

EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT OF UN WOMEN  
**FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME INITIATIVES AND THEMATIC**  
**PRIORITIES OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2021**



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report, and the overall evaluation process, was informed and enriched by the participation of more than 268 stakeholders, staff and partners – many of whom actively contributed to the development of evaluation findings by serving as reference group members, attending focus group discussions and completing comprehensive surveys. Without the support and active participation of these individuals in the consultation process, this report would not have been possible.

The evaluation was conducted by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES) in collaboration with the Internal Audit Service. The IES team included the Chief of the Independent Evaluation Service, Inga Sniukaite as Evaluation Team Leader; Messay Tassew, Evaluation Specialist; Uldis Kremers, Audit Specialist; Soo Yeon Kim, Evaluation Analyst; Christina Sollito, Research Assistant; and Divvaakar Subramanyam Vidalur, Independent Consultant and Organizational Assessment Expert.

We are grateful to the Internal Reference Group members for their thoughtful comments and insights and for investing significant time and effort to ensure that the evaluation would be of maximum value and use to the organization.

We also extend our thanks to UN Women's Senior Management Team for its feedback and contribution to the evaluation. The evaluation also benefitted from the active involvement of the UN Women Flagship Programme Initiative focal points, and the regional and country office personnel consulted during the data collection phase. We thank these colleagues for the time they invested in supporting the evaluation process and in facilitating the engagement and inclusion of a wide range of partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries.

We would also like to thank IEAS colleagues – Malika Mukhitdinova, Chief of Internal Audit; and Chaitali Chattopadhyay, Regional Evaluation Specialist for their contribution and feedback at the various evaluation process milestones.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who engaged or participated in this evaluation, be it through responding to a survey; making themselves available for interviews; or participating in the consultation process. We are grateful for your contributions, which have without doubt enriched this report.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>LIST OF ACRONYMS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1. BACKGROUND</b>	<b>15</b>
1.1 <b>Overview</b>	16
1.2 <b>Evaluation purpose, objectives and use</b>	16
1.3 <b>Evaluation scope</b>	17
1.4 <b>Evaluation approach and methods</b>	17
1.5 <b>Evaluation constraints and limitations</b>	18
<b>2. EVALUATION CONTEXT</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>3. BACKGROUND TO FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME INITIATIVES</b>	<b>20</b>
3.1 <b>Programming model</b>	22
<b>4. FINDINGS</b>	<b>23</b>
4.1 <b>Overarching questions</b>	24
Q1. To what extent have FPI/TP approaches improved and focused strategic programming?	24
Q2. To what extent has the FPI approach strengthened governance, quality assurance, monitoring and knowledge management?	29
Q3. To what extent has the FPI approach enhanced engagement of partners around common GEWE goals?	42
Q4. To what extent has the FPI approach enhanced collaboration and system-wide coordination on GEWE among un agencies at global and country levels?	44
Q5. To what extent has the FPI approach enhanced resource mobilization and donor relations, and provided flexible and predictable funding?	45
<b>5. LESSONS AND CATALYTIC RESULTS: SELECT FPI CASE STUDIES</b>	<b>50</b>
5.1 <b>Factors of performance</b>	51
5.1.1 Women Count	51
5.1.2 Climate Resilient Agriculture	52
5.1.3 Access to Justice	52
5.1.4 Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces	52
5.1.5 LEAP	53
<b>6. CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>7. RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>59</b>

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>A2J</b>	Access to Justice
<b>AfDB</b>	African Development Bank
<b>AGRA</b>	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
<b>APRO</b>	Asia and the Pacific Regional Office
<b>AS</b>	Arab States
<b>ASAM</b>	Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants
<b>ATLAS</b>	UN Women Internal ERP System
<b>AWP</b>	Annual Work Plan
<b>CAF</b>	Charities Aid Foundation
<b>CCAFS</b>	Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security
<b>CGIAR</b>	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
<b>CIAT</b>	The International Center for Tropical Agriculture
<b>CIP-SSA</b>	International Potato Centre
<b>CO</b>	Country Office
<b>COAT</b>	Country Office Assessment Tool
<b>COP</b>	Community of Practice
<b>COVID-19</b>	2019 novel coronavirus
<b>CRA</b>	Climate Resilient Agriculture
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>CTA</b>	Center for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation
<b>DAMS</b>	Donor Agreement Management System
<b>DFID</b>	UK Department for International Development
<b>DMA</b>	Division of Management and Administration
<b>DRF</b>	Development Results Framework
<b>DRMA</b>	Disaster Risk Management in Agriculture
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EQ</b>	Evaluation Question
<b>ERP</b>	Enterprise Resource Planning
<b>ESA</b>	Eastern and Southern Africa
<b>ESARO</b>	Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office
<b>EVAW</b>	End Violence Against Women
<b>FAQ</b>	Frequently Asked Question
<b>FGE</b>	Fund for Gender Equality
<b>FIKA</b>	Filière Karité de Cote d'Ivoire
<b>FMS</b>	Financial Management Section
<b>FPI</b>	Flagship Programme Initiative
<b>GE</b>	Gender Equality
<b>GEWE</b>	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
<b>HA</b>	Humanitarian Action
<b>HACRO</b>	UN Women Humanitarian Action Crisis Response Office
<b>HNCS</b>	Humanitarian Normative and Coordination Section
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology

<b>IDRC</b>	International Development Research Centre
<b>IEAS</b>	Independent Evaluation and Audit Services
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-governmental Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>IRRF</b>	Integrated Results and Resources Framework
<b>JKUAT</b>	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology
<b>KPI</b>	Key Performance Indicator
<b>LAC</b>	Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>LEADS</b>	Leads management system
<b>LEAP</b>	Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection
<b>LNOB</b>	Leave No One Behind
<b>MOPAN</b>	Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network
<b>MPTF</b>	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
<b>OEEF</b>	Organization Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework
<b>PARIS 21</b>	Partnership for Statistics in Development in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century
<b>PPID</b>	Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division
<b>ProDoc</b>	Project Document
<b>PSHA</b>	Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action
<b>RBM</b>	Results-Based Management
<b>REFAN</b>	Réseau des Femmes Agricultrices du Nord
<b>RM</b>	Resource Mobilization
<b>RMM</b>	Results Management and Monitoring
<b>RMS</b>	Results Management System
<b>RO</b>	Regional Office
<b>RWEE</b>	Rural Women's Economic Empowerment
<b>SC/SPS</b>	Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces
<b>SDF</b>	Structured Dialogue on Financing
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
<b>SMT</b>	Senior Management Team
<b>SN</b>	Strategic Note
<b>SP</b>	Strategic Plan
<b>Spanish AECID</b>	Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation
<b>SPU</b>	Strategic Planning Unit
<b>ToC</b>	Theory of Change
<b>TP</b>	Thematic Priority
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNECA</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
<b>UNEG</b>	United Nations Evaluation Group
<b>UNESCAP</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNIDO</b>	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
<b>UNISS</b>	United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UNOSG</b>	United Nations Office of the Secretary General
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>US\$</b>	United States Dollar
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WCA</b>	Western and Central Africa
<b>WCARO</b>	Western and Central Africa Regional Office
<b>WEE</b>	Women's Economic Empowerment
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WPHF</b>	Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund
<b>WPS</b>	Women, Peace and Security

# FOREWORD



Towards the end of 2015, UN Women introduced the Flagship Programme Initiatives (FPIs) as a means of consolidating and scaling-up the young Entity's programming modalities to better respond to the expectations and goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda; and other international agreements which

had recognized the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) in sustainable development. The FPIs represented an evolution in UN Women's programming designed to create high-impact, scalable initiatives through partnerships to enable the full realization of the Entity's integrated mandate and to be fitter for purpose in the context of the SDGs and UN reform.

The Independent Evaluation Service (IES), in collaboration with the Internal Audit Service (IAS) of the UN Women Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) undertook this evaluation as part of its corporate evaluation plan with the aim of assessing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of the 12 FPIs (and their integration as Thematic Priorities of the Strategic Plan [SP] 2018–2021) as a partnership, operational, resource mobilization and programming model to deliver high-impact and transformative results within the context of implementing the UN Women SP.

The evaluation found that the FPIs had an overall positive effect on the evolution of UN Women programming and operations. While the FPIs faced several challenges related to operationalization, knowledge management and resource mobilization, the evaluation noted the FPIs' significant contribution to greater awareness and adoption of focused and strategic programming across all areas of UN Women's work. Although there was considerable variance in the ability of the 12 FPIs to fully meet their ambitious goals, they succeeded in providing a coherent framework through comprehensive theories of change to operationalize UN Women's five Thematic Priorities across

regions and to package and brand UN Women's programming in ways that could be consistently communicated to donors and other stakeholders.

While the evaluation concludes that the FPIs were successful in embedding a corporate mind-shift towards consolidated and scalable programmatic approaches, there are opportunities for improvement in quality assurance mechanisms, resource mobilization, financial tracking and reporting, corporate performance monitoring and initiatives around structured partnerships. Moving forward, the evaluation recommends the establishment of clear accountability frameworks, and explicitly defined thematic programme focus to amplify UN Women's delivery footprint based on field capacity and resource mobilization targets in the next SP.

This formative evaluation of the FPIs took place at a critical point as UN Women celebrates its 10-year anniversary, along with the 25-year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and a five-year milestone towards achievement of the 2030 Agenda's SDGs. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to challenge the world in unprecedented ways, requiring UN Women to adapt and rapidly respond to the existing and emerging needs of women and girls worldwide. At this time, it is crucial for UN Women to look critically at the evolution of its work to draw on important lessons to enhance organizational learning, reinforce programmatic priorities and adapt to a dynamic and challenging external landscape. As UN Women undertakes the forward-looking process of developing a new SP for 2022–2025, it is our hope that this evaluation can serve as a key source of information to aid the Entity in its pursuit of transformative results and further advancement of the UN Development System reform agenda to better deliver on gender equality and women's empowerment.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Sutton". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

**Lisa Sutton**

*Director, Independent Evaluation and Audit Services*



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT OF UN WOMEN FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME INITIATIVES AND THEMATIC PRIORITIES OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2018–2021

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## BACKGROUND

The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES) conducts corporate evaluations to assess UN Women's contribution to results in gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE). In fulfilment of the UN Women corporate evaluation plan, this evaluation focused on the programmatic effectiveness and efficiency of the UN Women Flagship Programme Initiatives and the Thematic Priorities of the Strategic Plan (SP) 2018–2021. The evaluation was conducted by IES over a six-month period from April 2020 to October 2020 and involved a wide range of stakeholders from UN Women headquarters, Regional Offices (ROs) and Country Offices (COs), as well as external partners.

**The Flagship Programme Initiatives (FPIs) were developed in 2015 with the goal of creating high-impact, scalable initiatives that would build upon and supplement the Entity's ongoing programmatic work.**

The FPIs represent both operational and programming instruments, as well as a roadmap for the implementation of the SP's Thematic Priorities (TPs). The FPIs were envisioned as a new programming modality for UN Women to move away from a tradition of numerous, small-scale and fragmented interventions towards strategic, multi-year engagement frameworks delivered coherently across regions and countries, and at a requisite scale to achieve transformational changes in GEWE. The FPIs also aimed to further boost UN Women's resource mobilization and strategic partnership endeavours.

## PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the evaluation was to:

- Analyse whether and **how the FPIs have realized their stated intent** to ensure that UN Women fully leverages its triple mandate in an integrated manner to become “fitter and funded for purpose” to deliver against the SDGs and the ideals of UN system reform.
- Inform organizational **learning and accountability** for past performance.
- Provide **useful lessons** to feed into future corporate programmatic thinking and practice and serve as key inputs to the development of the UN Women SP 2022–2025.

The evaluation is intended to be used primarily by UN Women's leadership, policy thematic divisions and other headquarters divisions that support different aspects of UN Women's programme implementation at global, regional and country levels.

### EVALUATION OVERARCHING QUESTIONS:

1. To what extent have FPI/TP approaches improved and focused **strategic programming**?
2. To what extent has the FPI approach strengthened **governance, quality assurance, monitoring and knowledge management**?
3. To what extent has the FPI approach enhanced **engagement of partners** around common GEWE goals?
4. To what extent has the FPI approach enhanced collaboration and **system-wide coordination on GEWE** among UN agencies at global and country levels?
5. To what extent has the FPI approach enhanced **resource mobilization and donor relations**, and provided flexible and predictable funding?

## CONTEXT

This evaluation took place during the convergence of several important milestones for UN Women and the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda. These include the tenth anniversary of the establishment of UN Women, the 25-year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the twentieth anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security; and a five-year milestone for achieving the SDGs. At the same time, UN Women has begun the forward-looking process of developing the next SP for 2022–2025, presenting an opportunity for UN Women to examine and strengthen its programmatic priorities and focus, and to adapt to a dynamic and challenging external landscape.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to challenge the world in unprecedented ways, it is perhaps more important than ever for UN Women to explore innovative business processes and resourcing mechanisms to further leverage the repositioning of the UN Development System to better deliver on GEWE and to meet the evolving needs of women and girls across the world.

While undertaking this evaluation, the evaluation team remained conscious that UN Women is a relatively young entity undergoing a process of change that is typical of the evolution from a fledgling to a mature organization. At the time of their launch, the FPIs were intended to serve as the programming modality to help UN Women define its position within the larger UN system and focus its work towards impactful, scalable initiatives with greater results effectiveness. In this regard, the FPIs can be seen as a first corporate endeavour to test new programmatic approaches and strengthen the strategic orientation of the Entity towards a new generation of larger-scale, better-funded projects/programmes that could lead to the desired levels of impact.

## APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

To analyse the FPIs from an organizational effectiveness and efficiency perspective, the evaluation brought together models and methodologies for organizational effectiveness assessment, theory-based evaluation approaches and appreciative enquiry.

The evaluation was conducted by a multi-disciplinary team, which included evaluators and one auditor from IAS. Multiple streams of evidence were used to provide and validate evidence and reach conclusions (See Annex 2 for the Evaluation Matrix and Annex 7 for Evidence Grid for Evaluation Questions).

The evaluation team consulted over 268 internal and external stakeholders who were involved in the conceptualization, development and implementation of the FPIs. The interviews were supplemented by e-surveys of 156 UN Women staff (see Annex 9), five focus group discussions, and an extensive desk review of UN Women management systems and portfolio analysis.

The evaluation adhered to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) ethics and standards and applied gender and human rights principles. The evaluation approach was adapted to the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and utilized appropriate remote data collection methods. Multiple streams of evidence were used to provide and validate evidence against the evaluation questions and to reach conclusions. The evaluation also involved five deep-dive case studies<sup>1</sup> on select FPIs which were considered of an appropriate scale and maturation to offer useful lessons.

