

UN-Women

Discussion Note

Developing UN-Women Integrated Results and Resources Framework For the Strategic Plan 2018-2021

The purpose of this paper is to frame key issues for UN-Women as it prepares its results framework for the Strategic Plan 2018-2021. UN-Women will take into account lessons learned from the midterm review of its Strategic Plan 2014-2017, external reviews, as well internal assessments and evaluations from the Independent Evaluation Office on the strengths and weaknesses of its current plan and results framework as a basis for the development of the new framework. This paper outlines key issues that emerged from these assessments and subsequently identifies a possible structure for the results framework of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

I. Analysis of the Results Framework of the current Strategic Plan 2014-2017

The results framework is an essential component of the Strategic Plan. It plays a critical role in defining UN-Women priorities and specific contributions to results for women and girls and provides a performance reporting framework through specific indicators and targets. The results framework of the current Strategic Plan has two components: (i) a development results framework; and (ii) an organizational effectiveness and efficiency framework. In line with other UN entities, UN-Women will develop an Integrated Results and Resources Framework for its Strategic Plan 2018-2021. This discussion note focuses mainly on the structure of development results, as it represents an essential first step for the preparation of the results framework.

As mentioned above, a number of assessments have identified strengths and weaknesses of the current results framework. This section provides an analysis of these considerations and their implications for the development of a new results framework.

UN-Women's current strategic plan remains a sound instrument for the achievement of the Entity's mandate. The plan and its results framework is relevant, enables flexibility to adapt to emerging challenges and a changing contextual environment. As such, it is an instrument that is well positioned to ensure that UN-Women can support Member States in the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The midterm review of the Strategic Plan 2014-2017 noted the continued relevance of the Strategic Plan in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also found that UN-Women's six impact areas contribute in an integrated manner to a large number of SDG targets. It noted that UN-Women's outcomes and outputs encapsulate the specific strategies

identified by the Commission on the Status of Women in its Political Declaration at its 59th session for the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

However, the review also noted the need to further align the results framework with the 2030 Agenda, notably by fully integrating relevant SDG indicators in the framework. In line with the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda, it is also essential for UN-Women priorities to contribute not only to achieving SDG 5, but to provide support to ensure that the entire agenda delivers for women and girls.

UN-Women’s strategic plan is a good vehicle for communicating UN-Women’s work to both internal and external audiences. Its thematic pillars (i.e. leadership and political participation; economic empowerment; elimination of violence against women and girls; women, peace and security and humanitarian action; governance and national planning) and a pillar on global norms and standards are clearly understood by all key partners and allow for effective management of expectations and the efficient communication of results and impact. In addition, the existing structure of the Strategic Plan closely mirrors UN-Women’s organizational design, ensuring that all staff share a common framework integrating the work of organizational units in support of common goals.

However, while all areas of the current strategic plan remain relevant, there is a need for greater logic in the results structure. Impact areas currently mix thematic priorities, contexts and strategies, sometimes at the risk of overlaps and double or inaccurate reporting. Resolving these issues will be essential to strengthen the causal logic between impact/goal and outcomes based on an overall theory of change.

UN-Women’s current strategic plan is fully supported by the Entity’s results management system. UN-Women uses its results management system for all corporate annual work planning, monitoring and reporting processes. The strategic plan results framework is the basic results architecture to which all other results are related and linked through the system. Any revision to the results framework will therefore entail changes in UN-Women’s programme information management systems with corresponding implications in terms of timeline and cost for completion. In addition, available data will be essential to inform the establishment of baselines, targets and annual milestones. Depending on the scope of changes to the current results framework, there may not be sufficient data and evidence to inform solid indicators and accurate targets.

UN-Women’s current results framework is large and complex. There has been an imbalance between the complexity and size of the results framework and the benefits that could accrue from managing it. The framework is long with 118 indicators across all results and, during the period of the current plan, the number of offices and units reporting against results grew to over 100, producing a large amount of data annually. If all offices reported against all indicators, this would represent over 10,000 values per year. In addition, UN-Women’s corporate results

architecture includes a separate Strategic Framework submitted for approval to the General Assembly in the context of allocations of assessed contributions.

While this information has been valuable to measure UN-Women's performance, particularly in providing detailed information for the data companion produced each year as an annex to the Annual Report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan, there is a need to streamline the results framework to a more manageable level with more precise and strategically selected indicators that measure UN-Women's performance and the impact of the Strategic Plan.

Independent assessments have found impact and outcome level statements in UN-Women's current strategic plan and results framework to be technically sound. However, UN-Women must better capture the Entity's contribution to outcomes. Several assessments and evaluations have noted that it is difficult to pinpoint UN-Women's specific contributions to expected results at each level of the results chain because many output-level results appear to be at the outcome level. The new results framework needs to strengthen UN-Women's level of accountability at the output level. In addition, these results need not only to be better quantifiable, but also better capture the level of expected qualitative change.

