



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

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**Evaluation**

## **Evaluation of UN-Women's support to women, peace and security national action plans**

### *Summary*

This report summarizes the evaluation of UN-Women's support to women, peace and security national action plans during 2015–2019.

The evaluation assessed the relevance and coherence, effectiveness and organizational efficiency and sustainability of UN-Women's global, regional and national work to support the development and implementation processes of national action plans on women, peace and security. It identified lessons learned and provided recommendations to solidify UN-Women's work in this area.

The primary intended users of the evaluation are the UN-Women Executive Board, UN-Women senior management and programme personnel at global, regional and country levels.

## **I. UN-Women's work in supporting national action plans on women, peace and security**

1. Over the last two decades, UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) has been the central framework for addressing challenges faced by women in situations of conflict, along with nine subsequent supporting resolutions in this area. National Action Plans (NAPs) for implementation of WPS objectives are the main mechanisms by which global WPS frameworks are translated into concrete strategies, actions and outcomes at national level. Responsibility for implementation of WPS NAPs lies with national governments as outlined in UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions. As of November 2020, 92 UN Member States and territories had adopted a NAP on WPS, while several regional and subregional organizations also developed Regional Action Plans (RAPs) for implementation of UNSCR 1325.

2. UN-Women plays a pivotal role in WPS objectives at global, regional and national levels. Globally, UN-Women provides leadership, knowledge sharing and advocacy on WPS, and coordinates UN system work in this area. At regional level, UN-Women supports an enabling environment for regional and subregional organizations to advance WPS objectives. At national level, UN-Women supports countries to develop, implement, monitor and review their WPS NAPs by providing coordination, technical expertise, guidance and tools, and lessons and best practices.

3. UN-Women makes significant financial investments in WPS, specifically related to work on NAPs. During 2015–2019, UN-Women's expenditure on its Strategic Output 4.1/4.1.2, 'WPS commitments and accountability frameworks adopted and implemented in conflict and post-conflict situations', was estimated to be US\$ 88 million, while the amount budgeted was estimated at US\$ 114 million. Ninety-six per cent of this funding came from non-core resources.

## **II. Evaluation background and context**

### **A. Purpose, objectives and scope**

4. This evaluation, conducted by the UN-Women Independent Evaluation Service, assessed UN-Women's support to NAPs development and implementation processes in order to meet WPS commitments and adopt accountability frameworks in conflict and post-conflict countries. Support to the development of WPS NAPs was assessed through UN-Women's interventions, while assessment of support to their implementation focused on UN-Women's contribution to establishing an enabling environment and processes that allow WPS NAPs to be implemented effectively. Effectiveness was assessed by looking at the extent to which UN-Women promoted the five elements identified in the 2015 Global Study<sup>1</sup> on Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 as critical for a high-impact NAP that is likely to be implemented and generate change. The five elements were: strong leadership and effective coordination; an inclusive design process; costing and allocated budgets for implementation; a monitoring and evaluation framework; and flexibility to adapt to emerging situations.

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<sup>1</sup> UN-Women (2015) Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing the peace: a global study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. UN-Women: New York.

5. The evaluation focused on the period 2015–2019 and covered results from the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2014–2018 and the first two years of the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan.

6. The evaluation had four main objectives: (1) assess the relevance and coherence, effectiveness and organizational efficiency, and sustainability of UN-Women’s global, regional and national work to support WPS NAPs development and implementation processes; (2) analyse how human rights perspectives and gender equality principles are integrated into UN-Women’s support to WPS NAPs development and implementation processes; (3) identify a menu of evidence of what works in terms of UN-Women’s support to the development and implementation of NAPs to facilitate choices about future investments; and (4) identify lessons learned and provide recommendations to solidify UN-Women’s work in this area.

7. In addition to these objectives, the evaluation’s focus was expanded during the inception phase to include a light-touch assessment of the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for WPS and the work of UN-Women in this area.

8. The evaluation findings are intended to inform strategic decision-making, organizational learning and accountability in relation to UN-Women’s WPS NAP work. The primary intended users of the evaluation are the UN-Women Executive Board, UN-Women senior management and programme staff at the global, regional and country levels. The evaluation is also intended to be useful for other actors working on WPS, including partner governments, international and national level Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), civil society, UN agencies and development partners.

