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for Gender Equality and the
Empowerment of Women**

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Evaluation

**Report on the independent evaluation of
UN-Women’s contribution to women’s economic
empowerment by advancing gender-responsive laws,
frameworks, policies and partnerships**

Summary

This report summarizes the independent corporate thematic evaluation of UN-Women’s contribution to the economic empowerment (EE) of women by advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships.

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency and sustainability of UN-Women’s contribution to women’s economic empowerment (WEE) by the organization’s advancement of gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships, and to develop recommendations and insights to strengthen this area of work. The thematic scope covers UN-Women’s entire WEE portfolio, with a focus on sub-thematic areas where there is a stronger emphasis on laws, frameworks and policy strengthening. The geographical scope includes UN-Women’s work globally and across all regions. The evaluation includes both a retrospective view of results achieved and forward-looking insights to support implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

The primary intended users of the evaluation are UN-Women’s Executive Board, senior management and programme personnel. The evaluation is also intended to be useful for other actors directly working on or with an interest in WEE, including governments, civil society organizations (CSOs), United Nations organizations, NGOs, the private sector and development partners. The evaluation will also feed into the development of a strategy for UN-Women’s work on EE that is under way.

I. Background

1. The independent corporate thematic evaluation was conducted by UN-Women's Independent Evaluation Service of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services. The evaluation was initiated in February 2022 and completed in January 2023. This evaluation, which covered the period from January 2018 to June 2022, includes the entirety of the previous Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and the first two quarters of the current Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

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

- To what extent is UN-Women's work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies for WEE aligned with global normative frameworks, priority policy areas and the needs of beneficiaries?
- To what extent is UN-Women's work on WEE coherent with the work of partners and other key thematic areas? How effectively does UN-Women leverage its integrated mandate?
- To what extent have UN-Women's efforts in this area led to demonstrable impact/outcomes? What metrics exist to measure progress?
- What efforts have been made to ensure the efficiency of programming and the sustainability of benefits and efforts in this area?
- To what degree are human rights and "leave no one behind" – including disability inclusion and gender equality principles – integrated in this area of work?

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

II. Evaluation approach and methodology

4. The evaluation adopted a theory-based approach, drawing on various methodologies for measuring policy influence to develop a conceptual framework on the contribution of gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies to the economic empowerment (EE) of women. The evaluation methodology included contribution analysis and employed a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach.¹

¹ The evaluation approach was aligned with the UN-Women evaluation policy, the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidance on integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluation, the UNEG ethical guidelines, the UNEG code of conduct for evaluation in the United Nations system and the recent UNEG guidance on integrating disability inclusion in evaluation.

Both primary and secondary data sources were consulted in gathering evidence to address the key evaluation questions. A comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercise was conducted to identify a relevant range of internal and external stakeholders. In total, 211 internal and external stakeholders were engaged through key informant interviews, focus group discussions and surveys. While most of the interviews were conducted virtually, the evaluation team undertook an in-person data-collection mission in Kenya, where interviews and focus group discussions with 25 stakeholders were held. Additionally, the evaluation team designed and fielded an online survey for internal and external partners, which received responses from 128 stakeholders (90 UN-Women personnel and 38 partners). The evaluation team also developed 10 case studies, including two global cases and eight country case studies to explore promising practices and lessons learned from each region.

III. Evaluation context

5. Following more than two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global economy continues to suffer economic shocks due to regional conflicts, increasingly severe environmental challenges and climate-related disasters. Higher-than-expected inflation in many parts of the world is tightening global financial conditions. Policy discussions and responses have yet to sufficiently take gender equality perspectives into account.

6. Between 2018 and 2022, several milestones were marked in addressing socioeconomic challenges. For example, the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women adopted the agreed conclusions that place focus on gender and climate change linkages and provide a blueprint to promote women's full participation in the design and implementation of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction efforts. Global multi-stakeholder platforms – such as the Generation Equality Forum, the Global Alliance for Care, the Alliance for Feminist Movements and the Feminist Action for Climate Justice Action Coalition that bring together national governments, feminist organizations and researchers – were also launched to address barriers as well as advance and coordinate financial and political support to organizations and the key role that they play amid global uncertainty.