### DATA COLLECTION



#### Desk review

and synthesis Portfolio analysis and review of UN Women management systems, reports and internal assessments



#### Focus group

**Interviews:** MEWGC, LEAP, CSA, Safe Cities and RO Strategic Planning Specialists



#### Surveys conducted

and remote semi-structured interviews of UN Women staff and partners. 23% total response rate for surveys (HQ:26%, RO: 11%, and CO:58%)



#### Five case studies:

MEWGC, LEAP, CSA, A2J, Safe Cities

**112**

stakeholders interviewed

**5**

focus group interviews

**5**

case studies

**280+**

documents reviewed

**2**

online surveys

**156**

survey respondents

<sup>1</sup> Women Count, Climate Resilient Agriculture, Access to Justice, Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces and LEAP.

## KEY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### CONCLUSION 1



**The FPIs were a much needed and significant corporate initiative to strengthen UN Women’s programmatic focus, thematic coherence and operational effectiveness to attain the SP objectives towards GEWE. The FPIs represented a way of consolidating UN Women’s then fragmented and subscale programme footprint using coherent approaches that could be scaled up as well as aggregated for corporate results monitoring and reporting.**

The FPIs were introduced in the context of a newly structured entity with a long tradition of operating and supporting numerous but small initiatives, with a majority implemented by civil society partners. As a transformative paradigm, FPIs represented the first corporate endeavour to test programmatic approaches and provide opportunities for corporate learning and adaptation. Nonetheless, there was considerable variance in the success of the 12 FPIs. Some were developed based on pre-existing global programmes and thrived organically, while the nascent FPIs struggled to quickly take off and gain traction.

### CONCLUSION 2



**The FPI implementation experience during 2016–2017 and under SP 2018–2021 revealed successes and challenges, as well as adjustments and adaptation based on results. However, as FPIs represented the Entity’s first experiences with transformative programming, both successes and challenges hold valuable lessons in programming and change management for the next SP.**

The FPIs contributed to greater awareness and adoption of focused and strategic programming approaches across all areas of UN Women’s work. They provided a coherent framework to operationalize UN Women’s five SP outcomes across regions, and to package and brand UN Women programming in ways that could be consistently marketed and communicated to donors and other stakeholders.

There was a fair degree of consensus that FPIs have had modest successes as programmes; however, they have had definite success as programming structures to guide UN Women’s field programmes.

- FPI elements that delivered well: Organization-wide mindset shifts towards programmatic approaches; unifying theories of change; global and regional policy support mechanisms.
- FPI elements that were less satisfactory: Pooled funding and resource mobilization; inadequate systematic higher-level review and guidance mechanisms to ensure some standardization and use of good practices and processes; monitoring of FPI operational efficiencies; and results from economies of scale.

### CONCLUSION 3



**The FPIs were highly successful in embedding a corporate mindshift towards programmatic approaches, and also demonstrated the scalable impact of focused and standard approaches unified by clear theories of change, facilitated by global and regional policy support. Generally, these approaches are now used in UN Women’s programming.**

The FPIs’ singular biggest achievement has been their success in engendering an organization-wide appreciation of the necessity and benefits of more focused and impactful programming through consolidation. This represented a big shift from a tradition of fragmented and somewhat disjointed and subscale interventions to more strategic, medium-term results-focused approaches and programme instruments, underpinned by clear theories of change that enabled standard and scalable (yet customizable) implementation. These elements are now applied in programming irrespective of a programme’s classification as an FPI or otherwise. Strong headquarters and regional policy support was an important ingredient in FPI designs to ensure coherence and consistency of implementation, as well as cross-fertilization of knowledge and good practices. FPIs that were successful in mobilizing resources for global and regional policy support benefitted significantly from these components, which enabled effective delivery at scale and over a large global footprint.

Donor advocacy and recognition of the effectiveness of such mechanisms played a major role in securing predictable funding for global and/or regional specialists in FPIs such as Women Count (global, regional and country level), Climate Resilient Agriculture (two regions) and Access to Justice (one region).

However, there was ambiguity over the FPIs as distinct instruments of programming in the SP 2018–2021. The FPI concept has been somewhat quiescent since 2018 and several FPIs did not have dedicated programmatic infrastructure to implement their transformative goals. This was partly due to a void emerging in their championship, as well as a degree of disillusionment setting in from the failure to secure pooled funding and significant resources for majority of the FPIs, which belied the initial attractiveness of the FPI approach. There was also considerable variance in the success of the 12 FPIs, partly reflecting the inconsistent approaches deployed for their operationalization. Some stakeholders consulted as part of this evaluation also argued that 12 different FPIs was too large a number for a small organization such as UN Women, paired with the expectation of pooled funding for each of them.

#### CONCLUSION 4



**Elements that were weak and constrained several FPIs from performing to their potential were: quality assurance mechanisms, resource mobilization, financial tracking and reporting, corporate performance monitoring against FPI differentiator metrics, and initiatives around structured partnerships.**

There has generally been a growth in multi-year funding and larger-value donor agreements for UN Women since 2016. While not attributable to the FPIs, this trend correlates to the narratives and campaigns for multi-year and larger funding commitments also espoused and promoted by the FPIs and Strategic Notes. However, no FPIs were able to mobilize pooled funding, and resource mobilization was unsuccessful in most FPIs.

Factors affecting corporate resource mobilization for FPIs included: inadequate investment in formulation phases to pre-test the acceptability of FPI resource mobilization modalities and funding instruments; lack of adequate donor understanding of the FPI architecture and additionality over pre-existing donor modalities, including already existing pooled trust funds; and the overwhelming prospect of donor engagement on 12 additional instruments, which represented new transaction costs for donors.

#### CONCLUSION 5



**UN Women has elaborated a cogent approach on collaborative and comparative advantage in delivering its mandate over the years; however, its strategic position for UN system coordination is shaped by several factors including the extent to which the UN and other partners recognize its added value and demand for its thematic UN coordination efforts.**

While the extent and depth of partnerships with different stakeholders varied across FPIs, the evidence broadly shows that individual FPIs established strategic partnerships at the country level. Nonetheless, UN system coordination in the area of GEWE faced specific challenges that were rooted outside the FPI engagements and there was no clear strategy to support FPIs to evolve into the partnership or coordination vehicles they were primarily set up to achieve. Evidence of inter-agency coordination was mostly anecdotal.

Inhibiting factors for UN coordination included: overlapping mandates and programming around GEWE; FPIs were seen more as UN Women signature offerings rather than as multi-agency partnership vehicles; FPIs were perceived by some agencies as forays into competitive turfs and established strongholds; there were some issues of acceptability over the system-wide coordination of GEWE (especially at the country level) being bestowed on UN Women.

Inhibiting factors for partnership included: inability to secure buy-in for FPIs from the beginning and to build structured partnerships based on theories of change; and that the FPIs were seen and implemented as 'UN Women' initiatives rather than as truly partnership vehicles.

#### CONCLUSION 6



**FPIs were not stand-alone and independent modalities and their success depended to a great extent on the overall enabling environment and business processes. Although much emphasis went into substantive programmatic aspects, a similar degree of emphasis was not evident in corporate level monitoring of their performance to draw lessons and adapt from the implementation experience. Clear accountabilities for business processes and overall leadership of FPIs as corporate programming instruments were not established.**

Although FPIs were a major corporate initiative, most FPIs were implemented in stand-alone and uncoordinated ways, with limited external stakeholder engagement, appropriate governance, risk assessment (including pilot testing) and mitigation plans. Corporate mechanisms were not sufficiently followed up, especially since 2018, to ensure uniform operationalization, accountability, ownership and authority for quality assurance and thematic coherence.

Despite acknowledgement of the potential for cross-learning, aggregation and synthesis of results, no systematic knowledge management strategies were instituted for FPIs. However, individual FPIs evolved their own knowledge mechanisms and communities of practice within the available resources.

Other key factors affecting operationalization of FPIs included: insufficient higher-level direction and monitoring of the efficacy of FPIs as a leading corporate modality; capacity and skills gaps in programme management; limited success for resource mobilization and inadequate processes and controls to ensure complete and accurate recording of FPI funds for management purposes; absence of dedicated operational performance indicators and inadequate knowledge management and learning/feedback loops to test and improve the cost-effectiveness of individual FPIs, and the FPI modality as a whole.

## CONCLUSION 7



**FPIs exhibited a huge diversity of performance, results and early impacts. However, the common success factors across FPIs validated the FPI logic and rationale of coherence and standardization, programming and scale, predictable funding, strong partnerships and effective monitoring and knowledge management.**

Some individual FPIs such as Women Count, Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces and LEAP posted consistently good results across regions, while others such as Climate Resilient Agriculture and Access to Justice demonstrated results in fewer regions. The five case studies identified a number of common factors explaining successes and challenges: coherence through standard (yet customizable) approaches; predictable funding rooted in strong alignment with donor priorities; strong partnerships; programming at scale; and effective monitoring and knowledge management systems. These are strong endorsements of the strength and potential of FPIs as a corporate programming modality to be mainstreamed across regions and thematic areas.

In addition to the common factors cited above, individual FPIs had specific ingredients that contributed to their success, which could be replicated or adapted to other FPIs.



## CONCLUSION 8

**In summation, the FPIs were a bold and ambitious corporate initiative and carried risks associated with any major corporate change endeavour. The FPIs intervention logic remains highly relevant to UN Women's SPs, and their experiences – both successes and failings – provide valuable lessons for the continuance and reinforcement of programmatic approaches.**

UN Women has made significant corporate investment in embedding FPIs into its corporate culture, with some essential adjustments based on lessons learned over the past four years of implementation. The FPIs hold tangible value as corporate programming instruments for scalable impacts, which are becoming ever more imperative for all development actors.

## RECOMMENDATION 1

**UN Women should explicitly state thematic programme focus, field delivery footprint and reaffirm “second generation FPIs” as a programmatic instrument based on field capacity and resource mobilization targets in the next SP 2022–2025.**

UN Women's levels of revenue and programmatic footprint continue to necessitate effective programming instruments and modalities to deliver scalable impacts and enhance operational efficiencies. The lessons from implementing FPIs could be used to design improved “second generation FPIs” with better features and controls to serve the aims and targets of the next SP 2022–2025. Therefore, UN Women needs to explicitly reaffirm the importance of programmatic approaches to its SP and define appropriate corporate programming instruments whether these continue to be called FPIs or by other names. In this regard, due attention could be given to optimize (reduce) FPIs to a more pragmatic and transaction-light number that are grounded in an evidence-based Theory of Action to ensure programming impact and effectiveness towards measuring and reporting high-quality results in major areas of work.

**RECOMMENDATION 2**

**UN Women senior leadership should drive accountability for implementation of agreed corporate programmatic approaches and supporting business processes by clearly anchoring oversight and supervisory responsibilities for the “next generation FPIs” in PPID.**

To ensure interface between headquarters and field offices on corporate programming modalities, UN Women should strengthen management arrangements including use of effective matrix management elements to enhance programme delivery, knowledge management and results accountability for strategic programmes. The matrix structure should clarify accountability, oversight and supervisory responsibilities at global, regional and country levels. This would include responsibilities for supervision and monitoring of the “next generation FPIs” according to established indicators (see Recommendation 5).

**RECOMMENDATION 3**

**UN Women should clearly define how it will leverage its UN coordination mandate and UN reform to amplify GEWE results through its programming and establish its own programmatic footprint, where UN Women is recognized as the key thematic programme leader.**

The high priority given to GEWE among all UN agencies and an increasing emphasis of UN system-wide approaches reinforce the need for structured partnerships and joint programming modalities among UN agencies to attain global GEWE outcomes. Notwithstanding past challenges in structuring corporate partnerships with other agencies, UN Women should embark on early engagement with both donors and other UN agencies to explore and secure consensus over structured partnerships for the key GEWE pillars/impact areas foreseen in SP 2022–2025 and common to most agencies. This should include exploring common results frameworks, governance structure, resource mobilization plans and joint programming modalities, at least with agencies that have already worked with UN Women on FPIs, albeit in an ad hoc or unstructured way. Partner agencies would need to be highlighted in such arrangements, which should not be perceived or overly identified as UN Women led and ipso facto undermine common objectives.

**RECOMMENDATION 4**

**Develop global, regional and country “second generation” FPI modalities for each of the planned GEWE pillars, with theories of change and analysis of actions that link the normative support, UN system coordination and operational activities aspects of UN Women’s integrated mandate. In addition, differentiate actions and results at the global, regional and country level.**

Building on the lessons from FPIs, there would be merit in more clearly delineating the criteria for global, regional and country level modalities and how they are integrated, interlinked and coordinated. Having distinct templates for the three levels would enable differentiated branding, communications and resource mobilization strategies. While taking into consideration local and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) priorities, country Strategic Notes could be structured around the proposed modalities/templates. Recognizing that it may not always be possible to implement the recommended corporate programming modalities, UN Women should designate programmes as “second generation FPIs” based on clear criteria and with specific authority and accountability. Given the need for corporate monitoring of the modalities as a whole, there is benefit in establishing or assigning a Programme Coordination unit or group at headquarters to monitor progress in the various elements of the “second generation FPI” programme architecture. This would include persons with specific lead roles in five areas: UN engagement coordination as it relates to programmes; donor relations; results monitoring and analysis; knowledge management; and communications.

**RECOMMENDATION 5**

**UN Women should establish clear responsibilities and an accountability framework for each planned GEWE pillar/impact area across the whole organization.**

UN Women should conduct a comprehensive skills and capacity gap assessment in respect of the key elements of the programmatic approach and develop appropriate human resource strategies, including resourcing, in conjunction with the ongoing change management process. UN Women should introduce organizational effectiveness and efficiency indicators to track the uptake of programmatic focus through indicators including, but not

limited to, multi-year funding, average agreement values, and increase in share of FPI value in country, regional and global programming.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 6**

**UN Women should implement a full integration of its strategic planning, budgeting, results monitoring and financial systems so that planning, resource mobilization, budgets and expenditure of SP initiatives are clearly reported through the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system.**

UN Women should operationalize its upcoming SP upfront as part of its planning process, including its adaptation in UN Women's new ERP system, so that planning, results (corporate and project level), resource mobilization, budgets, revenue and expenditure of SP initiatives are clearly identified, tracked and reported through the audited ERP system (rather than through other tools not subject to end-to-end process and quality controls). UN Women should implement its new corporate result-based budgeting and financial ERP system, attaining full integration of SP planning, resource mobilization, budgeting and expenditure into the system with end-to-end process and quality controls, to enable unambiguous tracking and allocation of SP initiatives and results, both at the corporate and project level.