## **B. Evaluation methodology**

9. The evaluation was both summative and formative in nature, summarizing information on existing UN-Women strategies and offering recommendations for future work. It adopted a mixed-methods approach and involved four main components of data collection: desk review, including analyses of annual workplans and WPS NAP work for 60 countries, with detailed in-depth review of 20 countries plus headquarters units; virtual case studies of Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Iraq, Mali, Nepal, Uganda and at headquarters level, including 143 interviews conducted, three surveys with UN-Women field presences, civil society organizations (CSOs) and government partners, and international organizations; and analysis of data from UN-Women systems.

10. The evaluation used both quantitative and qualitative analysis, with an evaluation matrix providing an overarching framework for analysis across all evaluation components. A reconstructed theory of change was developed for UN-Women’s work on WPS NAPs and was used as the overarching theory to understand how change happens in this area of work. Contribution analysis was used to understand UN-Women’s performance and assess contributions to observed changes. The evaluation adhered to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) ethics and standards and applied gender equality and human rights principles.

11. The most significant limitations to the evaluation resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. Travel restrictions meant that all field missions had to be replaced by virtual case studies. Therefore, it was not possible to conduct the planned focus group discussions with beneficiaries to gather first-hand evidence on the impact of UN-Women’s work. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic meant that not all identified stakeholders were available for interview.

### III. Key conclusions

12. The evaluation contains 18 findings on which the following 11 conclusions and eight recommendations are based.

**Conclusion 1: UN-Women's WPS NAP support is strongly grounded in SDGs 5 and 16 and in an understanding of local WPS priorities and contexts, allowing the Entity to advance these global goals in a contextually relevant way.**

13. UN-Women used multiple strategies to understand the priorities of local stakeholders and to align its support to the country context. These strategies were effective and ensured that UN-Women's NAP work was relevant in a variety of contexts and was able to address different types of WPS challenges. These strategies included working closely with government and civil society stakeholders on NAPs: for example, in Kyrgyzstan engagement with civil society increased the local relevance of UN-Women's NAP work. Supporting national entities also led to NAP development, as in Uganda where UN-Women emphasized strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Gender to lead the NAP process. Connecting NAP work with wider national plans and processes was another strategy for alignment with local contexts, for example, in Tunisia UN-Women's support was well aligned to existing government plans. Similarly, learning from previous NAP processes was vital: for example, in Nepal where taking account of lessons from the first NAP helped to increase the national relevance of UN-Women's support to the second NAP.

14. UN-Women's NAP support was closely aligned with the SDG framework in all countries. In addition, the evaluation found alignment between UN-Women's NAP support and The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in a number of countries, including examples where CEDAW or the Beijing Platform for Action were effectively used as an overarching framework to advocate for WPS objectives.

15. The evaluation found that UN-Women's NAP work could be better aligned to a broader set of normative frameworks at both global and regional level, and that achieving such alignment requires building knowledge and commitment about these frameworks and their relevance to WPS. For example, in Uganda, the training provided on linkages between WPS and other normative frameworks during the NAP consultation process was a key factor in facilitating alignment. However, the evaluation found that more could be done to link national and regional plans and processes. An important factor that could further advance WPS objectives at the regional level, and potentially be more successful, would be to enhance the strength and effectiveness of the regional institutions themselves, including with adequate staffing, financing and technical expertise. This suggests that UN-Women's work at the regional level could be more strategic in assessing when and how engagement with regional bodies and processes could add value and is worth investing in.

**Conclusion 2: UN-Women's normative and coordination activities in support of WPS NAPs are the most visible and valued by all stakeholders.**

16. UN-Women was widely recognized as playing a unique role in the normative and coordination aspects of NAPs and in adding significant value in these areas. However, there was limited reflection, at organization-wide level and at field level, on how the different roles that UN-Women plays in relation to NAPs can operate in synergy to generate greater impact.

