for money. e) All personnel to sign the COI declaration, including all those who onboard.	d) 31 October 2022 e) 31 October 2022
16. Strengthening ICT management	20. The Representative, SAMCO to coordinate with the InfoSec Security Officer at headquarters and IST in the Regional Office and seek assistance to address InfoSec Security compliance.	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. Meetings with InfoSec Security Officer at HQ and RO held, and outstanding InfoSec Security compliance issues identified and addressed.	31 March 2023
17. Strengthening travel and hospitality management	21. The Representative, SAMCO to ensure: a) Completeness of documentation for the entire travel management process. b) Necessary documentation and approvals are in place for travel-related documentation depicting value for money.	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. Develop SOPs for Duty Travel to re orientate all personnel. SOPs to include checklist of supporting documents and step by step guide on preparation for duty travel. Emphasis to also include waivers for non-UN personnel This may be revised depending on the travel module to be incorporated in Quantum	31 December 2022
18. Strengthening asset management	22. The Representative, SAMCO to ensure that: a) Accountability for assets is allocated to a dedicated, trained asset focal point. While there is no need to have a separate function for asset management, staff should be trained and held accountable. b) All assets wrongly charged to expense accounts are identified and assigned to the correct asset account. c) All assets are properly tagged and accounted for. d) A list of non-capital and third-party owned assets is maintained and regularly monitored.	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. a) Arrange training with ESARO on asset management for focal persons. b) Correct any assets wrongly charged and corrected. c) Proper serialisation of assets in line with the in-service asset report. d) List of non-capital and third-party owned assets is maintained and regularly monitored	a) 31 December 2022 b) 28 February 2023 c) 28 February 2023 d) 31 December 2022
19. Strengthening safety and security management	23. The Representative, SAMCO to establish a process that ensures all security and business continuity criteria are fully complied with, and that any missing elements are identified, justified for non-compliance, or addressed. A peer review by UNDSS could be carried out to ensure that data on safety and security are accurately reported.	South Africa Multi Country Office	Medium	Management agrees with IAS recommendation. a) Complete of the Security and Safety Compliance Survey in line with the UNDSS Security Plan. b) Maintain 100% target updates on BCCMA. c) Purchase satellite phones and update the BCCMA accordingly. d) Coordinate with UNDSS for security trainings for all personnel (fire and First Aid).	a) 31 October 2022 b) 28 February 2023 c) 31 January 2023 d) 31 December 2022

Annex 1: DEFINITIONS OF AUDIT TERMS, RATINGS AND PRIORITIES

A. AUDIT RATINGS

Satisfactory	The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were adequately established and functioning well. Issues identified by the audit, if any, are unlikely to affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area.
Some Improvement Needed	The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were generally established and functioning, but need some improvement. Issues identified by the audit do not significantly affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area.
Major Improvement Needed	The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were established and functioning, but need major improvement. Issues identified by the audit could significantly affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area.
Unsatisfactory	The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were either not adequately established or not functioning well. Issues identified by the audit could seriously compromise the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area.

B. PRIORITIES OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

High (Critical)	Prompt action is required to ensure that UN Women is not exposed to high risks. Failure to take action could result in major negative consequences for UN Women.
Medium (Important)	Action is required to ensure that UN Women is not exposed to risks. Failure to take action could result in negative consequences for UN Women.
Low	Action is desirable and should result in enhanced control or better value for money. Low-priority recommendations, if any, are dealt with by the audit team directly with management, either during the exit meeting or through a separate memorandum subsequent to the fieldwork. Therefore, low-priority recommendations are not included in this report.

UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN.
A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals is a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.