Photo ©UN Women/Ryan Brown

# 1

## BACKGROUND

## 1.1

### OVERVIEW

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of UN Women's Flagship Programme Initiatives (FPIs) and the Thematic Priorities (TPs) of the Strategic Plan (SP) 2018–2021. The evaluation was carried out by the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the UN Women Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS), in collaboration with the Internal Audit Service (IAS). The evaluation was conducted between April 2020 and October 2020.

The FPIs, which represent the primary orientation of UN Women's operational activities, were developed in 2015 with the aim of creating high-impact, scalable initiatives that would build upon and supplement the Entity's ongoing programmatic work. The FPIs represent both operational and programming instruments, as well as a roadmap for implementation of the Strategic Plan's TPs. Through

this approach, UN Women's expansive and diverse programming portfolio was to be further consolidated and streamlined to create economies of scale associated with operational activities. The FPIs also aimed to further boost UN Women's resource mobilization endeavours. Most importantly, the FPI approach was intended to enable UN Women to fully leverage its triple mandate of normative support, UN system coordination and operational activities to be fitter for purpose in support of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for women and girls and UN reform implementation.

The report is presented in seven chapters: background, context, background to FPIs, findings, lessons and catalytic results, conclusions and recommendations. Appendices are presented in Volume II.

## 1.2

### EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND USE

The evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of the FPIs as a partnership, operational, resource mobilization and programming model to deliver high-impact and transformative results within the context of implementing the UN Women SP. The evaluation analysed whether and how the FPIs and TPs delivered against their stated intent to ensure that UN Women fully leverage its triple mandate in an integrated manner to become "fitter and funded for purpose".

The evaluation specifically assessed the added value of the FPIs and the extent to which the FPIs/TPs:

- changed the way UN Women works in terms of deepening programmatic priorities and implementation (focus, coherence, scale and rationalization of footprint);
- improved operational efficiency (optimized, consolidated and streamlined business processes to achieve economies of scale);
- attracted high-quality resources (predictable, flexible and a critical mass of resources to drive SP results); and
- facilitated the delivery of high-impact programmes to achieve the vision encapsulated in the 2018–2021 SP.

Drawing on the analytical framework and methodology, as well as insights collected during the evaluation inception stage, the evaluation sought to answer five overarching evaluation questions:

1. To what extent have FPI/TP approaches improved and focused **strategic programming**?
2. To what extent has the FPI approach strengthened **governance, quality assurance, monitoring and knowledge management**?
3. To what extent has the FPI approach enhanced **engagement of partners** around common GEWE goals?
4. To what extent has the FPI approach enhanced collaboration and **system-wide coordination on GEWE** among UN agencies at global and country levels?
5. To what extent has the FPI approach enhanced **resource mobilization** and **donor relations**, and provided flexible and predictable funding?

The evaluation was framed as a forward-looking evaluation, with the aim of assessing the progress and contributions of the FPIs/TPs to date, while also informing organizational learning and accountability for past performance. Therefore, the insights presented in this report provide useful lessons to feed into future corporate

programmatic thinking and practice and are expected to serve as key inputs to the development of the UN Women SP 2022–2025.

The primary intended users of this evaluation are UN Women’s leadership, policy thematic divisions and other headquarters divisions that support different aspects

of UN Women’s programme implementation at global, regional and country levels. Other internal stakeholders in the field, as well as external key stakeholders including Member States, donors, UN entities and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) may also be interested in reviewing the evaluation for learning and strategic decision-making.

### 1.3

## EVALUATION SCOPE

The evaluation focused on the 12 FPIs formulated in 2015 and the programmatic principles and approaches underlying the FPIs, which have evolved since 2015, including their subsequent integration as 12 “Thematic Priorities” and outputs in the SP 2018–2021. Therefore, the evaluation covers

the development and implementation of the FPIs during the period 2015–2020, while taking into consideration the increasingly dynamic and complex context in which the FPIs were conceived and operationalized.

### 1.4

## EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODS

To analyse the FPIs from an organizational effectiveness and efficiency perspective, the evaluation brought together multi-dimensional models and methodologies for organizational effectiveness assessment, theory-based evaluation approaches and appreciative enquiry. These approaches were considered to be the most appropriate to provide evidence-based analysis and lessons learned about what worked, what didn’t work and why in the implementation of FPIs as a programming modality. The evaluation also deployed the principles of gender-responsive evaluation and incorporates a “leave no one behind” (LNOB) perspective. Collaboration with IAS helped to deepen the analysis of financial data and governance mechanisms as well as reinforced the coherence of IEAS collective efforts towards ensuring accountability and promoting learning.

Multiple streams of evidence were used to provide and validate evidence against the evaluation questions and to reach judgments (See Annex 2 for Evaluation Matrix and Annex 7 for Evidence Grid for Evaluation Questions). A comprehensive stakeholder analysis identified key primary and secondary stakeholders at global, regional and country levels as well as the ultimate beneficiaries of FPI implementation (see Annex 4). Based on the FPIs’ theories of change (ToC), the evaluation team also developed a simplified visual model to map out the FPI building blocks to increase programmatic and operational effectiveness and efficiency and to eventually facilitate the delivery of SP outcomes and impact (See Annex 13).

To gain a comprehensive and holistic view of the effectiveness and efficiency of the FPIs as a programmatic modality, the evaluation team consulted over 268 internal and external stakeholders who were involved in the conceptualization, development and implementation of the FPIs. Valuable insights from key informants were gathered in confidential, semi-structured virtual interviews, in accordance with the recommendations for remote data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>2</sup> Using Skype and Zoom, the evaluation team interviewed 112 stakeholders (89 Female and 23 Male), including 53 UN Women headquarters staff; 39 UN Women regional and country-level staff; 11 donor representatives; and 9 external partners (see Annex 5). The interviews were supplemented by e-surveys of 156 UN Women staff (See Annex 9), five focus group discussions, an extensive desk review of UN Women management systems, and a portfolio analysis.

The portfolio analysis was a comprehensive, desk-based review to extract relevant data pertaining to the evaluation questions from UN Women’s RMS, DAMS, ATLAS, Executive Dashboard and external sources, as well as pertinent documentation submitted by the relevant UN Women thematic focal points. The evaluation also carried out five in-depth case studies of selected FPIs<sup>3</sup> which were considered of an appropriate scale and maturation to offer useful lessons. The case studies aimed to extract ‘impact stories’ and identify the factors that contributed to the success or weaknesses of the FPIs, with a focus on links to organizational

<sup>2</sup> Pocket Tool for Managing Evaluations/Research during the COVID-19 Pandemic, UN Women IES, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Women Count, Climate Resilient Agriculture, Access to Justice, Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces, and LEAP.

processes and systems. The case studies were informed by a desk-based review of relevant documents from the sources used in the portfolio analysis. Primary data was collected through a series of remote interviews with key informants and focus group discussions conducted virtually. Annex

2 provides a complete overview of the overarching questions and subquestions, including the evaluation criteria to which they pertain; relevant sources of information and evidence; and the applied tools for data collection.

## 1.5

### ETHICS, GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the UN Women Evaluation Policy and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards. The evaluation adhered to UNEG ethics and standards; applied gender and human rights principles; and incorporated an LNOB perspective to examine how UN Women's FPI approach enabled the Entity to reach the most vulnerable women and remain relevant, effective and efficient in fulfilling this goal.

The evaluation included a gender-responsive approach,<sup>4</sup> promoting accountability towards commitments of gender equality, women's rights and the empowerment of women in all aspects of the process. The evaluation also adopted a transparent and participatory process involving UN Women personnel at the corporate, regional and country levels, as well as relevant external stakeholders including donors, Member States and implementing partners. The evaluation approach was adapted to the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, in conformity with the "do no harm" principle, data collection activities were performed remotely.

## 1.6

### EVALUATION CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

The COVID-19 situation precluded any field missions for this evaluation, and placed excessive reliance on Skype/Zoom interviews and online surveys as the major tools for primary data collection, limiting the opportunity to interact in person with beneficiaries and an expanded pool of external stakeholders. The evaluation also faced challenges with financial data: this is elaborated on in more detail as a finding in the report. Turnover of some key staff also constituted a limitation and is likely to have had an impact on the ultimate success of the FPIs as well as institutional memory.

The lack of clear nomenclature, systematic documentation and analysis of the roll-out and implementation experience of most FPIs, plus their transition into TPs under the

SP 2018–2021, prompted the evaluation to use an approach that essentially reconstructed the storyline and assembled evidence from the experiences as perceived and recounted by the key actors involved in FPI implementation. While ascertaining the success of the FPIs, the evaluation was aware that the context and perspective of when they were formulated needed to be considered, and not with the hindsight of experience. Given the FPIs' differences in terms of maturity and operationalization, the evaluation cautiously pivoted away from applying the same measure of markers to ascertain the success of individual FPIs. Similarly, as the FPIs were taken up to different degrees, the insights drawn from the case studies may have wider relevance but cannot be robustly extrapolated to all FPIs or the wider UN Women portfolio.

4 UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (2015) "How to Manage Gender-Responsive Evaluations: Evaluation Handbook." <https://genderevaluation.unwomen.org/en/evaluation-handbook>.

## 2. EVALUATION CONTEXT

The evaluation took place at an important inflection point as UN Women celebrates its 10-year anniversary and other critical milestones for the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda, such as the 25-year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the twentieth anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security; and a five-year milestone for achieving the SDGs. In addition to these factors, the evaluation took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to challenge the world in unprecedented ways, requiring a rapid and gender-responsive response to address the different needs of women and girls across the world.

At the same time, UN Women is undertaking a forward-looking process of developing the new SP for 2022–2025. This new SP presents an opportunity for UN Women to review and reinforce its programmatic focus and priorities; adapt to a dynamic external landscape; address emerging challenges, including the short and long-term implications of COVID-19 on development and humanitarian cooperation; and explore innovative business processes and resourcing mechanisms to demonstrate scalable and transformative results, while further advancing the implementation of the UN Development System reform agenda to better deliver on GEWE.

According to a number of respondents to the evaluation survey, in its early years, UN Women was characterized by many short duration, small-scale projects; a fragmented programmatic approach; and constrained and fragile staffing structures, including weak monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and knowledge management capacity. In this context, the evaluation recognizes that the FPIs represent

a thought process that began in 2015 with the aim of improving UN Women's programmatic effectiveness. As the concept of FPIs was to introduce a new way of programming, it was rooted in UN Women's aim to promote positive change and the Entity's willingness to adapt and draw on lessons learned.

The evaluation also remained conscious that UN Women is a 10-year-old Entity undergoing a process of change that is characteristic of the evolution from a fledgling to a mature organization. Identifying and articulating its niche and finding its place at the centre of the GEWE dialogue within the much larger and entrenched UN system was a daunting task. Within this context, the FPIs were intended to serve as a programming modality to help UN Women define its position and prioritize its work towards greater results effectiveness. From this perspective, the FPIs can be seen as a first corporate endeavour to test programmatic approaches and strengthen the strategic orientation of the Entity towards a new generation of robust projects/programmes that could lead to the desired levels of scaled-up impact.

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**The evaluation also recognizes that UN Women is now in a much better position to implement the FPIs than it was at the time the FPIs were launched. UN Women has matured organizationally; strengthened its global footprint; and expanded its human and financial resources. Capitalizing on its 10 years of experience, UN Women has achieved significant results across its integrated mandate.**

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## 3. BACKGROUND TO FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME INITIATIVES (FPIS)

The UN Women FPIS were formulated towards the end of 2015, to better respond to growing recognition of the importance of GEWE to sustainable development; the adoption of the 2030 Agenda with a specific SDG on GEWE, and 80<sup>5</sup> gender-relevant indicators for the 17 SDGs; and the core concepts of LNOB and “reaching the furthest behind first”.

The FPIS represented an evolution in UN Women’s programming modalities aimed at: scaling up results through partnerships to deliver against the rising expectations set in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, SDGs and other internationally agreed goals; ensuring UN Women’s fitness for purpose to deliver on the 2030 Agenda and achievement of the SDGs for women and girls at national level; ensuring a critical mass of core resources; and successfully accessing high-quality, non-core funding to achieve the SP.<sup>6</sup>

The FPIS’ design was also informed by the mid-term review of the SP 2014–2017, which identified the need for greater programmatic focus to scale up impact; results-oriented partnerships; and renewed resource mobilization efforts to meet the growing demand for UN Women support (without the commensurate growth in resources).

The FPI architecture consisted of a dedicated ToC for each FPI, and multi-year implementation with a threshold level of financial outlay to support impact. Each FPI was anchored in a specific (corporate) ToC outlining the pathways and actions by UN Women, and other stakeholders (national and UN agencies, CSOs, resource partners and the private sector) to achieve transformative changes under specific GEWE dimensions as articulated in the (then six) SP impact areas. Through the use of standard approaches and methodologies across country and global programmes, underpinned by a common ToC, FPIS were expected to bring scale, efficient implementation and aggregated results reporting. FPIS were also expected to have the necessary thresholds for implementation horizons and financial budgets to demonstrate impact at scale.

The FPIS were formulated under the lead of the Policy and Programme Bureau with a consultative process involving many cluster consultations with representation from

UN Women ROs and COs and the Programme and Policy divisions at headquarters. This culminated in a Global Leadership Retreat in September 2015 with representations from more than 40 COs and staff from headquarters divisions and the regions, that led to the validation of 12 FPIS (covering the five thematic impact areas) using a voting process.<sup>7</sup> While most FPIS were entirely new formulations such as Women Count, a few initiatives such as Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces and LEAP were based on pre-existing programmes that had already established a footprint. However, each FPI was standardized with a “package” consisting of a ToC that outlined how UN Women would achieve transformative change in the specific thematic area; a brief narrative; a list of potential sources of financing; and a decision-making tool for identifying implementation partners. The FPIS were designed to address multiple SDGs: as evident from a mapping of FPIS to the SDGs, the 12 FPIS contribute to 40 targets covering 12 SDGs. While all FPIS contribute to SDG 5 targets (to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), they also enable contributions to several SDGs, especially SDG 10, SDG 16 and SDG 17, and to a lesser extent SDG 1 and SDG 8.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, FPIS constituted ‘branded’ offerings from UN Women to be chosen by COs and ROs for selection and adaptation based on specific contexts, priorities, opportunities and challenges.