17. At country level, UN-Women's inclusive approach, strong convening power and neutrality enabled it to effectively fulfil its coordination mandate in the area of WPS NAPs. At the global level, UN-Women's normative role allowed it to lead on WPS within the global policy space, as well as establish standards for national NAP processes.

However, there was less recognition among stakeholders of UN-Women's operational role and activities in support of NAPs.

18. The evaluation found that there is significant value in UN-Women's mandate to support all Member States, across all levels of development and in all regions on NAPs, as this gives the Entity traction and influence over WPS with all countries at their request, including development partner countries. However, the importance of this mandate was only recognized by global-level actors, suggesting it is less visible to actors at the national level.

**Conclusion 3: UN-Women engages in external coordination at national, regional and global levels. There is space to strengthen coherence between these levels to provide better support.**

19. UN-Women was perceived as having a clear mandate to lead coordination on WPS and was perceived as strong in this coordination role. The Entity engaged in coordination at national, regional and global levels, with the strongest focus on national-level coordination. This national coordination work included the mobilization of stakeholders and resources, as well as the establishment of NAP development processes and national coordination mechanisms. It generally involved leading three separate but interconnected coordination processes: coordination of national government, CSOs and other national stakeholders; coordination of UN system engagement; and coordination of development partners. An example of successful national-level coordination can be seen in the establishment of the 'Friends of WPS in Mali', an informal group of like-minded development partners focused on promoting the WPS agenda. This group met regularly to share information and develop common strategies on WPS and was also key in generating external funding for NAP implementation

20. At the regional and global level, UN-Women coordinated knowledge generation and exchange; standardization of approaches; and, to a lesser extent, resource mobilization and funding. The extent and efficacy of UN-Women's regional coordination work was found to vary between regions and appeared to be heavily dependent on the regional office's WPS capacity. UN-Women regional offices coordinated some regional interaction on WPS and NAPs among different sets of stakeholders in the Middle East and North Africa, South East Asia and the Western Balkans. UN-Women's global-level coordination role was primarily focused on wider WPS objectives, with less reference to NAPs specifically, and included participation in global-level coordination and funding mechanisms related to WPS.

21. The evaluation concluded that more could be done to strengthen, extend and connect the different elements of UN-Women's external coordination on NAPs by developing synergies with a wide range of actors.

**Conclusion 4: UN-Women is effective in facilitating national WPS NAP processes that build awareness and consensus and strongly contribute to the adoption of WPS NAPs.**

22. In most contexts, UN-Women plays a unique and effective role in bringing together multiple actors and providing neutral convening spaces for dialogue on WPS and NAPs, with the Entity's inclusive approach and neutrality having enabled it to undertake this role. These processes generate commitment and awareness of WPS issues among a wide range of stakeholders; allow discussion on sensitive issues; and build consensus for NAPs. For example, in Guatemala the NAP process facilitated by UN-Women opened up new spaces for dialogue; created more awareness of WPS; and stimulated institutional changes.

23. UN-Women's convening role enabled the Entity to increase awareness of WPS objectives and of context-specific WPS issues. These included issues related to the

pursuit of recognition and justice for victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in Nepal and Guatemala and the gendered implications of preventing violent extremism among youth in Kyrgyzstan, as well as women's participation in the management of water resources, the role of women mediators and the value of community conflict resolution in a number of countries. UN-Women's convening work on NAPs also supported the development of important relationships among different stakeholders, which could then be used to advance wider WPS objectives. For example, in Guatemala, the NAP process convened by UN-Women provided a basis for civil society to then engage with government actors outside this process and advocate for issues such as reparations for victims and survivors of CRSV.

24. UN-Women's strong relationship with civil society, women's machineries and other sectors involved in contributing to gender equality was recognized as adding value to WPS NAP development and implementation. However, while UN-Women field presences generally had a good relationship with actors in sectors involved in advancing gender equality, they did not always have strong relationships with wider elements of state and society that are also important for advancing NAPs.