Over the last two years, UN-Women undertook an exercise to sharpen its programmatic focus as reported in the midterm review of the Strategic Plan. The development of Flagship Programming Initiatives (FPIs) provided UN-Women with greater focus by consolidating a large number of small-scale, short-duration UN-Women only projects into a small number of larger multi-stakeholder transformative programmes. UN-Women is still in the process of rolling out the FPIs and this experience will be an invaluable input into the development of more specific outputs capturing UN-Women's contribution to larger outcomes. In addition, a clear categorization of output types will help bring focus to the type of interventions directly attributable to UN-Women.

The current results framework does not adequately capture the contribution of UN-Women's composite mandate to development results. UN-Women's current results framework isolates its normative, UN coordination and operational work. The new results framework provides an opportunity to better reflect the integrated nature of UN-Women's composite mandate and logically articulate how all three parts of the mandate come together in support of global outcomes.

The normative work undertaken by the Entity encompasses normative intergovernmental support functions (at the global level), currently reflected in impact area 6, as well as support to Member States to translate intergovernmentally-agreed global norms and standards at the national level. In the latter case, normative work is fully integrated in UN-Women's operational activities and reflected in a number of outcomes and outputs under specific thematic areas. However, it has been difficult to clearly track this normative work and how it complements other types of interventions within each impact area. At the same time, there are important linkages of this work with intergovernmental normative support functions at the global level in the specific thematic areas, such as leadership and participation, economic empowerment, ending violence

against women and girls and women, peace and security. The new results framework needs to more clearly capture the two types of normative work and their interlinkages.

Similarly, the current results framework only reflects one dimension of UN-Women's coordination work (in particular the UN System-Wide Action Plan on gender equality and women's empowerment) in the organizational effectiveness and efficiency framework. The evaluation of the UN coordination function emphasized the need to better capture the contribution of UN-Women's coordination work for the achievement of development results. This can be done through dedicated outputs and/or indicators within specific thematic areas.

This approach will also be informed by better coordination and coherence with other UN agencies to ensure system-wide complementarity in support of the achievement of the gender equality agenda. UN-Women is dedicated to a common approach to the strategic planning process, ensuring similarity in terminology, approach, theory of change, scenario planning across the strategic plans of other entities, as well as joint thinking on the development of indicators, targets and baselines. To this effect, UN-Women is participating in several inter-agency working groups on the SDGs, results-based management, and linking results to resources, to ensure a harmonized approach to strategic planning. In addition, UN-Women is leading the inter-agency group on gender equality to ensure that key UN partners clearly articulate their complementarity and that UN-Women is able, within this broader landscape, to leverage partnerships in a highly catalytic manner.

Leaving no one behind. While the current results framework provides disaggregated information for relevant indicators, the commitment of the 2030 Agenda to "leaving no one behind" requires an even stronger focus on those at risk of being most marginalized. This issue has also been emphasized in the Beijing+20 review which highlighted that women experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination are most at risk of inequality in opportunities and outcomes. The new results framework will need to incorporate greater information on this dimension in relevant indicators.

Linking results to resources. The current results framework is not linked to specific resource envelopes, which are contained in the Integrated Budget. UN-Women has prioritized the integration of its results management system and its financial planning system (Atlas), which will provide valuable information to strengthen the results to resources linkage in the new results framework. This will be based on a realistic costing of outcomes with details on the use of core and non-core resources. Financial scenario planning will allow UN-Women to articulate how its results will be prioritized, differentiating aspirational targets from realistic income-based ones (linked to resource mobilization outcomes).

II. Possible structure of the Results Framework for the Strategic Plan 2018-2021

Based on the analysis above, a number of new elements and key considerations will inform the development of the new results framework:

- Strong alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through the integration of relevant SDG indicators;
- Integration of strategies identified in the CSW 59 Political Declaration on Beijing+20;
- Integration of the triple mandate;
- Easy to communicate priorities aligned with a theory of change;
- Simplification and streamlining of the result framework by reducing the number of impacts, outcomes, outputs and indicators;
- Clarity on UN-Women’s contribution at the output level and linked to Flagship Programming Initiatives;
- Results and indicators that capture the commitment to “leaving no one behind”;
- Strengthened linkage between results and resources.

On this basis, UN-Women has used its current results framework as the starting point to identify necessary adjustments to respond to the considerations above.

In line with other UN entities, UN-Women proposes to include a **single impact area** (rather than six) in its new results framework. This would provide an overarching vision of success directly linked to the achievement of gender equality and women’s empowerment and an opportunity to more clearly link UN-Women’s support to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The impact statement could be broadly defined as “achieve gender equality, empower all women and girls, and realize their human rights”. This would also more clearly respond to General Assembly resolution 64/289 paragraph 51 (b) which stated that “the Entity shall provide [...] guidance and technical support to all Member States, across all levels of development and in all regions, at their request, on *gender equality, the empowerment and rights of women and gender mainstreaming*” (emphasis added). Indicators under this impact area would reflect relevant SDG indicators and other impact indicators relevant to the gender equality agenda.