FPIS were not intended to replace country-level programming, rather, they were expected to guide country-level programming, by enabling selection of outcome and output statements from the corporate ToCs for work planning but with commitments to report against one corporate FPI outcome indicator in the results management system (RMS). This would enable aggregation of country-level results under various outcomes. For new Strategic Notes (SNs), the SN Outcomes comprised a selection of FPI outcomes. Consistent with the FPIS’ aim of consolidating UN Women’s programming and leveraging economies of scale without increasing the workload of its staff, guidance was provided for COs to aim to mobilize at least US\$ 1 million per flagship per year. Over time, it was expected that flagships would account for 80 per cent of UN Women programming.

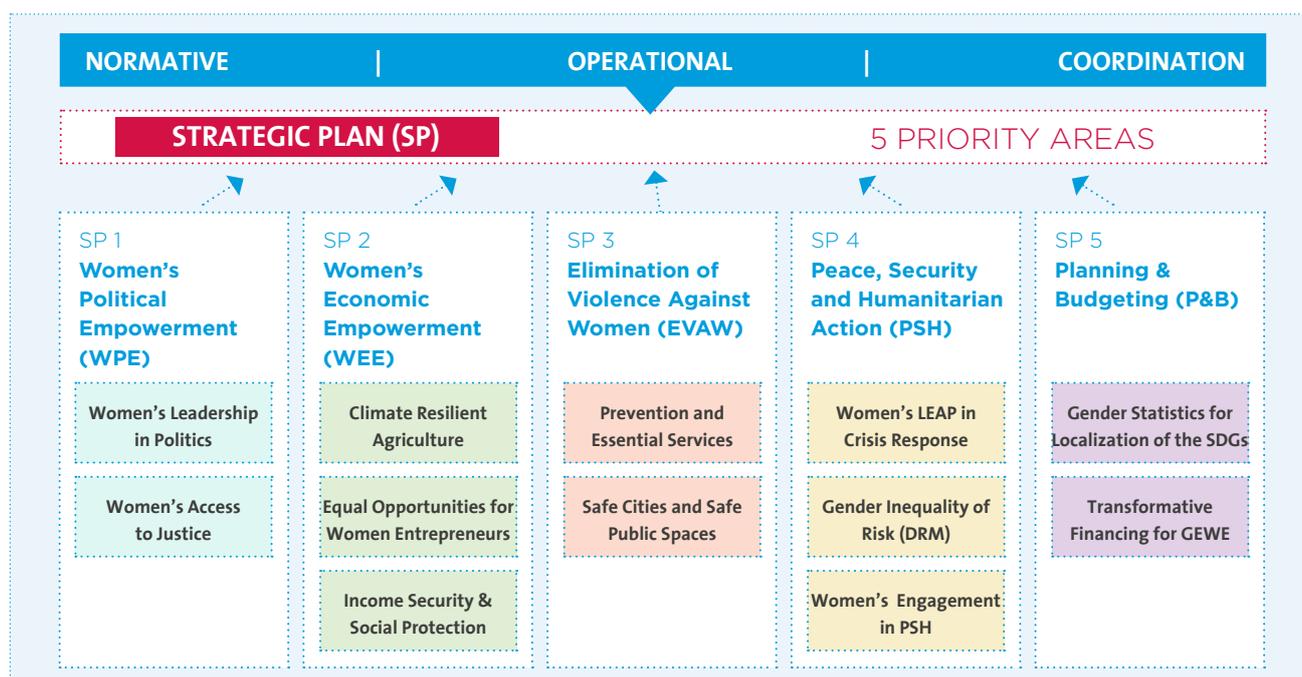
5 Gender-relevant SDG indicators, UN Statistics Division, Inter-agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics (IAEG-GS) (2018).

6 Structured Dialogue on Financing: UN-Women’s funding overview, gaps and financing strategy (2016), para 24.

7 UN Women intranet page on FPIS.

8 Brief - Supporting the SDGs with UN Women’s Flagship Programme (2016).

**FIGURE 1.**  
FPIs mapped to UN Women Strategic Plan 2014–2017 priority areas



Source: UN Women Flagship Programme Initiatives – A vision for coherence (Presentation), September 2015

### 3.1 PROGRAMMING MODEL

The FPIs were to be implemented using three modalities: global/regional programmes that support several countries simultaneously through a single programme document with common programme management and standardized approaches and methodologies; portfolios of

country-level integrated projects, following a common ToC; and UN Multi-Partner Trust Funds (MPTFs) providing seed funding to projects with similar objectives implemented using UN system-wide approaches.

**TABLE 1: FPI programming modalities and select examples**

MODALITY	EXAMPLES OF FPIs IMPLEMENTED USING THE MODALITY
 <b>Global programmes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women Count (30 countries)</li> <li>• Access to Essential Services to Eliminate Violence Against Women</li> <li>• (10 agencies).</li> </ul>
 <b>Portfolio of integrated country-level projects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to Land and Productive Resources for Climate Resilient Agriculture – six countries in Africa: Senegal, Liberia, Kenya, Mozambique, Malawi and Uganda.</li> <li>• Access to Justice – several country programmes, a regional and a global programme.</li> </ul>
 <b>UN MPTFs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global Acceleration Instrument to support three FPIs on women's engagement in peace, security and humanitarian action.</li> </ul>

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team.

The criteria for selecting FPIs at regional/country level were: country demand and partnership opportunities; impact in terms of GEWE (transformative from a normative support, UN system coordination and operational activities viewpoint); scale (at least US\$ 1 million per FPI per country per year) to leverage economies of scale and manage staff's overall workload; and proven methodology (established area of UN Women's work ) or growing demand for support from partners (such as in humanitarian and climate fields).

Corporate support to operationalize FPIs included design and operational kits, policy and technical backstopping arrangements at regional and headquarters level, and dedicated resource mobilization and funding modalities.

- **Guidance kits:** Each FPI had a package of guidance materials, including examples of programming documents, concept notes, country projects, global technical support projects; communication materials to support resource mobilization efforts; methodologies and tools to assess the gender gap in given areas; financing information, including lists of potential contributing partners; and reference documents.
- **Policy Specialists:** A key feature of the FPIs were the Policy Specialists at regional and global level (to be funded from FPI resource mobilization) to spearhead the design and roll-out of the FPIs; coordination of work across countries; and knowledge management, including codification of good practices.
- **Pool funding modalities:** Raising high-quality, non-core funding was a key aim of FPIs, and a key feature of the FPI architecture was pooled funding, with options for funding at global or country level, with the possibility of earmarking funding at outcome levels. To enable pool funding modalities, FPIs envisaged dedicated fund codes; common cost sharing agreements; and common financial reporting of consolidated expenditure only at the outcome or, if required, the output level against budget.

As designed, the FPIs carried the potential to attain operational economies and better results management. Due to the standardized approaches, higher resource mobilization, common technical support and integrated monitoring and reporting arrangements, the FPIs promised a larger footprint of programme delivery without a linear increase in management costs. Therefore, there was potential to achieve reductions in management ratio and the institutional budget/total budget ratio for UN Women. The use of common indicators for outcome-level results monitoring

also made the aggregation of results across countries possible and reflected corporate-level contributions in various thematic impact areas.

### Transition to Thematic Priorities in the Strategic Plan 2018–2021

The FPIs were under an early stage of implementation when preparations began to develop the SP 2018–2021. The SP outputs drew significantly on the intervention logic of the FPIs: the Development Results Framework (DRF) was developed around the FPIs, and the 12 FPIs' ToCs were integrated into the SP 2018–2021.



Photo © Pan American Health Organization

# 4

## FINDINGS

## OVERARCHING Q1. To what extent have FPI/TP approaches improved and focused strategic programming?

### FINDING 1

**FPIs contributed to greater awareness and adoption of focused and strategic programming approaches across all areas of UN Women’s work. The FPIs provided a coherent framework through ToCs to operationalize UN Women’s five thematic priorities across regions, and to package and brand UN Women’s programming in ways that could be consistently communicated to donors and other stakeholders.**

The FPIs were envisioned as a new programming modality for UN Women (the Entity was constituted in 2010–11 from four different entities), to shift away from a tradition of numerous, dispersed, small-scale and fragmented interventions, referred to by many within UN Women as ‘confetti’ programming;<sup>9</sup> and instead develop strategic, multi-year engagement frameworks delivered coherently across regions and countries at requisite scale to achieve transformational changes in GEWE.<sup>10</sup>

The FPIs’ key elements were designed for impactful programming and included: coherence through standard (yet customizable) approaches underpinned by a ToC for each FPI, addressing structural barriers, discrimination and unequal distribution of power; a multi-year engagement horizon with dedicated results framework and indicators; scale, represented by a minimum resource threshold of investment; and diverse partnerships to leverage synergies. The FPIs were also to become an integrative device reflecting UN Women’s triple mandate, through their design and operational mechanisms.

The concept of the FPIs offered stronger programmatic design and focus, underpinned by a centrally developed programmatic design (around a specific ToC), drawing on central technical expertise and resources in programme design to ensure high quality. The FPIs also offered efficiencies in donor engagement. Operationally, by designing and

implementing larger programmes, the FPIs offered efficiencies in management costs for UN Women. Therefore, the FPIs sought to address programme dispersion; insufficient and fragmented technical expertise; and inefficiency. The value of the FPIs was also acknowledged in the MOPAN Assessment, which noted that “the new Flagship Programme Initiatives model is beginning to improve both prioritization of activities and partnerships”. The FPIs were presented as a central element of UN Women’s operational and programming model in the SP 2018–21. The FPIs used a consistent approach and ToCs: the latter enable the selection of relevant projects to more clearly contribute to SP outcomes and outputs.<sup>11</sup>

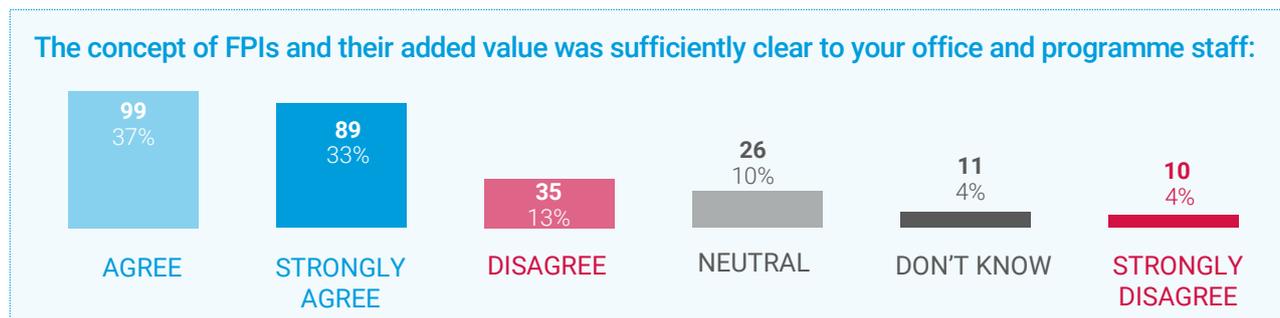
The online survey conducted by the evaluation team noted staff’s consistently positive perceptions on the clarity of the FPI concept and their value addition. The most important elements were the underlying ToC; the logic of larger-scale and more predictably resourced programmes; and an enabling technical backstopping structure envisioned at regional and headquarters levels which were seen as important prospective benefits from the perspective of CO staff. Important elements cited in interviews were the coherence of the FPIs based on a standard ToC; clear identification of areas of change to be targeted at the country level; and the prospect of impact at an unprecedented scale through augmented financial resources and working in partnerships.

<sup>9</sup> The term ‘confetti programming’ was frequently mentioned in the evaluation interviews to characterize the programming culture at UN Women prevailing before the FPIs.

<sup>10</sup> UN Women’s Strategic Plan 2018–2021 (UNW/2017/6) noted that “UN-Women’s operations initially relied on large numbers of small-scale, short-duration projects. Based on evaluation recommendations to focus on a limited number of transformative initiatives supported by clear theories of change and better leveraging its triple mandate, UN-Women has developed Flagship Programme Initiatives (FPIs). In line with UN-Women’s collaborative advantage, FPIs are partnership vehicles to coalesce partners around common goals” para 116.

<sup>11</sup> MOPAN Assessment of UN Women 2017–2018, page 22.

**FIGURE 2.**  
Responses to online survey question A.1 from headquarters and RO/CO levels



Source: Online survey conducted by the evaluation team, question A.1 (Annex 9).

## FINDING 2

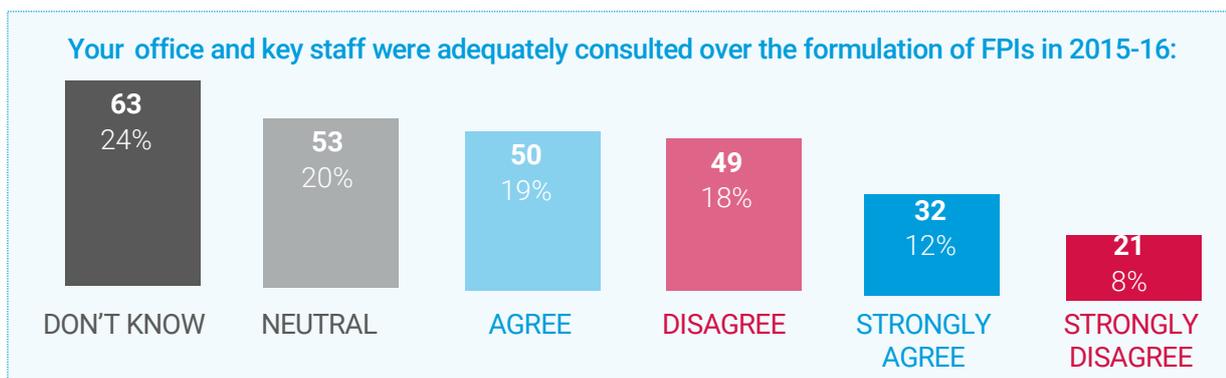
**The FPI development process was largely consultative and participatory, involving headquarters divisions as well as field offices. However, opinions were divided about the extent of consultation especially with field offices and external stakeholders such as UN agencies, governments & CSOs.**

The development of the FPIs in 2015 involved a series of consultations by the Policy and Programme Bureau with representatives from the regions and Programme and Policy units at headquarters. Clustered proposals under the six SP impact areas resulted in the consolidation of 53 proposals under 16 FPIs and ToCs, of which 12 were eventually finalized.<sup>12</sup> The 12 FPIs were formally presented with their ToCs and operational arrangements and endorsed through a voting process involving more than 50 representatives from COs and ROs.<sup>13</sup> Some stakeholders consulted expressed the view that the FPIs were developed by subject experts at headquarters, with little interaction from the field and were not necessarily grounded in the realities of countries in the field. Divided views were noted in the online survey of headquarters, RO and CO staff, where 30 per cent of respondents (82 of 268) agreed that consultations on the formulation of FPIs were adequate; while 26 per cent (70 of 268) disagreed or strongly disagreed that

offices and staff were adequately consulted over the formulation of FPIs in 2015–16. In particular, field offices noted that the formulation process was highly driven by headquarters with limited consultation of field offices. It was also felt that external stakeholders, particularly CSOs (one of UN Women's primary outreach channels), were not adequately consulted in the formulation of FPIs.