**Conclusion 5: UN-Women supports high-impact criteria for WPS NAPs, but this support does not always translate into effective WPS NAPs due to external challenges beyond the control of UN-Women.**

25. The evaluation assessed the extent to which UN-Women promotes the high-impact NAP criteria identified in the Global Study (ref paragraph 4). It found that UN-Women focused most strongly on promoting the high-impact criteria of strong leadership and coordination and of inclusive NAP design processes, and that the Entity had been largely effective in doing so.

26. UN-Women supported strong leadership and coordination for WPS through a range of strategies, including advocating for the establishment of national coordination bodies; identifying and building the capacity of key stakeholders within key institutions who can drive NAP processes forward; and supporting CSO leadership to play an oversight, advocacy or implementation function in relation to NAPs. Particularly strong examples of UN-Women's support for leadership and coordination were found in Afghanistan, Iraq, Nepal and Nigeria, as well as in Georgia, where a UN-Women project succeeded in supporting the establishment of a national coordination mechanism to oversee NAP implementation. However, UN-Women's efforts to develop strong leadership and coordination for NAPs were frequently hindered by the high turnover of government officials and by changes in government structures.

27. UN-Women supported inclusive NAP design processes, including by supporting long and complex NAP consultation processes to ensure that relevant stakeholders could participate, and by promoting the participation of a wide range of actors. For example, the NAP development process in Uganda involved in-depth consultations with civil society and state partners, as well as with women survivors of CRSV, and engaged non-traditional stakeholders such as religious leaders. However, the evaluation found that there is space to further improve support for inclusivity: challenges to inclusive NAP design processes included poor security situations and weak regional-level capacity and infrastructure, both of which prevent outreach beyond capital cities.

28. The evaluation found that UN-Women's support for the other elements of a high-impact NAP was more mixed. UN-Women supported costing and budgeting of NAPs in some contexts, primarily through organizing costing exercises and discussions, and supporting preparation of draft costing plans. However, such support rarely resulted in a costing plan adopted by governments as an integral part of the NAP, or translated into annual operational budgets of implementing institutions. This type of support became more prominent in the latest generation of NAPs.

29. UN-Women supported the development of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks within most NAP processes. However, a common pattern appears to be that, although an M&E framework was established, actual monitoring processes were weak due to limited capacity or commitment. The most widely used strategies by UN-Women to advance M&E were providing technical and financial support for the development of M&E guidelines and frameworks, and capacity building for implementation of M&E frameworks. There was limited evidence of UN-Women's support for the development of flexible NAPs or for adapting NAPs to respond to changing contexts, although in some cases NAPs were adjusted to changing situations.

30. While UN-Women mostly supported high-impact NAP criteria, the extent to which such criteria were included in the final NAP is mediated by the complexity of context, the actors involved and the final decisions of governments. In particular, the inclusion of these criteria in the final NAP was often hindered by lack of financial resources; lack of political commitment; limited capacities of national stakeholders to manage the process; and violent conflict. Other barriers that were mentioned included weak coordination among ministries; difficulties in including stakeholders outside the capital and major cities; and lack of institutional infrastructure to support localization.

**Conclusion 6: UN-Women's NAP work contributes to laying the foundations for transformational change. However, UN-Women would benefit from a clear theory of change in this area.**

31. While UN-Women's support to NAPs helped to lay the foundations for transformational change, UN-Women did not have a well-developed understanding of how such change comes about. Nor did the Entity have a range of standardized intervention strategies that could be adapted to local contexts to support NAP implementation. Therefore, it would be useful for UN-Women to elaborate a theory of change that demonstrates how its NAP work can move from lower to higher outcomes reflected in progress towards NAP goals. This understanding would facilitate the development of more effective strategies for achieving gender equality.

32. The evaluation found that UN-Women's WPS NAP support advances gender equality by promoting inclusive processes; raising awareness of gender equality; promoting the inclusion of these issues in NAP documents; supporting women's empowerment and leadership; and building partner capacity. However, the evaluation was unable to assess whether these strategies contributed to actual transformative change in the lives of women and girls, because such transformation tends to be a slow and non-linear process driven by local actors.