UN-Women’s performance in supporting the development of a comprehensive set of **global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and women’s empowerment** would be captured as a second level impact, indicating that the intergovernmental support functions of UN-Women go beyond the specific outcome areas in the results framework (which are focused on selected themes). This would also clarify the scope and reduce overlaps in reporting. Indicators of performance for the intergovernmental normative support function would be aligned with expected accomplishments of the Strategic Framework in order to strengthen linkages between the two frameworks.

The thematic areas of work (“impact areas” in the current framework) would become **outcomes**. This may need a rephrasing of the outcomes and selection of related indicators. In order to ensure continuity, outcomes would largely follow the structure of the current results framework with a limited number of proposed changes.

The thematic area of **‘leadership and participation’** would be merged with **‘governance and national planning’** so as to demonstrate more clearly the causal linkages between the two areas of work. The outcome area would include specific indicators capturing the various dimensions of this work, including support to CEDAW reporting, access to justice, gender statistics and other relevant areas.

Results of the important work on **women, peace and security and humanitarian action** would continue to be captured through a stand-alone outcome, but would also include shared indicators or outputs across other outcome areas in order to better demonstrate and capture linkages between them. For example, women’s participation and leadership in peace-related processes contributes both to the governance and leadership outcome and to the women, peace and security outcome – this would be captured through a shared indicator.

Proposed changes to the current results framework would also include three new elements: the inclusion of drivers of change, corporate output indicator categories, and strategic enablers.

Drivers of change: In addition to specific results, a number of change strategies would be identified as a key contribution to results. These may be similar to ‘output categories’ but closer to a programme or development strategy. These change strategies are the ‘red threads’ that run through UN-Women’s programmes regardless of thematic area or operational context. They are catalysts for change across the entire programmatic portfolio and capture “how” the Entity supports transformative change. The following proposed “drivers of change” have been identified: Innovation and technology; Alliance-building and movement for change; Youth engagement; South-South cooperation; Knowledge-hub; and Evidence, data and statistics.

Corporate output indicator categories: In order to improve the definition of outputs, UN-Women suggests introducing corporate output indicator categories. These would allow to better articulate and measure UN-Women’s contribution to change and specifically what the organization delivers/produces with its resources and for which it can be held accountable. The inclusion specific normative and coordination outputs or output indicators would enable a better integration of UN-Women’s triple mandate under each outcome. Output indicator categories would also be aligned with Flagship Programming Initiatives, as the key programming instrument supporting the delivery of UN-Women’s outputs.

Strategic enablers: These enablers are based on the priorities identified by the Commission on the Status of Women in its Political Declaration on the occasion of Beijing+20. They represent the key elements encapsulating the nature of UN-Women’s thematic work and the levers that UN-Women uses to catalyze change and deliver results for women and girls. In line with the CSW 59 Political Declaration, strategic enablers would be defined around the following themes: (i) laws, policies and strategies; (ii) institutions and mechanisms; (iii) social norms and stereotypes; (iv) investments for gender equality; (v) strengthening accountability.

Flagship Programming Initiatives (FPs) are a programming modality supporting the achievement of results in the Strategic Plan in a way that synergistically combines UN-Women’s triple

mandate. FPIs will contribute to the achievement of outputs in the results framework. Corporate-level indicators will be derived from FPIs and directly linked to an array of more specific indicators through the FPI Theories of Change and associated indicators. The analysis of the roll-out of FPIs to date will constitute valuable information to define outputs that accurately capture UN-Women's contributions to results.