However, there were important differences among FPIs as to the extent of consultation, with a greater proportion of positive responses for FPI 1 (Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership), FPI 6 (Prevention and Access to Essential Services), FPI 7 (Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces), and FPI 11 (Women Count). The evaluation considers this is in part due to the fact that some initiatives were already operating before the FPIs were conceived in 2015 and were recognized and repackaged as FPIs with the addition of specific ToC.

**FIGURE 3.**  
Responses to online survey question A.2. from headquarters and RO/CO levels



Source: Online survey conducted by the evaluation team, question A.2 (Annex 9).

<sup>12</sup> Flagship Programmes FAQ (Sept 2015), and interviews.

<sup>13</sup> UN Women Flagship Programme Initiatives – A vision for coherence (Presentation), September 2015.

In general, there was overall agreement that FPIs offered COs 'ready to go' programme menus that could be adapted to the country context but without disturbing their integrity. Document reviews and key informant interviews revealed that regions and countries used FPIs as programming instruments, and SN reports since 2016 reveal an uptake of FPI approaches in the formulation of regional and subregional initiatives, albeit selectively. Several regions' SNs contained a few FPIs selected on the basis of prioritized regional issues and firm resource pipelines. For instance, the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) RO's SN 2016

prioritized Women's Access to Land and other Productive Assets for Climate Resilient Agriculture, with a focus on 10 countries and donors including Germany, Chile, IFAD, Ford Foundation and CAF; and produced gender statistics for evidence-based localization of SDGs, focusing on 12 countries and donors: Mexico, South Korea, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, DFID, USAID, Brazil and World Bank. Both of these initiatives drew on FPI 3 (Climate Resilient Agriculture) and FPI 11 (Women Count) respectively.<sup>14</sup>

### FINDING 3

#### Although several guidance materials were developed, a significant proportion of staff perceived operational guidance on FPIs to be insufficient.

The desk review identified a number of guidance materials developed to operationalize the FPIs, which were accessible on the FPI intranet platform. These included ToC, FAQ booklets and slide presentations containing details of operational mechanisms for programme formulation, results management and financial systems. Annex 1 to the SP 2018–2021<sup>15</sup> had several examples of the value of the FPIs in implementing recommendations from the review of the 2014–2017 SP. In addition, advice on applying FPI principles was also included in Guidance on Strategic Notes.<sup>16</sup>

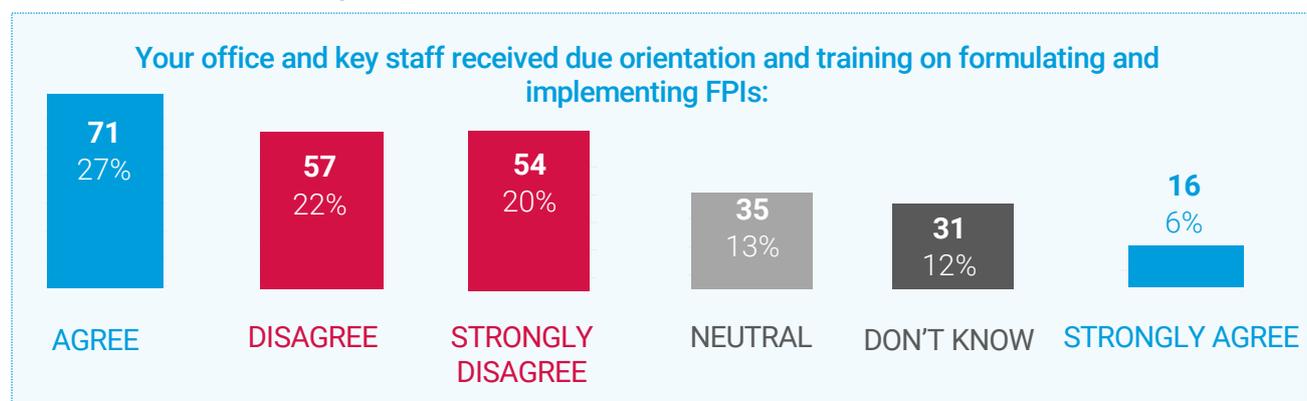
The Guidance on UN Women Strategic Notes (2018) stipulated that all offices are required to be mindful of FPIs when preparing their SNs and plan for US\$ 1 million per annum for COs and US\$ 0.2 million for a programme presence.<sup>17</sup> Collaborative approaches were emphasized through guidelines for SNs to reflect a 'clear division of responsibilities' among partners based on common ToCs, and for a

minimum target of 30 per cent of COs' programme budget to be through joint programmes. To enable consistency and aggregation, SN indicators were to be linked to relevant SP output and outcome indicators.

Although the evaluation found and studied the above cited guidance products, the online survey obtained mixed responses on the availability of guidance: of 264 responses, 71 agreed and 16 strongly agreed that staff had received due orientation and training on formulating and implementing the FPIs; while 57 disagreed and 54 strongly disagreed. Perceptions were most positive in four FPIs: FPI 1 (Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership), FPI 11 (Women Count), FP 3 (Climate Resilient Agriculture) and FPI 6 (Prevention and Access to Essential Services), which were more successful in raising resources for global policy support components.

FIGURE 4

#### Responses to online survey question A.3. from headquarters and RO/CO levels



Source: Online survey conducted by the evaluation team, question A.3 (Annex 9).

<sup>14</sup> UN Women LAC Strategic Note 2014–2018.

<sup>15</sup> Integration of lessons learned into the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan (Annex 1 to UN Women SP 2018–2021).

<sup>16</sup> Guidance Note – 2018 UN Women Strategic Notes.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*, page 6.

## FINDING 4

**Although significant investment went into the conceptualization and formulation of FPIs, there was no systematic operationalization in their roll-out, especially for FPIs that did not have inbuilt global and regional support components. This resulted in a variety of implementation models within and among FPIs.**

Although FPIs had clear features designed for effective performance, they lacked systematic higher-level review and guidance mechanisms to ensure standardization and use of good practices and processes of all FPIs. While some initiatives were introduced (the FPI dashboard, GANTT chart and the FPI intranet repository), they were not sufficiently followed through. As a result, FPIs evolved their own operationalization plans and two types of FPIs emerged over time: one being a global headquarters-led programme with a funded global support component at its core and ‘child’ projects at country level; the other being aggregations of stand-alone regional and country-level projects operationalized under regional and country SNs, without a central global support facility. With the adoption of the SP 2018–2021, the divide became even more significant, as subsequent programming was more along the second variant, i.e. following the FPI approach but not conceptualizing ‘classic’ initiatives as intended in the original FPI design. The two types of FPIs also pursued different resource mobilization approaches, some at headquarters level and several at the decentralized level through SNs.

An example of operational good practice was the Women Count FPI, which evolved a clear methodology for programme setup and implementation, with a number of processes and pre-assessments preceding the actual design of country and regional-level projects. The programme established a strong central guidance mechanism at headquarters and a matrix management structure in the regions, with regional policy specialists having dual reporting responsibilities – to regional directors and to the headquarters-based Programme team leadership. Due investments

in operational support capacities were also financially costed in programme design and resources were mobilized accordingly. These operational investments led to a slow start but subsequently a streamlined and scalable delivery model in the Women Count FPI, which stands out among all FPIs for its governance and operational effectiveness.

Similarly, the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls FPI developed a common package of ready-to-use global guidance materials and tools, with demonstrated adaptation in several cities. The FPI also helped to test and scale up an integrated model that was easily adapted to implement selected or the entire four main areas of action. UN Women’s management experience in this pioneering FPI highlighted the importance of incorporating versatile expertise, strong quality assurance, effective knowledge management and attention to developing and validating programme documents.

Notwithstanding the benefits of standardized approaches, there were also challenges in coherent implementation. In some cases, as in the LEAP FPI, this was due to complex humanitarian action and crisis settings, and immediate priorities in some areas. As a result, COs experienced constraints in addressing all components of the programmatic spectrum. At the same time, as attested in the Corporate thematic evaluation of UN Women’s contribution to Humanitarian Action (HA), the selective use of components can undermine the strategic intent of UN Women’s HA programming and reduce clarity about the specific role of UN Women in HA.<sup>18</sup>

## FINDING 5

**The integration of FPIs into Thematic Priorities was without sufficient consultation, especially for those outside the official loop of the SP development process.**

Compared to the preparatory consultations over FPIs in 2015, there was less extensive consultation on the integration of the FPIs into the new SP 2018–2021, which articulated the Five Outcome Areas, served through 15 Thematic Priorities, also termed ‘Outputs’ of the SP.<sup>19</sup>

Of the 15 Thematic Priorities, 12 were based on and even retained the ToC from the 12 FPIs. However, the terms ‘Flagship Programmes’ or ‘Flagship Programming

Initiatives’ themselves were no longer prominent in the SP document. However, there were references to FPIs as the main programme modality to implement the SP.<sup>20</sup>

The online surveys reflected an overall positive view that the transition to the SP 2018–2021 had retained the intervention logic of FPIs, and the TPs were essentially similar to the FPIs in their approaches, methodologies and tools.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Corporate thematic evaluation of UN Women’s contribution to humanitarian action, UN Women (2019), page 34.

<sup>19</sup> This was a huge reduction from the UN Women SP 2014–2017’s 17 outcomes and 35 outputs.

<sup>20</sup> Integration of lessons learned into the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan (Annex 1 to UN Women SP 2018–2021), paras 117–120.

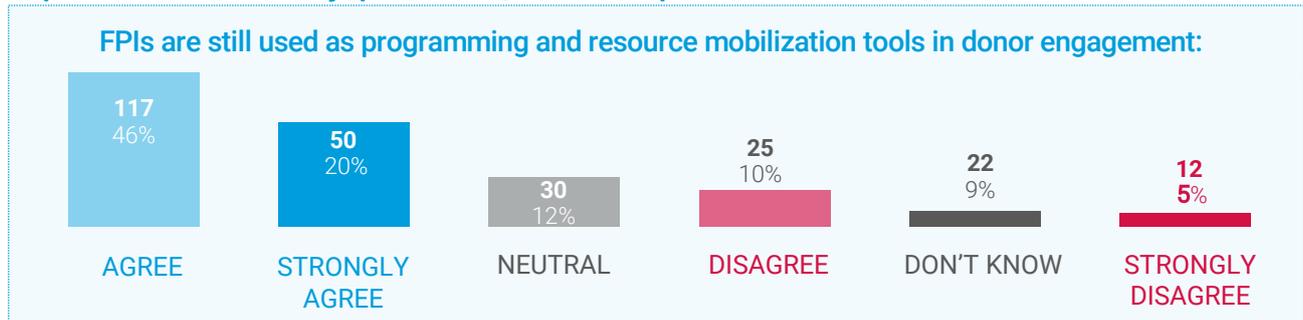
<sup>21</sup> Online survey questions B2 and B3.

Views were relatively more positive for FPI 1 (Women’s Political Empowerment and Leadership), FPI 6 (Prevention and Access to Essential Services), FPI 7 (Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces) and FPI 11 (Women Count).

The online surveys confirmed that FPIs were still being used as programming and resource mobilization tools in donor engagement, evident from more than half of

survey respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing to the same. There were more positive responses to FPIs that had raised more resources, FPI 6 (Prevention and Access to Essential Services), FPI 7 (Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces), FPI 1 (Women’s Political Empowerment and Leadership), and FPI 11 (Women Count).<sup>22</sup>

**FIGURE 5.**  
Responses to online survey question B.4 from headquarters and RO/CO levels

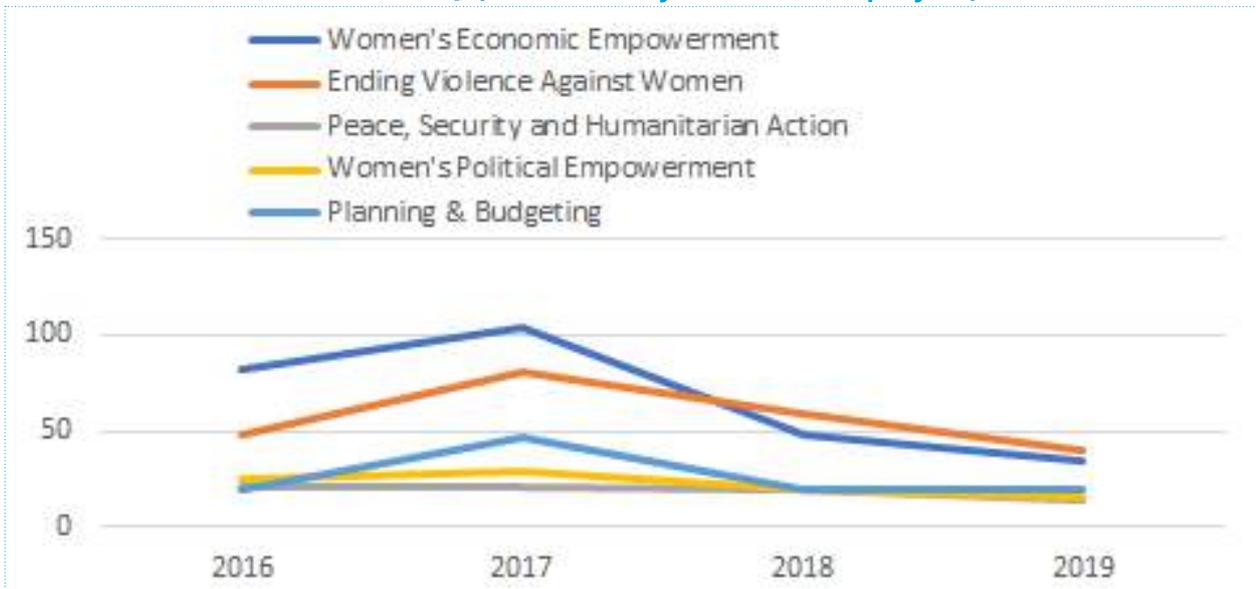


Source: Online survey conducted by the evaluation team, question B.4 (Annex 9).