33. In all countries UN-Women promoted an inclusive NAP process and sought to engage a wide range of women facing marginalization, including notably conflict-affected women and victims and survivors of CRSV. The evaluation found that UN-Women's support to the NAP development process in Uganda was a good practice in this regard, as it brought together a wide variety of stakeholders in nine regional consultations. However, in other cases, the evaluation found that UN-Women could improve its support for inclusivity and provide more space for additional actors within NAP consultation processes.

34. UN-Women's NAP work included strengthening the capacity of partners to advance gender equality. UN-Women's support to civil society to implement parallel accountability mechanisms was very valuable. The evaluation also identified numerous examples of UN-Women building the capacity of both civil society and government partners to integrate these issues more effectively into their work.

**Conclusion 7: Given the human and financial resources available for NAP development and implementation, the activities implemented produced satisfactory results.**

35. While results were satisfactory given the resources invested, these investments were mostly a small fraction of UN-Women's overall spending on WPS at country level. Overall, UN-Women's spending on NAP activities (not including staffing costs) comprised an estimated 6.3 per cent of the WPS budget in the period under evaluation (2015–2019). However, there were some notable exceptions in this regard, with investments on NAPs in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Nepal and Tunisia comprising an estimated 35 per cent of the WPS budget in this period.

36. The extent to which UN-Women's human and financial resources were adequate to support WPS NAPs development and implementation processes was mixed. The evaluation found that in conflict-affected contexts, high personnel turnover limited the ability of field offices to ensure adequate human resources to support effective NAP development, while in other contexts, country offices faced challenges in ensuring adequate personnel to address political complexities and ensure sustainable progress.

37. The evaluation noted that additional financial resources could have leveraged additional results, in particular for NAP implementation. However, the evaluation also noted that to better understand how the money spent on NAPs translates into results, UN-Women needs to invest in better systems for tracking and reporting results with the right indicators.

**Conclusion 8: Internal thematic and organizational coherence in UN-Women's support to NAPs has implications for how the Entity reports results and manages knowledge and guidance.**

38. While the majority of support to NAP development and implementation was programmed within the WPS thematic area, in some field presences it was programmed within other areas such as End Violence Against Women (EVAW) or Women's Leadership and Political Participation (WLPP), and therefore reported under these areas. This limited UN-Women's ability to have effective oversight of its work on NAPs, or to comprehensively understand and assess how this work contributes to wider outcomes within its Strategic Plan.

39. The evaluation found thematic coherence of NAP development work within WPS, although there was potential for NAPs to be more effectively utilized as a framework for all UN-Women's WPS work. The evaluation also found that UN-Women's NAP work contributed to other areas of UN-Women's work including EVAW, WLPP, Humanitarian Action, gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE). In an example of good practice, the UN-Women country office in Uganda adopted an integrated approach to coordination, policy support and programming across thematic areas, in which it explicitly linked each NAP pillar to its other thematic areas to create synergy. This meant that there were shared goals for NAP implementation and shared responsibilities for advancing policy-level changes across UN-Women's different thematic areas.

40. The evaluation found mixed results in terms of UN-Women's standardization of learning and knowledge products to inform global normative processes. The evaluation identified demand for better packaged and systematized knowledge to inform country-level actors, in particular: best practices and lessons learned on NAPs; guidance on how to address NAP implementation gaps; and lessons on how to assess and capture the impact of NAP implementation and present concrete evidence. Overall, the evaluation assessed that collection, systemization and sharing of best practices in NAP development and implementation within the organization was an area where UN-Women could significantly strengthen its systems and practice. Despite this, the evaluation did identify some interesting initiatives for sharing knowledge and good practice, including UN-Women support for regional-level learning in the Arab States region.



**Conclusion 9: UN-Women recognizes the importance of national ownership of NAPs for their long-term sustainability, and building this ownership is a central element of UN-Women’s engagement on NAPs.**

41. Advancing national ownership was a central element of UN-Women’s work on NAPs, primarily through facilitating inclusive processes; promoting strong coordination; and building capacity of national actors for sustainable implementation.