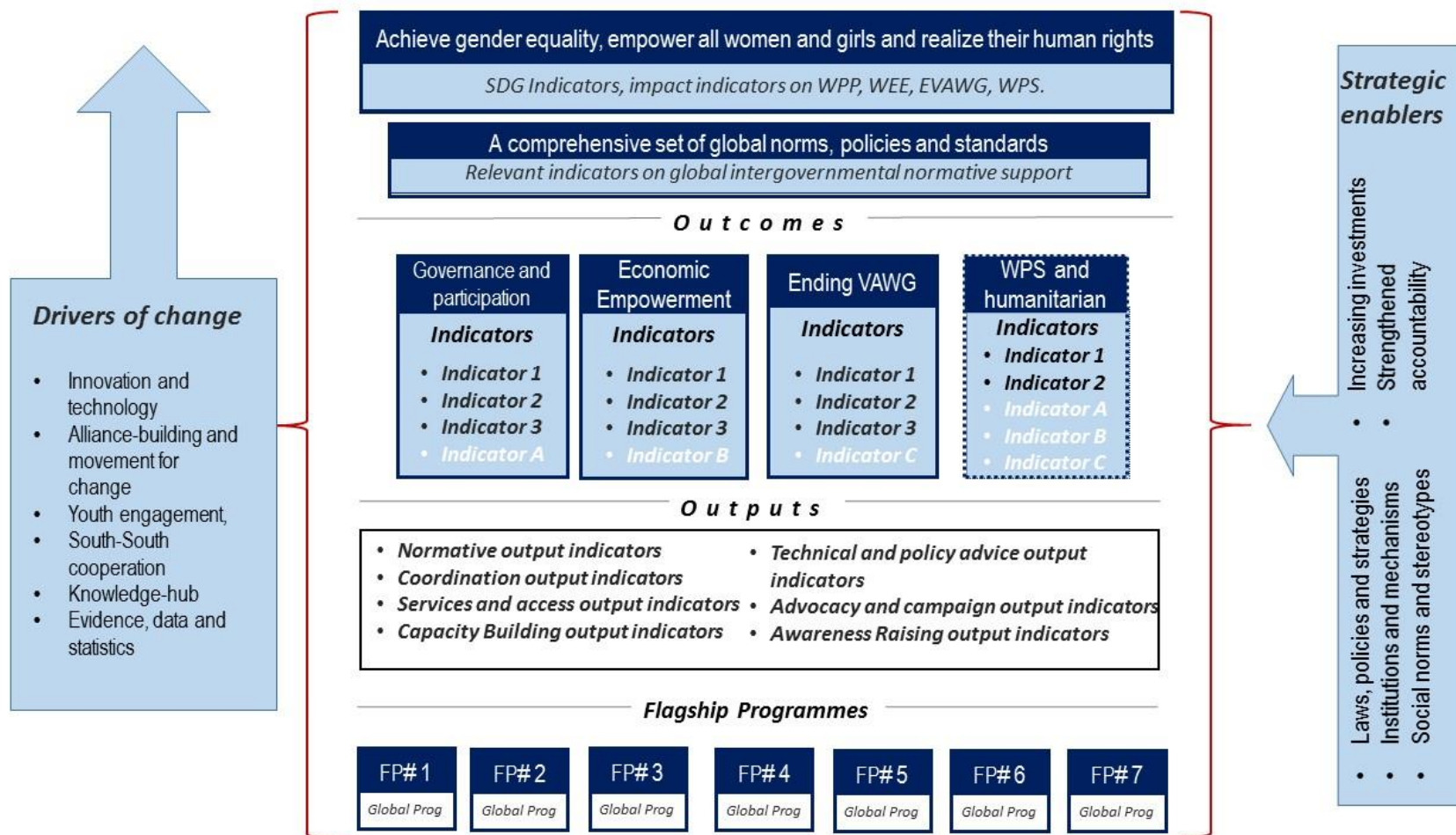
Figure 1 below provides a visual representation of this proposed results framework structure.

This model has a number of advantages. It is closely aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in particular SDG 5 and fully incorporates the guidance from the CSW 59 Political Declaration on Beijing+20. It captures in a compelling way the transformation that UN-Women's wants to effect in the lives of women and girls. It is also largely aligned with the current Strategic Plan and therefore already familiar to key stakeholders. In addition, it is consistent with the findings of the midterm review of the Strategic Plan 2014-2017.

Likewise, it does not require major changes in internal roles and responsibilities, areas of expertise or to the architecture of the results management system. This would also allow a longer-term mapping of trends on UN Women's work in support of gender equality and women's empowerment due to relative consistency of data categories. In addition, higher-level results are greatly simplified in comparison with the previous results framework (reduction from 13 outcomes to 4). The similarities with the current results framework would provide a good basis for the purposes of linking results and resources.

At the same time, since some of these areas are common to other UN entities, it would be important to ensure coherence and complementarity with the work of UN agencies in these areas. Similarly, UN-Women's contribution would need to be much more explicit than in the current results framework; in this regard great attention would be put on the definition of specific outputs and their contribution to outcomes.

Figure 1



III. Next steps

At the informal workshop on the development of the Strategic Plan on 13 February 2016, UN-Women hopes to receive informal feedback and direction on these proposed changes. This feedback will allow UN-Women to further refine the model and move to the development of outcome and output statements, as well as the selection of indicators, based on specific theories of change. This will lead to the finalization of the Integrated Results and Resources Framework for the new Strategic Plan.

The results framework will be developed alongside the narrative of the new Strategic Plan. Early drafts will be ready in mid-April 2017 for discussion with the Executive Board members. The draft Strategic Plan 2018-2021 will be presented for feedback at the Annual Session in June 2017 and then further refined to a final version by August 2017.