7. WEE is one of UN-Women's four key thematic impact areas. Work on WEE aligns with key global normative frameworks and international commitments, including, among others, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and a series of relevant International Labour Organization conventions. As articulated in the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, UN-Women focused its contributions to WEE with three expected outcomes: (i) more policies promote decent work and social protection for women; (ii) more women own, launch and/or manage small, medium and large enterprises; (iii) and more rural women secure access to, control over and use of productive resources and engage in sustainable agriculture to increase their income security, work conditions and resilience to climate change.

8. In the current Strategic Plan 2022–2025, UN-Women's impact area on WEE focuses on integrated approaches to address the root causes of inequality and includes the following key interventions: (i) transforming the care economy

by strengthening and implementing the Five Rs;² (ii) incentivizing decent work, equal pay and entrepreneurship, including by promoting financial and digital inclusion and gender-responsive procurement; (iii) supporting the development and implementation of gender-responsive macroeconomic policies and practices; (iv) championing women's increased participation and leadership in green and blue economies and climate-resilient agriculture; and (v) engaging effectively with women-led organizations, the private sector and trade unions to tackle discriminatory social norms, practices and legislation, and ensuring women's active participation and leadership in the economy. To support implementation, three of UN-Women's Signature Initiatives are being developed in the area of WEE and aim to contribute to progress towards relevant Strategic Plan systemic outcomes.

IV. Key conclusions

Conclusion 1. UN-Women has clear and well-acknowledged comparative advantages in normative work and facilitating policy dialogues, including through key intergovernmental processes related to WEE. National (and regional priorities) inform WEE programming and are responsive to changing contexts; for example, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is scope to proactively plan for the need to adapt to current and emerging priority policy areas, such as climate change, the cost-of-living crisis, macroeconomic stagnation and the impact of ongoing conflicts.

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

10. In addition to the priority policy areas identified in the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and its corresponding Strategic Notes, UN-Women played a successful role in highlighting the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on WEE. At the regional and country levels, UN-Women's work has been adapted to focus on contextually relevant sub-thematic areas within WEE. Where it has successfully aligned with national priorities, UN-Women has been able to capitalize on strategic opportunities and develop close relationships with governments to facilitate the implementation of gender-responsive policies. The current economic and political context encompasses rising inequalities and economic exclusion, protracted conflict and humanitarian emergencies, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change. While needs assessments and national and regional priorities inform UN-Women's WEE programming, there is scope for further flexibility in adapting and responding to changing contexts at the field level.

² Recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, and reward and represent care workers (UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025).

Conclusion 2. UN-Women works effectively to build consensus and facilitate a coherent voice in global policy dialogues on WEE. While UN-Women’s approach to partnerships on WEE is generally sound and tailored to the operating context, engagement with international financial institutions on WEE-related policies could be further strengthened.

11. At the global, regional and country levels, UN-Women partners work with a range of stakeholders, including governments, other United Nations agencies, think tanks, CSOs and the private sector. UN-Women’s partnering approach to WEE is often appropriate and sound, facilitated by formal multi-stakeholder planning systems (such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Group). UN-Women also engages in a context-specific way, partnering and “filling gaps” as needed with other partners.

12. UN-Women works effectively in building consensus on WEE issues across multiple stakeholder groups and in facilitating a coherent voice in global policy dialogues. This consensus is often translated into regional and national coordination work, to align regional and country partners with global norms and standards. The Entity promotes coherence and coordination on WEE in the United Nations system, working across a range of relevant agencies and tapping into relevant economic expertise where possible. While much of the work is complementary and improves efficiency, there are cases where partnerships for WEE are underutilized. For instance, engagement with intergovernmental bodies that focus on macroeconomic issues could be strengthened.