42. Support for inclusive NAP development processes was the most common strategy for promoting ownership. Capacity building and technical support was also frequently used to advance national ownership. For example, in Uganda UN-Women focused on strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development to lead the NAP process, while in Nepal UN-Women supported the capacity of institutions tasked with NAP implementation at both central and local level.

43. A central strategy of UN-Women to build ownership in a number of countries was in supporting the development of strong coordination mechanisms among national actors responsible for NAP implementation. For example, UN-Women supported the establishment of a cross-sectoral task force for NAP implementation in Iraq. In Georgia, UN-Women encouraged a shift from the NAP being located in the legislative to it being located in the executive branch, which increased government ownership.

44. The evaluation found that UN-Women largely focused on promoting ownership among a relatively limited group of actors directly involved in NAP processes. In most countries, there was limited emphasis on building broader ownership among wider actors and institutions, such as other government ministries.

45. The evaluation also noted that UN-Women could do more to link NAPs to broader policy and planning processes and make the case for their relevance to wider policy goals. The evaluation observed that where UN-Women did successfully support the integration of NAPs into wider policy frameworks or plans they were more likely to be sustainable.

**Conclusion 10: Sustainable implementation of NAPs requires meaningful translation to the local level and ensuring adequate funding is available. UN-Women needs a clearer strategy for how it can support such sustainable implementation.**

46. The evaluation found that UN-Women engages in NAP implementation across multiple countries, although this engagement was not always systematic and there was no standard approach. The most consistent component of UN-Women’s support to implementation was in the Entity’s support to coordination bodies or other mechanisms responsible for NAPs, to monitor, regularly report and/or evaluate progress. In some instances, UN Women field presences also supported the implementation of specific NAP activities such as harmonization of policy frameworks in the defence and security sectors; provision of embedded personnel within government; support for civil society organizations and women mediators in communities; and activities with direct links to the humanitarian portfolio.

47. Effective NAP localization was identified as critical for meaningful ownership and sustainable implementation, especially among local actors and for integrating NAP priorities into local plans. UN-Women provided support for localization in some contexts, including through development of municipal NAPs; advocacy for integrating NAP priorities into municipal development/workplans; establishment of conflict resolution structures in villages and local communities; and engagement of women mediators and cross-border dialogue activities in conflict-affected areas. However, this support could be more widespread and effective. In some contexts, there have been

significant challenges with localisation due to insufficient outreach to local communities and lack of access to provinces in contexts with high conflict and insecurity.

48. Factors related to funding were the greatest barriers to sustainable NAP implementation. Lack of costing and budgeting and insufficient funding for NAP implementation were cited by multiple categories of stakeholders in Nepal, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan and Uganda. GRB was identified as a way to generate some sustainable funding for NAPs, although it was noted that GRB alone is unlikely to raise sufficient revenues. UN-Women worked with several countries to incorporate GRB into their NAP work, either during the development stage or when supporting government ministries to budget their NAP for implementation.

**Conclusion 11: UN-Women has supported COVID-19 responses that take account of WPS issues. There is strong potential for NAP principles and priorities to inform national responses to COVID-19, but so far this has mostly not occurred.**

49. UN-Women supported a gender-sensitive response to COVID-19 and adapted its WPS work to be relevant to this changing context, both by joining the UN integrated COVID-19 response and by refocusing its WPS work to directly address the challenges posed by COVID-19. The Entity has undertaken advocacy work such as social media campaigns, online information sessions and radio broadcasts raising awareness of the linkages between WPS and COVID-19. UN-Women also produced a range of knowledge generation and dissemination activities on gender-sensitive responses to COVID-19. In addition, UN-Women provided support to CSOs and women peacebuilders, including a funding scheme set up with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) through the UN-Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) to fund its COVID-19 responses.

50. National processes to adopt or implement NAPs were delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic in certain countries, while stakeholders reported significant concern that funding for WPS objectives will decrease as funds are used to respond to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. This despite the significant impact COVID-19 has had on women in conflict-affected contexts and the recognition by many stakeholders that WPS could be a useful gender-sensitive framework for responding to the pandemic.