However, interviewees at both headquarters and field offices had mixed views on the prominence of FPIs as the principal programming instrument in the new SP. The evaluation’s desk review clearly brought out that FPI narratives had fallen significantly since 2018. The evaluation’s search for FPI references in the RMS portal also showed a significant drop in the use of FPIs as terms in corporate documentation since 2017 and in reporting across all five impact areas of UN Women’s SP.

The FPIs as a term were less visible in the SP 2018–2021. The evaluation deduces that this was in part due to the gradual loss in distinction between FPIs and non-FPIs, in part due to a void emerging in their championship, as well as a degree of disillusionment from the failure to secure pooled funding and significant resources for a majority of the FPIs, which belied the initial attractiveness of the FPI approach. These aspects are covered in greater detail in Evaluation Question 5 on Resource Mobilization.

**FIGURE 6.**  
References to FPIs in RMS 2016–2019 (RMS entries by thematic area per year)



Source: Compiled by the evaluation team from UN Women RMS annual reporting submitted by RO/COs (2016–2019).

22 Online survey of headquarters and RO/CO staff Q B4.

## OVERARCHING Q2. To what extent has the FPI approach strengthened governance, quality assurance, monitoring and knowledge management?

### FINDING 6

#### UN Women embarked on a number of business and operational processes to facilitate the FPIs but limited improvements and economies of scale were achieved.

The FPIs were one of several major changes introduced in UN Women to strengthen organizational effectiveness, such as: regional architecture and country presence; restructuring of headquarters divisions; and enhancement of business processes, all of which contributed towards UN Women's objectives. The FPIs focused mainly on changes to programming frameworks, and also intersected with several business processes and operational mechanisms, which led to a few changes in corporate financial, donor engagement and results management systems. Otherwise, FPIs operated using the same business processes as all other UN Women programmes.

The FPIs were formulated with a number of accompanying operational and financing modalities. Key among these were: descriptions of implementation modalities; pooled funding and individual donor fund codes; integration into the corporate RMS; outlines of a donor management and reporting system; and a proposal for a business process mapping and streamlining exercise. Some of these processes did not emanate from the FPIs but were key to operational effectiveness by strengthening the enabling environment in which FPIs were to perform.

The most significant process investments were in donor-related processes. First, the corporate financial/Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system assigned dedicated pooled fund codes for the FPIs to receive and manage pooled contributions from donors for the 12 FPIs.<sup>23</sup> Around the same time, UN Women developed and calibrated RMS and updated its corporate financial system (Atlas) to track and report on FPI revenue and expenditure. A new business development system called LEADS was launched in 2016 to provide a multi-year pipeline management tool to support UN Women's programming shift from less flexible short-term funding to multi-year transformative

initiatives. Another change that did not originate from FPI processes but contributed to its operationalization was the Donor Agreement Management System (DAMS). UN Women also entered into a Structured Dialogue on Financing with the Executive Board aimed at enhancing corporate core funding as well as high-quality, non-core funding for programmes, including for the newly formulated FPIs.

To facilitate field implementation, the FPIs envisaged the use of UN joint operations facilities for procurement, travel, financial management, human resources and information technology processes.<sup>24</sup> Appropriate adjustments were made to RMS to reflect outcomes and outputs under the 12 FPIs and to the corporate financial system (Atlas) to tag revenue and expenditure under the assigned fund codes.<sup>25</sup>

In terms of programme formulation, the FPIs were envisaged as a portfolio of branded country projects with their own partnership and resource mobilization mechanisms at country level, usually supported by global/regional policy support projects. Global and regional projects were meant to complement country projects through technical and operational support as well as initiate scalable and replicable model initiatives, or at times provide seed money for country projects. Resource mobilization for FPIs was intended to be primarily achieved through lightly earmarked multi-donor pooled funds for each FPI, with funding mobilized both at headquarters and country level.<sup>26</sup>

An important management change, in some ways initiated by the FPIs, was the merger of the Policy and Programme divisions into one Policy and Programme Division which was intended to improve the efficiency of programme support to field offices.

23 Initially 13 dedicated codes were created but only 12 were operationalized as one FPI was never rolled out.

24 UN Women Flagship Programme Initiatives – A vision for coherence (Presentation), September 2015.

25 The functionality of tagging SP outcomes and outputs to FPIs existed in RMS until 2017. It is no longer available after the introduction of SP 2018–2021.

26 UN Women Flagship Programme Initiatives – A vision for coherence (Presentation), September 2015.

## FINDING 7

**There was major variation in FPI revenue data retroactively and approximately estimated by the Strategic Planning Unit (SPU) versus the FPI revenue data (audited data of UN Women) provided by the Financial Management Section (FMS). This was principally due to the different interpretations applied to classifying interventions as (potentially) FPI projects, but also to the subjective tagging of project activities to FPIs.**

The evaluation noted major differences in the FPI audited revenue figures provided by FMS, which for 2016–June 2020 were US\$ 105,293,770 (US\$ 97,901,798 for the period 2016–2019), as against the ‘estimate of FPI population’ based on the Executive Dashboard budget data mapping (originating through data interface from Atlas) by SPU of the SP 2014–2017 and 2018–2021 Development Results Framework (DRF) selected Outputs to FPIs, which were US\$ 853,557,743 for the period 2016–2019 (if including all budget sources) or US\$ 785,931,604 (if including non-core funds only), and were eight or nine times the audited values reported by FMS. This large estimate also corresponded to 93 per cent of all SP DRF funds over the period.<sup>27</sup>

This enormous difference was principally caused by FMS and SPU’s different interpretations about what could qualify as an FPI. The Entity did not have controls in place to enforce complete and accurate recording of FPI funds, due to not always following the procedure provided by FMS as well as the substantial changes in the FPI business model since their inception to date.

The evaluation noted that the FPI revenue data provided by FMS was audited and based on the procedure that was pre-agreed at the outset of FPI implementation on how funds should be recorded (under FPI fund codes in Atlas). However, management estimates compiled by SPU were based not on revenues but budgets and expenditure for all DRF programmes and projects that were deemed to follow (fully or partially) the logic of the 12 FPIs/ToCs, irrespective of whether the funding was received under dedicated FPI codes and agreements. The underlying data for SPU estimates was obtained by manual tagging of projects to SP Outputs in Atlas by project managers or operations managers, and then a high-level mapping of tagged SP Outputs was made to the 12 FPIs to produce an estimate of the FPI shares. The accuracy of such tagging and effectiveness of quality controls of tagging can have considerable variance and subjectivity.

The evaluation notes that the FMS data may have underestimated the total funds mobilized for FPIs, considering subsequent FPI interventions may not have followed the pre-agreed procedure and mobilized funds under

the provided FPI fund codes or requested new dedicated FPI fund codes. In the absence of specific accountability for validating projects classified under an FPI or not, and whether donor agreements for projects carried specific FPI references or not, the robustness and accuracy of the SPU FPI estimates are not verifiable and may have been overestimated.

With caveats on the integrity of available data, the evaluation studied ‘country FPI portfolios’ which exceeded US\$ 4 million for 2016–2019 (US\$ 1 million per country per FPI per year on average, in line with FPI criteria), and found 35 such ‘country FPI portfolios’.<sup>28</sup>

The portfolios had between 1 and 20 individual projects, showing wide variation in the financial thresholds of projects. When only taking into account projects that were correctly mapped to FPIs, only 20 of the 35 ‘country FPI portfolios’ exceeded US\$ 4 million for 2016–2019 (US\$ 1 million per country per FPI per year on average). The total for these 20 larger ‘country FPI portfolios’ was US\$ 132.9 million for 2016–2019 (US\$ 1.7 million per country per FPI per year on average). These values are more in line with the figures provided by FMS.

Unless the discrepancies between the FMS and SPU approaches are resolved, these process weaknesses and data gaps will also present challenges in tracking the new ‘thematic funding window’ modalities being considered for the SP 2022–2025. This will only be achieved by integrating the results management and financial management systems and by designing all programme planning, resource mobilization, results-based budget allocation and expenditure tracking to flow through a single auditable financial system with adequately designed data architecture, mapping and quality controls.

The MOPAN Assessment<sup>29</sup> mentioned that UN Women’s RMS is aligned with its ERP system for finance (ATLAS) and full integration was nearly complete. This allows for real-time tracking of resource allocation and delivery at all levels, from project to global reporting. However, the evaluation could not confirm this in interviews and according to evidence, this was yet to happen.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Based on audited Atlas data provided by FMS and data compiled by IEAS from the Executive Dashboard (based on mapping of SP DRF Outputs to FPIs provided by SPU).

<sup>28</sup> Of the 35 ‘country FPI portfolios’, three were for FPI 1, one for FPI 3, one for FPI 4, one for FPI 5, 11 for FPI 6, one for FPI 7, six for FPI 8, eight for FPI 10, and three for FPI 12.

<sup>29</sup> MOPAN Assessment of UN Women 2017–2018, Results based budgeting systems, page 30.

<sup>30</sup> Interviews with finance and programme management units, and RMS dashboard data.

## FINDING 8

### The design and roll-out of FPIs did not have inbuilt elements to address skills gaps and strengthen capacity in programme management and resource mobilization as well as some thematic areas that had not been UN Women's traditional strongholds.

Given the transformative significance of the FPIs and the major changes they entailed to UN Women's way of working, a systematic change management process would have seemed in order to ensure the right degree of buy-in, expectations management and also to identify and strengthen weak and risky elements linked to implementation. Given FPIs intended ambitious expansion in terms of delivery rates and resource mobilization magnitudes, a due assessment of organizational competencies and their distribution between headquarters and field offices is required especially in two areas: resource mobilization (particularly at country and regional level), and programme management competencies to handle larger and more complex programme delivery efficiently. However, the evaluation could not find evidence of any concrete initiatives in this direction.

Several respondents to the survey observed that the scale of programming represented by the FPIs was a big leap outside of UN Women's comfort zone and traditions. Vesting leadership of the FPIs in the Policy Division, that

had little programme management expertise, elicited concerns among both policy and programme units, which were eventually merged. While there were some deliberations in the Policy, Programme and Inter-governmental Support Division (PPID) on establishing an inventory of organizational capacities and skill mix assessments to handle larger and more strategic programmes, these were eventually not progressed. In addition, strengthening project management capacity was expected to be funded from non-core resources mobilized for the FPIs themselves, which did not happen for all FPIs to the same extent. As a result, capacity remained patchy across FPIs depending on the capacities that could be supported from within, rather than from core resources.

The online survey responses on the sufficiency of operational capacities revealed contrasting views, with headquarters respondents being more positive about headquarters capacities than RO and CO capacities, while RO/CO responses were uniformly positive about the adequacy of CO, RO and headquarters capacities.

**TABLE 2. Responses to online survey question C.6: Sufficient operational capacities existed in headquarters divisions, ROs and COs to undertake and deliver FPIs**

	HEADQUARTERS RESPONSES				RO/CO RESPONSES			
	Total responses	Agree or strongly agree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree / Don't know	Total responses	Agree or strongly agree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree / Don't know
Headquarters capacities	68	27 (40%)	21 (31%)	20 (29%)	42	18 (43%)	7 (17%)	17 (40%)
RO capacities	58	11 (19%)	18 (31%)	29 (50%)	45	18 (40%)	12 (27%)	15 (33%)
CO capacities	57	12 (21%)	23 (40%)	22 (39%)	45	16 (36%)	14 (31%)	15 (33%)

Source: Online survey conducted by the evaluation team, question C.6 (Annex 9).

Although the FPI guidance clearly set out that COs would lead resource mobilization for country projects, this was a crucial area in which COs faced capacity challenges. Feedback from a number of interviewees noted that several COs felt the FPI thresholds (US\$ 1 million per country per year) were unrealistic and therefore unachievable. For some middle-income countries, the entire country programme was below this threshold. Resource mobilization responsibilities were added to programme staff's workload, without the necessary exposure to important skills

and support for donor mapping, donor intelligence and donor pitching. Taking these factors into consideration, the expectation that COs could raise US\$ 1 million (per FPI per year) seemed unrealistic. These challenges were later resolved by diluting the threshold rather than by strengthening capacities and support for better resource mobilization, which did not progress the case for larger programmes.

Given that the FPIs are implemented at the country level, commensurate investment needed to be made in implementation support, monitoring and results-based management (RBM) capacities at country level. While FPIs were rolled out across regions, regional capacities to support country footprints remained practically unchanged and therefore were insufficient for effective backstopping, relying on one coordination and planning officer who also provided RBM support. FPIs that were relatively successful in mobilizing donor resources, for some or all regions, were able to add regional monitoring and reporting specialists for backstopping. As a result, there were non-uniform levels of implementation support between FPIs (e.g. Women Count, LEAP and Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces were more successful in resourcing regional support capacities for pathfinder countries) and even within FPIs (such as Climate Resilient Agriculture, which was more prominent in ESA and WCA). However, even these successful FPIs faced challenges rooted in UN Women's other processes, especially the recruitment of specialists and programme delivery managers.<sup>31</sup>

The lack of due reviews and quality assurance of FPI design were also resonant in the mixed views expressed in the online survey of headquarters and RO/CO staff.<sup>32</sup>

Among both headquarters and RO/CO responses, 26 of 69 (38 per cent) headquarters responses and 141 of 455 (31 per cent) RO/CO respondents agreed that FPI project designs were systematically reviewed and quality assured by headquarters divisions. However, there were more positive responses for FPI 11 (Women Count), FPI 1 (Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership), FPI 8 (LEAP) and FPI 7 (Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces).

For instance, the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls FPI was supported with clear guidance. The FPI set out common precepts and standards on diagnosis, programme design, monitoring, impact and communicating results of Safe Cities' programming. On average, the induction/pre-development stage for each city-level initiative spanned about two years and some start-up interventions would occur within this timeline. While it could be argued that the start-up phase was very time consuming and potentially resource intensive, the process significantly contributed to: establishing and nurturing trust among all partnerships to effectively diagnose the problem; identifying and making decisions about priority, locally tailored actions helping to foster local ownership

of the programme; and in defining and assessing the changes that all stakeholders aspired to achieve from the start of the initiative.

Similarly, Women Count followed an incremental approach to rolling out the programme based on the experience of pathfinder countries. The programme's success depended on national commitment to strengthen gender statistics and the buy-in of national statistical bodies was critical. Progress was faster in countries which had a well-established national statistics system or were committed to periodic investments in data collection and statistical analysis. The FPI's incremental approach enabled calibration based on what works and what does not work.