13. There is a need to ensure that engagement with international financial institutions (and other global actors) on issues related to WEE is coherent with UN-Women’s overall strategy for cross-sectoral and thematic engagement with such institutions, and builds on existing engagements (joint research, technical cooperation, capacity development and convening) in the areas of gender data and public finance. While mainstreaming gender in macroeconomic debates is recognized by many stakeholders as a key area of work, there is also concern about insufficient capacity to engage effectively on these issues. The recent shift of engagement with international financial institutions to the EE section and the linking of this section with the Financing for Gender Equality Hub represent positive steps towards establishing the appropriate internal architecture to strengthen work with international financial institutions.

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

Conclusion 3. The lack of a WEE strategy and managerial vacancies have impacted the direction of UN-Women’s work on WEE as well as the efficiency of its internal architecture and personnel. While there has been substantial progress in various WEE sub-thematic areas, the absence of a specific overarching organizing framework for WEE has hindered coherence. The recent appointment of the Chief of EE and the current development of a strategy provides an opportunity to strengthen the strategic focus and organization of UN-Women’s work on WEE, including more proactive and systematic cross-thematic linkages.

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

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

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

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

Conclusion 4. UN-Women's reporting shows that the Entity has exceeded or is close to achieving its targets on strengthening gender-responsive WEE policies, including on decent work, social protection, care systems, gender-responsive procurement and land tenure systems. While some inconsistencies exist in interpretation and results reporting by countries, evidence collected from case studies shows significant contribution through constructive and agile engagement in the policy change process. There is limited monitoring of the impact of policy change on the lives of women and girls, which warrants further attention, for accountability purposes and learning and also to strengthen the communication of UN-Women's results.

19. Changes in policies on decent work, social protection, care systems, gender-responsive procurement and land tenure systems have led to some progress. During 2018–2021, according to UN-Women's management monitoring and reporting data, the Entity contributed to the development and/or implementation of 53 gender-responsive macroeconomic policies, 41 gender-responsive fiscal stimulus packages, 114 laws and policies promoting women's access to decent employment, 69 laws and policies on gender-responsive social protection systems, and 85 laws and regulations on the care economy. However, the reporting of some of these results within UN-Women's results management system is inconsistent, showing different interpretations of indicators. This suggests a need to harmonize reporting and provide further guidance in some cases. Evidence from case studies confirmed that significant efforts have been made along the "pathway" to policy change, often taking several years. UN-Women's role in convening diverse stakeholders, providing technical support, developing evidence-based data and using specific policy analysis methodologies and policy guidance tools are particularly valued.

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

Conclusion 5. The proposed Signature Initiatives provide opportunities to work programmatically and scale up activities on global priorities for WEE, by embedding changes in laws, frameworks and policies in wider systemic change. While UN-Women is able to lead and support on the care economy, decent work and entrepreneurship at the global level, the Entity needs to strengthen its capacity on climate change if it is to play a supportive role in this area (including in gender-responsive approaches to the transition to green and blue economies and climate-resilient agriculture).

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

22. UN-Women has made significant and pioneering contributions on transforming the care economy around the world, placing the issue on the global agenda, generating evidence and advocating for change. The Entity is well positioned to continue its leadership role (for instance with the Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights, the Global Alliance for Care as well as joint programmes with other agencies, including the International Labour Organization). UN-Women brings experience and expertise in research and data, convening and advocacy in this area and in its collaboration with partners, including the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund and the African Development Bank.

23. Within the proposed Signature Initiative on decent work and entrepreneurship, UN-Women aims to build on the Entity's substantial body of work on tackling discriminatory norms, laws and policies in both the public and private sectors. The Entity works with different partners and takes a leading or supportive role that depends on the presence and role of different actors in different contexts. At the country level, UN-Women often leads in gender-responsive procurement, both in advocacy and implementation. The Signature Initiative also provides the opportunity to include the rights of migrants to work, as UN-Women is one of the few actors bringing a rights-based approach to migration. This Initiative will draw on UN-Women's comparative strengths in convening, research and diagnosis, although a "toolkit" of methodologies and tools that are used in related policy analysis throughout UN-Women has yet to be established.