51. Although NAPs are well suited to inform national COVID-19 responses, there was little evidence that they were being used to do so. This was despite 70 per cent of UN-Women field personnel reporting that the NAP supported by their field presence was flexible enough to respond to emerging challenges such as COVID-19.

52. More broadly, the evaluation found that, while key WPS principles and priorities contained in NAPs could be useful in informing national emergency responses – including responses to COVID-19 – they were rarely used in this way. This was in large part because institutions leading emergency responses typically had limited awareness or ownership of the NAP. The majority of stakeholders interviewed recognized the importance of having flexible NAPs that can respond to emerging challenges and crises and that provide a blueprint for actors to coordinate a sustainable gender-responsive emergency action plan. The evaluation recommended that UN-Women focus on developing broad, overarching, flexible NAPs within which strategies and activities can be adapted to respond to emerging challenges, although this inevitably makes monitoring the results achieved more difficult.

## IV. Key recommendations

**Recommendation 1: UN-Women’s WPS NAP support should connect with and scale up a wider range of global normative frameworks, as well as regional frameworks and processes to increase traction.**

53. UN-Women should examine how it can connect its work on WPS with a wide range of normative frameworks and review processes (beyond those strictly related to UNSCR 1325 or conflict) at global, regional and national levels. This could provide traction for NAP work, particularly where there are entry points for UN-Women’s deeper engagement. This could also provide an opportunity for advancing WPS objectives at the normative level. Developing such a strategic approach to alignment would require strengthening knowledge on wider normative frameworks and their relevance to WPS among UN-Women personnel, especially at the country level.

54. The UN-Women Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action (WPSHA) section and regional offices should map global and regional opportunities for engagement on WPS and NAPs and assess the potential of different global or regional frameworks, structures and processes for advancing RAPs and NAPs.

**Recommendation 2: UN-Women should strengthen the synergy between its normative, coordination and operational roles in support of WPS NAPs to enhance its impact.**

55. UN-Women should strengthen its understanding of how the different roles and intervention strategies it adopts to support NAPs can connect to and build upon each other. In particular, UN-Women should identify, and clearly articulate to personnel, what such an integrated approach to WPS NAP work would look like at the country level and how it could be achieved.

56. The WPS section should identify and document good practice examples of an integrated approach to WPS NAP support and develop and disseminate guidance on what an integrated approach looks like and how it can be achieved.

**Recommendation 3: UN-Women should devise a strategy to harmonize its external coordination efforts, with a focus on strengthening and linking global, regional and national-level coordination processes.**

57. UN-Women should strengthen its coordination role in relation to knowledge generation and sharing, in particular ensuring that evidence, lessons and best practices are shared between multiple levels. The WPSHA Section should identify and share effective approaches to NAPs in different contexts as part of its role as coordinator of global and regional communities of practice. UN-Women should channel knowledge and evidence generated from its national-level coordination work to the regional and global level. Such knowledge sharing could be funded from mechanisms such as the UN Peace Building Fund, Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund and others.

58. There is a need to strengthen and expand UN-Women’s role in UN system coordination as well as with other international organizations as it relates to WPS NAPs at all levels. The UN-Women WPS section and national focal points should engage a wider range of national stakeholders in WPS NAP processes to deepen participation and ownership, and use the Entity’s external coordination with development partners to mobilize funding for NAP implementation. The UN-Women WPS section at global level should strengthen links and synergies with other actors and processes whose work has relevance for WPS and NAPs.

59. A strategic approach to coordination is required in the area of WPS NAPs that builds upon the unique coordination role that UN-Women plays on WPS at multiple levels. The UN-Women WPS section should (a) expand global-level networks and

spearhead more dialogue at regional level to strategically feed into global-level recommendations; and (b) draw in national-level actors and facilitate multi-level dialogue on NAPs, for example by encouraging participation of national CSOs in activities of the Global WPS National Focal Points.

**Recommendation 4: UN-Women should continue to expand its current strategies to support WPS NAP development. It should also define a clear and consistent strategy for support to WPS NAP implementation.**

60. UN-Women should continue its existing strategies to support inclusive and well-coordinated NAP development processes, in line with high-impact criteria and use of standardized methodologies. The Entity should ensure wide cross-sectoral participation of all relevant actors from government, civil society and other stakeholders, in particular those outside the capital or major cities.