Effective implementation and results monitoring (or even the SP results framework itself) necessitated investment in strong RBM capacities at the regional and country level. However, the evaluation noted that these capacities were weak in relation to the uptake and spread of FPI programmatic approaches. The evaluation learned that there was often only one coordination and planning officer in each region who could provide technical RBM support (for 50 per cent of the time). Not all regions had regional monitoring and reporting specialists. The weakness in capacity and lack of investment in training on RBM was also revealed through the online surveys. Of 69 headquarters responses, 17 (25 per cent) agreed that programme staff received adequate training on formulation and RBM for FPIs. The responses from RO/CO were only slightly less favourable, with 81 of 450 respondents (18 per cent) in agreement.

Under-resourced country-level monitoring systems were also noted in the Evaluation Synthesis for 2016 and in the MOPAN Assessment.<sup>33</sup>

There were more positive responses for FPI 6 (Prevention and Access to Essential Services), FPI 7 (Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces) and FPI 11 (Women Count), which corroborate the premise that FPIs that obtained more resources were able to invest in support capacities. A telling example of this can be found in the Women Count FPI, which established its own reporting system more aligned to donor requirements.<sup>34</sup> The system enabled Women Count to structure reporting more effectively to highlight the outcomes of the FPI based on its own customized results chain, which was more detailed and specific than the corporate system and provided richer insights into programme effectiveness. Women Count achieved high-quality reporting by not

31 Supplementary observations in the online survey.

32 Online survey question C 5.

33 MOPAN Assessment of UN Women 2017–2018 observed that monitoring remains a critical gap in the operational capabilities of both UN Women and key partners at the country level, page 39.

34 When the Women Count programme started, UN Women was still in the process of upgrading its reporting system and Women Count was able to build on that.

burdening CO staff and supported data and evidence collection costs from programme budgets. The expectation that FPIs would raise sufficient funding to put these capacities in place was not realized as donors were not willing to support global or regional support resources for many FPIs. However, the evaluation considers the dependence on non-core funding to support core functions to be an organizational risk.

As a result, the evaluation considers that the intended benefits of FPIs<sup>35</sup> could not be fully realized due to insufficient direction on monitoring of the efficacy of FPIs as a leading corporate modality, as well as insufficient corporate investment in programme management, resource mobilization and monitoring capacities.

## FINDING 9

**Despite acknowledgement of the potential for cross-learning, aggregation and synthesis of results, systematic knowledge management strategies were not instituted for FPIs. However, individual FPIs evolved their own knowledge mechanisms and communities of practice within the available resources.**

A key advantage of the FPI modality was the potential for knowledge harvesting and analysis, through consolidation, aggregation and qualitative lessons learning from implementation in a diversity of settings and contexts, therefore iteratively improving ToCs through strong feedback loops. Implementation of somewhat similar programme designs in several countries also promised a strong institutional comparative advantage in the thematic areas addressed by the FPIs. This required a knowledge management system to be in place, which was nascent in UN Women at the time the FPIs were conceived.

According to some interviewees, a suitable internal knowledge system to support achievement of SP results through FPIs was missing. A dedicated knowledge management strategy was envisaged, but no evidence could be found that it had been realized. In particular, no knowledge products translated the implicit knowledge of FPIs into explicit products showcasing good practices, successes and failures, and lessons across FPIs.

Although knowledge management functions were transferred from the Research and Data Section to Programmes, due investments were not made in knowledge management structures and processes. Knowledge management was pursued in different ways by the FPIs. Only one region, ESARO, had a full-time knowledge management specialist, supported by an assistant. However, the evaluation also learned of knowledge focal point networks with regional and national nodes, but these were supplementary rather than primary tasks assigned to the staff concerned. The most common feature among these were the Communities of Practice (COPs), several illustrations of which were mentioned to the evaluation team.

The Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls FPI had an effective and dynamic COP; a platform for all the participant cities; as well as interested 'observer' prospective Safe Cities, which also included a biennial Global Leaders' Forum for the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces FPI. With funding from the Republic of Korea and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), a portal documenting a number of tools, documents, webinars, good practices and information to guide the development of safety apps was developed to support Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces stakeholders online, and to complement the biennial face-to-face interactions. In addition, the FPI succeeded in producing results reports, and several compendia of good practices to guide some of the prevention of sexual harassment work started in several countries. Funding was key to the dynamism of the COP for this FPI. In contrast, a similar effort under the Access to Justice FPI had one congregation for all country project teams but this did not continue due to availability of resources.

Interesting examples were also found in the Climate Resilient Agriculture FPI, especially in the Buy from Women Platform initiative that began in Rwanda and was later replicated in several countries such as Mali and more recently Senegal, with several lessons emerging from each roll-out (for instance, the importance of good ICT networks, which existed in Rwanda but not in rural areas in Mali). The presence of a regional policy specialist in WCARO (vacant at the time of this evaluation) and ESARO enabled a methodical documentation of implementation in several countries (Mali and Senegal among others), and the development of regional knowledge products such as the Climate Smart Agriculture value chains package.

<sup>35</sup> The full list can be seen in the UN Women Flagship Programme Initiatives – A vision for coherence – Extended version (Sept 2015), slide 21 E.

Two weaknesses of the FPI design in general were: the absence of specific action plans and budgets for knowledge management, and the expectation that the financial support for knowledge management would come from non-core donor funding, which did not happen. This was in part due to the reasoning that knowledge management is a core function for UN Women and should be provided

from core resources. In this regard, the evaluation would like to point out that donor priorities can promote systematic knowledge management. For instance, programmes funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) specify a sizeable share of funding to be invested into knowledge management, with co-financing contributions from implementing partners.

## FINDING 10

**The evaluation did not find evidence of corporate review mechanisms to monitor the performance of the FPI programming modality as a whole. FPI-specific process indicators were not part of the Organization Effectiveness and Efficiency (OEEF) section of the Integrated Results and Resources Framework in the SP 2018–2021, although their ToCs were formally included in the narratives.**

Although FPIs were key drivers of change, there were no specific indicators reflecting corporate monitoring, review and reporting of FPI performance against their original intent. Important characteristics that distinguished the FPI approach and held the key to their effectiveness – pooled funding trends; minimum resource threshold criteria for interventions; and use of joint programming and resource mobilization – were not incorporated into corporate or managerial performance indicators.

The SP 2018–2021 OEEF did not include explicit indicators to track the uptake of FPI modalities, such as the growth in the numbers of FPIs meeting criteria; proportion of country programmes accounted for FPI modalities against the guidance target of 80 per cent; numbers of FPIs using joint programming modalities; and the number of FPIs based on strategic partnership strategies, etc.<sup>36</sup>

While the FPIs' absence in the SP 2014–2017 can be understood as the SP preceded the FPIs, given FPIs are the principal programming modality for UN Women, a more prominent inclusion of the FPIs into the SP 2018–2021 results framework was expected. There was no formal accountability mechanism for FPI performance as a game-changing corporate programming approach<sup>37</sup> in the SP 2018–2021, counter to their original intent.

The evaluation noted views from headquarters that while the FPIs were being rolled out, the SP 2018–2021 planning processes were already in motion. FPIs and SP processes were pursued in parallel and came together only at the last stage of the SP 2018–2021 planning process, which led to the FPIs and ToCs being incorporated into the SP 2018–2021 results chains.

Programme operations staff were unclear about how to link work under the SP 2018–2021 to specific FPIs under various reporting systems, especially LEADS and DAMS. More importantly, there was a lack of guidance from the Policy and Programmes divisions on effective tagging of work

relating to FPIs for purposes of aggregation and extraction, and in differentiating FPI contributions to operational efficiency and impacts at scale.

The online surveys conducted by the evaluation team confirmed the lack of systematic monitoring of the FPI value proposition. First, there was a low level of agreement and also disagreement about the existence of metrics linked to FPIs' contributions to partnerships, resource mobilization, coordination in monitoring and reporting, with 14 of 57 headquarters responses in agreement, 11 in disagreement; and 17 of 42 RO/CO responses in agreement and 8 in disagreement with the statement.<sup>38</sup> In addition, business process owners for FPIs were missing; the survey showed only 13 of 58 headquarters responses and 13 of 42 RO/CO responses were in agreement that the Senior Management Team (SMT) and programme staff had Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) linked to FPIs in performance assessments; however, there were similar levels of disagreement (in 12 of 58 headquarters and 13 of 42 RO/CO responses).<sup>39</sup>

In retrospect, the evaluation sees the lack of systematic monitoring as a major setback for the FPIs, as they seem to have been overlooked in the operationalization of the SP 2018–2021. By incorporating ToCs for the 12 thematic outputs, there was no longer a distinction between FPIs and non-FPI interventions, and therefore less relevance of FPI-specific indicators to showcase their value to high-quality programming processes and scalable impacts.

The attenuation of FPI narratives in the SP 2018–2021 was seen by some as a validation of their conceptual rationale as they had been integrated in the SP as ToCs; however, according to some stakeholders, there was ambiguity over the FPIs as distinct instruments of programming in the SP 2018–2021. Their subdued presence since 2018 was seen as a desire to retain rather than write off a large corporate process and staff time investment that in some ways had not met expectations. This desire, as well as the

<sup>36</sup> Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF) of the UN Women's Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> Responses to online survey question G2.

<sup>39</sup> Responses to online survey question G1

lack of clear leadership and active championship of the FPIs themselves, fostered ambiguity across processes, e.g. programme planning, resource mobilization tools, financial reporting and results reporting, including retrofitting projects subjectively under FPI labels rather than initial formulations of FPIs in accordance with their original design.

While ascertaining the success of FPIs, the evaluation is conscious of the need to consider the context and perspective of when they were formulated, and not with the hindsight of experience. The FPIs were designed to provide order and coherence to UN Women programming against its broad mandate; adopt a strategic approach with a strong outcome orientation; and achieve results at scale. In terms of operational scale and efficiency, the FPIs presented a framework for UN Women to be ‘fitter and better funded’ for purpose through partnerships, high-quality non-core resource mobilization and attaining operational scale and efficiency. These were indeed ambitious aims to be realized in the short duration since the FPIs were implemented. Therefore, the assessment of the FPIs’ success and

impact is seen from the perspective of their appropriateness as model structures towards larger and more impactful programming.

Overall, there was a fair degree of consensus in UN Women staff that the FPIs have had definite success as programming structures to guide UN Women’s field programmes. They have enabled a broad framework around corporate outcomes and have enabled programming and reporting results that can be compared between countries and aggregated at the corporate level.

More specifically, FPIs contributed to greater awareness and adoption of focused and strategic programming approaches across all areas of UN Women’s work; provided a coherent framework through ToCs to operationalize UN Women’s five thematic priorities across regions; and to package and brand UN Women programming in ways that could be consistently marketed and communicated to donors and other stakeholders.

**FINDING 11**

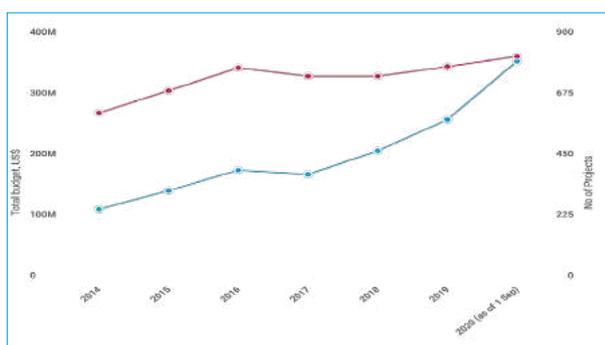
**Despite the FPIs’ low share of overall non-core resources, the FPI principles and guidance represented a major corporate narrative that coincided with the inflection point in resource growth trajectory and trends in multi-year and larger-value agreements and programming.**

Notwithstanding the challenges in estimating the magnitude and quality of FPI revenues, the evaluation notes that the FPIs were cited as an important ingredient in UN Women’s efforts to augment regular and other resource contributions.

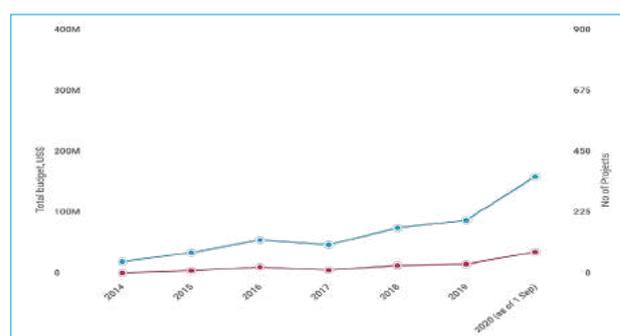
There is considerable evidence that the FPIs strongly promoted narratives that supported requests for multi-year resources, larger-value agreements and pooled funding, which were subject of discussion in the Structured

Dialogue on Financing report in 2016.<sup>40</sup> Other than the FPIs (which were the major programme themes in UN Women in 2015 and 2016), no other corporate narratives can claim stronger causal linkages to the significant growth in multi-year resources and larger-value agreements since 2016. Several senior staff strongly felt that the FPIs had brought greater clarity in communicating with donors and attracting resources, and their introduction was an inflection point in the resource growth trajectory.

**FIGURE 7.**  
**No. and value of all active non-core funded DRF projects<sup>41</sup>**



**FIGURE 8.**  
**No. and value of active non-core funded DRF projects with annual budget greater than US\$ 1 million**



Source: Executive Dashboard | Data: Number of projects in red line and total budgets US\$ in blue line.

40 Structured Dialogue on Financing: Report on Financing the UN Women Strategic Plan, including its flagship programme initiatives (UNW/2016/CRP.1)

41 After excluding the number of ‘active’ projects with no budget.

The Structured Dialogue on Financing Report 2020 clearly mentions the Strategic Partnership Framework with Sweden, the UN Women FPIs (specifically citing the Women Count FPI), the Spotlight Initiative and SNs (country and multi-country) as representative of flexible funding modalities for partners to support SP outcomes.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, the report for 2018 notes that the key driver of the sharp increase in multi-year funding agreements in both regular and other resources between 2016 and 2018 was the funding of higher-level results including through FPIs, country SNs and thematic funding mechanisms such as Spotlight.<sup>43</sup>

With donors having a wide choice of funding options in UN Women – core resources, SNs, Trust Funds, strategic programme outcomes and specific programmes and projects, the appeal of FPIs might be expected to vary among donors. For instance, Sweden's contributions to the Strategic Partnership Framework at US\$ 38 million overshadowed the US\$ 8 million given to FPIs, but both aimed to serve UN Women's SP results. Therefore, the relative share of FPIs in revenue may not be an indicator of their utility, as donors contribute to other resource mobilization modalities too.