24. The third proposed Signature Initiative on women's climate action and green and blue economies is responding to the pressing global need to address the threats and impacts of climate change and environmental destruction, with a focus on the destruction of livelihoods and markets that disproportionately impacts women, as well as the unequal access to natural resources (including land tenure systems). UN-Women plays an important supportive role in the climate change process to ensure a gender-responsive approach, including in green and blue economies. However, as a relatively new significant area, UN-Women does not yet have the capacity to successfully support efforts in a consistent way. There is also a need to ensure that climate change work is mainstreamed across the WEE portfolio, as part of a broader organization-wide strategy on climate change.

Conclusion 6. Financial and human resources are identified as the most significant challenges for UN-Women in advancing gender-responsive WEE laws, frameworks and policies. Personnel at all levels are overstretched and take on multiple functional roles. There is a need to improve support across headquarters, regional offices and country offices, for example, to support programme management, knowledge management and resource mobilization. While WEE was the least-funded thematic area from 2018 to 2021, the increased planned budget for Strategic Plan 2022–2025 is more commensurate with WEE’s broad mandate.

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

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

27. While there are positive examples of coordination across headquarters, regional offices and country offices, there was a need to establish clear lines of responsibility for supporting country offices in data generation, sharing policy guidance, tools and methodologies, or knowledge management in the spirit of “pivoting to the field”. Limited systematic knowledge management and sharing risk undermining the utility and value of the rich research and knowledge products developed.

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

Conclusion 7. Supporting a gender-responsive WEE policy is a suitable strategy for nationally owned, sustainable change and potential impact at scale. Systematic attention needs to be directed towards advocating for policies that are resourced and have implementation plans and appropriate accountability frameworks. The interrelationship between changes in laws, frameworks, policies and social norms is also important for sustainability and should be consistently articulated and integrated within UN-Women programming.

29. UN-Women’s approach to working on WEE, in supporting the development and strengthening of gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies is paving the way for nationally owned changes. Policy and legislative change represent significant achievements, so efforts towards such change need to be supported by appropriate resources and implementation plans to ensure realizable and long-term change. The tracking and monitoring of the results of policy change is also important, yet challenging. In addition to supporting governments, UN-Women could draw on its networks and resources in the CSO movement to support this.

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

Conclusion 8. UN-Women’s overall approach to WEE considers the leave-no-one-behind principle and is perceived as relevant to the needs of marginalized groups. This approach could be strengthened by translating global principles and approaches into practical and context-specific tools, improving the availability of disaggregated data and by strengthening considerations of the connected systems and structures of power.

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

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

V. Key recommendations

Recommendation 1: UN-Women should continue supporting the global discourse and normative frameworks on WEE, while advocating for gender-responsive approaches in emerging priority areas.

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

34. UN-Women should continue to take an evidence-based approach in responding to new and emerging crises/priority areas. In particular, the Entity should undertake analyses of current economic trends (such as the implications

for women of current macroeconomic stagnation, and the cost-of-living crisis), environmental changes and political developments to assess the likely impacts on WEE and propose mitigating policies and laws. The Entity should draw on lessons from its successful response to COVID-19 (gender-disaggregated data collection and use, rapid assessments, development and implementation of gender-responsive policy tools).

Recommendation 2: UN-Women’s WEE strategy should include a clear articulation of key definitions and a framework for WEE, an assessment of current financial and human resources allocated to WEE policy support, and clarity on the approach to harnessing cross-thematic linkages.

35. UN-Women should develop and articulate a progressive global framework on WEE that is rights-based and complementary to the approach of partners. The Entity should harness the opportunity provided by the development of a WEE strategy to reflect on the strategic direction and ensure it is grounded in the realities of available resources. The approach should also be compatible with the systems and mechanisms for operationalizing systemic outcomes (including on gender-responsive normative frameworks, policies and institutions) of the new Strategic Plan 2022–2025. The approach should also make links with the work of the Humanitarian Action section.