61. UN-Women needs to decide what role the Entity should play in supporting WPS NAP implementation. It is recommended that UN-Women build upon the embedded theory of change outlined in this evaluation; develop a related strategy to inform its support for WPS NAP implementation; and engage in specific support to implementation actions, based on this theory of change and strategy and on an assessment of where the Entity best adds value.

**Recommendation 5: UN-Women should strengthen its understanding of how to support transformational shifts in gender equality and women's empowerment and should use this to inform its work on WPS and NAPs.**

62. UN-Women should build upon the embedded theory of change outlined in this evaluation to develop a framework for understanding how transformational change in gender equality and women's empowerment happens in conflict-affected settings, and how UN-Women can support such change as part of its work on NAPs. UN-Women should generate more learning from its own interventions regarding which approaches best advance gender equality and the empowerment of women in different types of conflict contexts. UN-Women should develop strategies and tools that could be used to assess what types of transformational change are most critical for delivering on WPS objectives at the country level. UN-Women should identify partners to implement work in this area, as well as ways to capture the results and impact of such work.

**Recommendation 6: WPSHA management should enhance its internal reporting systems related to tracking financial resources and results towards WPS NAPs to better demonstrate and enhance results. It should also strengthen technical leadership to ensure a harmonized approach to WPS NAP support.**

63. UN-Women should undertake an assessment of the financial resources required to provide meaningful support to WPS NAP implementation. Based on this assessment, the Entity could make an informed decision about the strategy it should adopt and the investments to support WPS NAP implementation. WPSHA management, field presences, and regional offices should enhance their internal reporting systems to include stronger impact indicators, as well as strengthen the entity's understanding of how financial resources are linked to results. They should also develop effective systems to store and manage knowledge and invest in building institutional memory so that knowledge and experience on WPS NAPs are captured, retained and can be drawn on in the future. UN-Women should consider maintaining a pool of WPS NAP experts with specific Terms of Reference and technical support from headquarters, from which expertise could be deployed to support national NAP development and implementation in a systematic manner.

**Recommendation 7: UN-Women should expand the range of actors and processes that it engages with on WPS NAPs to broaden and deepen national level ownership**

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**and integrate its engagement on WPS NAPs with its other areas of work at the national level to support sustainable NAP implementation.**

64. Broad national ownership of WPS NAPs across multiple sectors and at multiple levels is critical for sustainable implementation. UN-Women should expand the range of actors and processes that it engages with to build broader based ownership of the WPS NAP. In particular, the Entity should reach out beyond the most directly involved actors to engage with those working in other sectors and demonstrate the relevance of WPS NAPs to their work. Similarly, UN-Women should strengthen its engagement with local-level actors and processes and should use this as an entry point to support localization efforts.

65. To support sustainable NAP implementation, the UN Women should integrate its NAP support with its other areas of work such as GRB or humanitarian work at the national level, thereby leveraging this wider work in support of NAP implementation in a consistent manner.

66. UN-Women should promote the integration of NAPs into other strategies and plans at the country level that UN-Women supports (e.g. national gender strategies or development plans). UN-Women should also connect its NAP work with its other areas of work at country level, including linking UN-Women's GRB programming and NAP work to support the use of GRB to finance NAP implementation; harnessing UN-Women's existing work with civil society on norms and attitudes to address the barriers to meaningful NAP implementation; and using UN-Women's work on themes such as GBV to help meet NAP goals in these areas.

**Recommendation 8: UN-Women should address the immediate need to integrate WPS principles into COVID-19 responses, as well as the longer-term challenge of ensuring that NAPs are used to inform emergency planning.**

67. UN-Women needs to make urgent, strong and consistent efforts to advocate with national, regional and global actors for the consideration of WPS principles in COVID-19 responses. The Entity should also develop longer-term strategies to link NAPs to emergency policy and legal frameworks and planning processes at the national level, so that actors working on emergencies understand the relevance of NAPs and that emergency plans and processes integrate key NAP priorities and principles.