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

Recommendation 3: UN-Women should refine and systematize its approach to partnerships for WEE and look to further strengthen its engagement with international financial institutions (and other global actors) where strategically advantageous.

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

38. UN-Women should strengthen the systematic engagement of CSOs and enhance the Entity’s coordination role in WEE within the United Nations system. The Entity should also strategically review the potential of WEE-related work with international financial institutions to further contribute to macroeconomic policy debates; to cohere with other key areas of engagement (including financing for gender equality, strengthening availability of gender-disaggregated data, etc.); and to demonstrate readiness to engage (capacity, networks, resources). The Entity should continue to provide technical support as well as convening and capacity development support to governments, while also advocating for adequate resource allocation to the implementation of gender-responsive WEE policies.

Recommendation 4: UN-Women should review and formalize the roles and responsibilities of headquarters, regional offices and country offices in the

area of WEE, particularly in terms of knowledge-sharing and management, research and data, and monitoring and reporting.

UN-Women should review the coordination and communication of the EE section among headquarters, regional and country office levels, with a view to supporting country offices to have the resources, capacity and knowledge to advance WEE outcomes at the country level. To improve knowledge management, the headquarters of the EE section could consider creating a central repository of research, guidance, relevant tools, methodologies and examples of the application in different contexts and successful strategies to support the development and implementation of gender-responsive laws and policies. To enhance research and data, a research and data expert could respond to the research and data requests of country offices by providing a network of experts and knowledge exchange as appropriate.

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

Recommendation 5: UN-Women should develop sustainable approaches to addressing structural barriers that impede WEE and to supporting social norms change. Efforts should be focused on supporting governments and other actors to monitor the effects of WEE policy changes on women's lives and livelihoods.

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

41. The Entity should strengthen data capacities in the EE section and collaborate further with the Research and Data section to support national statistical offices and relevant ministries with tools and guidance on the collection and use of gender-disaggregated data. It is recommended that UN-Women explores ways to support governments to monitor the effects of WEE laws, frameworks and policy changes on people's lives and livelihoods, for instance, by drawing on monitoring frameworks from CSOs and development agencies and by collecting and sharing stories of change from the field.

Recommendation 6: UN-Women should refine and contextualize its approach and strategy for leaving no one behind and including marginalized groups, as they relate to WEE.

42. UN-Women should consider the global leave-no-one-behind principle in the context of WEE and embed this into the WEE strategy. It is recommended to develop practical guidance for use in different regional and country contexts, highlight good examples of comprehensive and practical leave-no-one-behind approaches to WEE and provide tools to bolster relevant monitoring and evaluation capacities in the field to fully execute leave-no-one-behind requirements. The Entity should also continue to expand outreach and engagement with organizations focusing on marginalized groups, including youth and persons with disabilities.

ANNEX 1

Evaluation findings and key questions

Key question 1. To what extent is UN-Women’s work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies for WEE aligned with global normative frameworks, priority policy areas and the needs of beneficiaries?

Finding 1. UN-Women’s work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies for WEE is well aligned with global normative frameworks and includes efforts to support adherence to these frameworks at the regional level. UN-Women also promotes and contributes to shaping global discourse around policy issues related to WEE.

Finding 2. UN-Women’s work to support gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies is aligned with priorities identified in the Entity’s Strategic Plans and regional Strategic Notes. The WEE thematic area includes an expansive range of priority policy areas, each requiring specialized technical expertise.

Finding 3. UN-Women’s programming on WEE is aligned with national priorities. The Entity has also made efforts to identify and address beneficiary needs, including through a grass-roots approach in some cases.

Key question 2. To what extent is UN-Women’s work in WEE coherent with the work of partners and other key thematic areas? How effectively does UN-Women leverage its integrated mandate?

Finding 4. UN-Women works in a coordinated way with partners at the global level and makes great efforts to enhance coherence among actors to pave the way towards a more conducive enabling environment for WEE. There is scope to deepen and expand partnerships that can contribute to addressing the systemic and structural challenges for women in global economic systems.

Finding 5. UN-Women is making commendable efforts to enhance coordination with regional partners such as the African Union, though there is scope to enhance working with regional economic commissions. Coherence with government partners at the national level is noteworthy, with concerted efforts to engage with finance/WEE-related government ministries in addition to ministries working on gender equality. While acknowledging the influential role of the private sector, there are concerns about potentially differing agendas on WEE policy. There are examples of engagement with CSOs in the WEE policy cycle, particularly policy implementation, but this has yet to be systematized.

Finding 6. UN-Women has comparative strengths in supporting the development of WEE laws, frameworks and policies given its focus on the EE of women and girls, its direct engagement with national government partners and convening power among a range of actors.

Finding 7. There are positive examples of UN-Women employing its integrated mandate (normative, coordination, operational) and enhancing the enabling environment to realize women and girls’ economic rights. However, there remains scope to systematically strengthen the mutually reinforcing links among operational, coordination and normative work in this area.

Finding 8. The absence of a specific organizing framework for WEE has impacted the strategic direction, key definitions and conceptual underpinnings of UN-Women's work in this area, thereby limiting the internal coherence of the WEE thematic area to some extent.

Finding 9. Cross-thematic linkages are evident in some country-level policy engagement work particularly between WEE and gender-based violence, and WEE and gender-responsive budgeting. At the headquarters level, there is strong collaboration between WEE and the Research and Data Division, and WEE and the Intergovernmental Division. Scope remains to enhance cross-thematic coordination.

Key question 3. To what extent have UN-Women's efforts in this area led to demonstrable impact/outcomes? What metrics exist to measure progress?

Finding 10. UN-Women's reporting on contributions to the development and strengthening of WEE laws, frameworks and policies shows progress in many areas, though some results may be inconsistently reported. Evidence collected from case studies shows significant contribution through constructive and agile engagement within the policy change process.

Finding 11. Although it is highly plausible that UN-Women's contribution to WEE policy/legislative change has had positive effects on the livelihoods of women and girls, there is limited monitoring data to draw upon. The need to assess the impacts of WEE policy/legislative change on the livelihoods of women and girls is increasingly recognized; however, it is a challenging area, particularly given current capacity constraints.

Finding 12. One of UN-Women's key contributions has been generating research and evidence to inform WEE debates and support the policy dialogue/development process. The application of methodologies for the diagnostic analysis of the gender responsiveness of policies/legislation has particular relevance across the organization.

Key question 4. What efforts have been made to ensure efficiency of programming and sustainability of benefits and efforts in this area?

Finding 13. The budget for WEE during the period 2018 to 2021 was the lowest of all the UN-Women thematic areas and did not reflect its broad mandate or strategic priority. Core funding to WEE, which is already limited, declined during the period, and the consequent reliance on non-core funding led to a portfolio of shorter-term project funding. Human resources for the EE section are stretched and many positions are funded through short-term project funding which are not synchronized with longer-term policy change work.

Finding 14. Within WEE, the approach to coordination and communication across headquarters, Regional and Country Offices has been varied and ad hoc. The potential knowledge/experience sharing is undermined by limited systematic knowledge management across the WEE thematic area.

Finding 15. While UN-Women is making significant strides in supporting the development of gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies, there is a need to routinely support governments to develop accompanying resources and implementation plans to support the realization of policies. There are also

untapped opportunities to engage women's groups to enhance accountability of policy implementation.

Finding 16. Although social norms change and its relationship with WEE policy change is not articulated or systematically integrated, there are examples of social norms change being included within WEE programming.

Key question 5. To what degree are human rights and the leave-no-one-behind principle – including disability inclusion and gender equality principles – integrated in this area of work?

Finding 17. While UN-Women's work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies related to WEE broadly reflect human rights, leaving no one behind, including disability inclusion, and gender equality principles, the approach could be more structured. There are some good examples of a comprehensive leave-no-one-behind approach, but availability of disaggregated data remains a key challenge.