Another correlation between the higher-value agreements and FPI narratives was the FPI emphasis on larger-scale programming. Corporate guidance set a minimum threshold of US\$ 1 million per outcome for full presence countries (this was later reduced to US\$ 0.5 million). In this regard, the Structured Dialogue on Financing report 2016, the first since the launch of FPIs, found rapid take-up of FPIs by UN Women COs. In 2016, the average size of FPI outcomes were over 40 per cent larger than the average size

of non-FPI project outcomes. The trend continued in 2017 with FPI outcomes on average outweighing non-FPI project outcome sizes (US\$ 741,600 versus US\$ 491,000).

For reasons not known, FPI-specific data on average size of outcomes and the share of FPIs in programme delivery were not mentioned in subsequent Structured Dialogue on Financing reports. While the reasons could not be clearly established, the evaluation considers this to be linked to the incorporation of the 12 FPIs into Thematic Priorities/Outputs of the SP 2018–2021, which blurred the distinction between FPIs and non-FPIs in future programming. The FPI ToCs were integrated under the thematic outputs and covered all interventions, whether they were above a threshold scale, involved multi-year funding and partnerships as key elements, or not.

To obtain another estimate of FPIs' share of programming, the evaluation filtered all global, regional or country-level non-core funded projects (based on Executive Dashboard data) using the recommended minimum threshold of US\$ 1 million per country (or alternatively, per headquarters section or RO) per year, from 2014 to 2020. While there could be some inaccuracies, this provided a crude but non-subjective estimate of projects that would have qualified under the minimum threshold criteria. The number of non-core funded DRF projects with annual budgets over US\$ 1 million progressively increased from 15 in 2014 with a total budget of US\$ 26.2 million, to 94 projects in 2020 with a total budget of US\$ 164.9 million. The average budget of such projects rose from US\$ 1.7 million to US\$ 1.8 million over this period. This attests to an increasing trend in multi-year programming, and also in magnitude, i.e. projects with a higher budget than the FPI prescribed threshold of US\$ 1 million per year.

## FINDING 12

### The steady improvement in management ratios at COs, while not attributable entirely to FPIs, correlates to the FPI focus on larger threshold programming.

Although FPIs were key drivers of change, no distinct indicators were designed to measure the effectiveness of the FPI intervention logic in the SPs. While this can be understood for the SP 2014–2017 which preceded the FPIs, their near absence in the SP 2018–2021 is not easily explained. The evaluation noted views from headquarters that the FPIs and SP processes were pursued in parallel and came together only at the last stage. However, with FPIs not conspicuous as programme instruments in the SP 2018–2021,

there were no results indicators for the FPI logic. By incorporating the 12 FPI ToCs in the 12 thematic outputs, there was no longer a distinction between FPIs and non-FPI interventions, and therefore no FPI-specific indicators.

The evaluation studied the UN Women's Country Office Assessment Tool (COAT) programme resource efficiency indicators, two of which – non-core to core ratio (target of at least 300 per cent) and management ratio (Institutional Budget to total expenditure [target of no more than 20

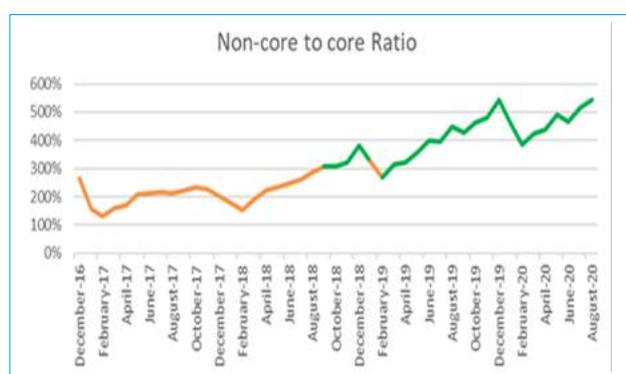
<sup>42</sup> Structured Dialogue on Financing the Results of the UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021 (UNW/2020/7) - The annualized values of Women Count's resources of US\$ 40 million for 2016–2020 (Resource & Data Section's estimates) and Sweden's commitment of US\$ 38 million for 2017–2020, are comparable, paras 43–46.

<sup>43</sup> Structured Dialogue on Financing the gender equality and women's empowerment results of the UN Women Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (UNW/2019/8), para 40.

per cent]) are relevant for FPIs. Based on COAT data for field offices between December 2016 and August 2020, the evaluation noted a steady trend of improvement in both non-core to core ratio and management ratio (see Figures 9 & 10 below).

The 'non-core to core ratio' has generally improved over time and mostly had a satisfactory performance range with peaks in December 2019 (542 per cent) and August 2020

**FIGURE 9.**  
Performance of COAT indicator of 'non-core to core ratio' for all UN Women field offices (headquarters not included), December 2016 to August 2020



It was not possible to prepare the above ratios exclusively for FPIs as they shared the same corporate core resource base. Therefore, no direct attribution can be made to the FPIs for the improvements in field operational efficiency. However, there was no disagreement that specific guidance to COs on minimum-thresholds of US\$ 1 million per outcome was a key driver in the increase in programme sizes and resource mobilization.

The evaluation considers that the Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF) indicators of the SP 2018–2021 were not appropriate to assess the added value and effectiveness of the FPIs as programming modalities. In the evaluation's view, more appropriate indicators would include the following (non-exhaustive) list:

- Uptake by countries and regions: number of countries undertaking FPIs and FPI shares of total programme delivery, targeted at 80 per cent for SNs.

2020 (545 per cent). This can be explained by UN Women's increased resource mobilization of non-core resources, as well as to some extent by its decreasing core budget resources. Similarly, 'management ratio' has shown an improving performance trend since its measurement from December 2016 to date.

**FIGURE 10.**  
Performance of COAT indicator of 'management ratio' for all UN Women field offices (headquarters not included), December 2016 to August 2020



Source: COAT

- Programme consolidation: number of projects; average project scale and duration compared for FPIs and other programmes.
- Trends in multi-year funding: number of FPIs that obtained multi-year funding; percentage of FPI budgets covered from multi-year funding.
- Trends in structured (as opposed to opportunistic) partnerships: number of strategic partnerships secured in FPIs that bring in funding and/or dedicated expert staff for technical and advocacy tasks as contributions to the programmes; number of FPIs implemented as joint programmes.

Based on the available evidence from desk reviews and case studies, the evaluation populated these indicators, as summarized in Table 3 below.

**TABLE 3. FPI uptake, programme consolidation, multi-year funding and structured partnerships**

FPI	UPTAKE	PROGRAMME CONSOLIDATION	MULTI-YEAR FUNDING	STRUCTURED PARTNERSHIPS
<b>Women Count</b>	Rolled out in more than 30 countries, demand increasing across all regions.	Being implemented as a single global programme with regional and country components. No comparable non-FPI programmes.	Secured close to US\$ 40 million for a five-year period 2016–2020. Mix of donors from both public and private sectors, such as Gates, SIDA, DFID, DFAT and Irish Aid.	Anchor partnerships with PARIS 21, data partnerships with ILO, UN Habitat, World Bank and at regional level with UN Regional Commissions.
<b>Climate Resilient Agriculture</b>	Programmes in over 20 countries, mostly in Africa, especially in Sahel countries	Implemented as single country programmes, with the exception of some multicountry projects, huge variations in scale (US\$ 0.18 million to US\$ 22 million), but most were above US\$ 1.5 million.	Funding was secured for projected project durations, which were mostly around two years.	Built on existing partnerships with UN agencies (FAO, IFAD, WFP, UNDP, UNEP) among others, but also partnered with banks and financial institutions, several agriculture and climate research bodies, CSOs and rural cooperatives, local traditional and private sector actors.
<b>Access to Justice</b>	Uptake in more than 20 countries across regions, also links to components in EAW and WPS interventions.	Most programmes are stand-alone; however, a few were global or regional programmes with common components across countries.	Funding for most projects was multi-year, except funding from Japan (whose policy does not allow multi-year commitments).	UNDP, UNODC are standard partnerships in rule of law programmes, also UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF. International Commission of Jurists.
<b>Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls</b>	The programme expanded from five founding programmes in 2010 to over 50 cities (in over 30 countries) by 2020, 11 of which are in developed countries.	Implemented as a global programme, including with a global framework to support self-starter programming. Seed money to countries and also stand-alone country programmes that adapt the global framework.	A total of US\$ 20.7 million raised during 2015–2019. Multi-year funding for global programme by AECID, the Republic of Korea, and Unilever at global level, and other donor partners at country level (NZAID, DFAT, the Netherlands, USAID). Under this period of review, many country-level contributions for select interventions were at a smaller scale except for Papua New Guinea and Egypt (US\$ 5.6 million and US\$ 2.2 million, respectively).	Less structured partnerships except for biennial Global Leaders' Forum and other global policy forums in partnership with UNDP and UN Habitat.  Mostly country-level partnerships with UNODC (prevention of violence) and UN Habitat (urban safety programme) and UNDP and World Bank on transportation.
<b>LEAP</b>	Uptake in more than 26 countries – varied programming at the country level – either countries in protracted crisis, or countries with a refugee response.	Implemented as regional programmes (in Arab States) and mostly as country programmes; also, as programmatic interventions not strictly following the LEAP framework (rather loosely associated with the key components of the LEAP's ToC.	The key donor for the LEAP programme was Japan (contributions over US\$ 35 million for the period from 2016 to 2019 <sup>44</sup> ) whose commitment was often on an yearly-basis; however, the programmes were often implemented on a 'multi-year' basis through funding extensions.	Less structured partnership at the corporate level.  Mostly regional/country-level partnerships with UNHCR, WFP, UNFPA, ILO, IOM, including through a joint programme in Brazil (UNHCR and UNFPA).

## FINDING 13

**FPIs were formulated with their own individual results chains and indicators; however, with the transition into SP 2018–2021, results indicators became common for all UN Women programming. As a result, corporate reporting for FPIs as a separate class of instrument was no longer formally carried out, except to donors for specific contracting requirements.**

The evaluation could not find consolidated narrative reporting on FPIs or for the individual thematic outputs of the SP 2018–2021. Information underlying the reported results was also fragmented and not readily accessible in RMS.

Annual reports on the progress of the SP included progress towards target results, in terms of percentages, under each DRF indicator. For instance, Output 6 ‘More and better-quality data and statistics available to promote and track progress of gender equality and women’s empowerment’ reports on numbers of national strategies for statistics development integrating gender perspectives (target 35); number of national reports on SDG implemented from gender perspectives (target 85); number of national coordination mechanisms governing production of gender statistics (target 49); and number of data producer and users with strengthened capacities for collection analysis and dissemination and use of gender statistics (target 17). Annual reports list actual attainments each year, as well as the number of countries (15 to 23) reporting under these indicators. However, there was no reference or differentiation of the targets and results showing the contribution of FPIs to these results, even though the Women Count FPI has been operating in 25 countries and accounts for a large share of expenditure under Thematic Output 6.

The evaluation could not find consolidated qualitative narratives on which elements, products and services outlined in the ToCs contributed to DRF results. These narratives are only found in brief detail on FPI websites or in individual donor reports, which range widely in the quality and richness of their content (Women Count and Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces being best practice examples). While some global FPIs (such as Women Count) provided donor reports based on or aligned to corporate indicators, others, especially country-level aggregations (Climate Resilient Agriculture), reported against project-specific indicators rather than corporate results indicators. Therefore, aggregation was not easy in these cases.

The coverage of resource mobilization, inter-country implementation comparisons, challenges, key enabling and disabling factors, knowledge management and advocacy, as

well as results aligned to corporate outcomes was particularly noteworthy in Women Count reporting. In comparison, the large body of useful information and insights available in numerous projects/programmes under FPI 3 Climate Resilient Agriculture was dispersed and fragmented in the absence of integrated reporting at the thematic output or FPI level.

The evaluation also took note of challenges related to the risk of double reporting or incorrect classification of results among FPIs which are interconnected, particularly in Access to Justice, End Violence Against Women (EVAW) and Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) areas. For instance, a large proportion of reported results were not featured under Output 7 ‘More justice institutions are accessible to and deliver for women and girls’, but under Output 11 ‘More countries and stakeholders are better able to prevent violence against women and girls and deliver essential services to victims and survivors’ and Output 12 ‘More cities have safe and empowering public spaces for women and girls’. In the absence of explicit reporting and tagging based on input provision from relevant policy units, the relevant contributions relating to Access to Justice had to be extracted from numerous documents developed under multiple programmes in several countries. Similar illustrations were noted between WEE components in EVAW and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) FPIs.

### Successful and less successful FPIs

Besides desk reviews of individual FPIs, the evaluation also collected perceptions of the success of FPIs from persons exposed to individual FPIs, as well as senior management with knowledge of the performance of several FPIs. Responses to the online survey were somewhat ambivalent as to whether the FPIs had achieved results as planned: there was a greater proportion of positive responses at RO/CO level (23/42, 55 per cent) than at headquarters level (21/58, 36 per cent).<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Online survey responses to question G3.

The evaluation considers the possibility that headquarters responses were based on impressions of several FPIs while the RO/CO responses were based on one or a few FPIs being implemented by the respondents.

There were also divided views on whether FPIs produced more scalable and transformative results than comparable interventions, with only 21 of 57 headquarters responses

(37 per cent) and 17 of 42 RO/CO responses (40 per cent) in agreement, and 13 of 57 headquarters responses (23 per cent) explicitly in disagreement.<sup>46</sup>

**TABLE 4. Online survey responses disaggregated by headquarters and RO/CO levels**

SURVEY QUESTION	HEADQUARTERS				RO/CO			
	TOTAL	SA/A	D/SD	Neither/DK	TOTAL	SA/A	D/SD	Neither/DK
<b>G.1. SMT and programme staff have KPIs linked to FPIs in performance assessments</b>	58	13	12	33	42	13	13	16
<b>G.2. Metrics were linked to contributions to partnerships, resource mobilization, coordination in monitoring and reporting</b>	57	14	11	32	42	17	8	17
<b>G.3. Your FPIs achieved results as planned</b>	58	21	9	28	42	23	3	16
<b>G.4. FPIs produced better more scalable and transformative results than comparable interventions</b>	57	21	13	23	42	17	4	21

Source: Online survey conducted by the evaluation team, questions G.1, G.2, G.3, G.4 (Annex 9).

However, the perceptions also indicate different degrees of success among the 12 FPIs: some were considered to be highly successful, while others faced challenges in realizing the aims and intents of the FPI approach. The FPIs considered most successful in terms of the aggregate responses of headquarters and RO/CO staff were: Women Count (FPI 11), Prevention and Access to Essential Services (FPI 6), Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces (FPI 7) and LEAP (FPI 8). The top three ranked FPIs in both headquarters and RO/CO responses went to Women Count (FPI 11), Prevention and Access to Essential Services (FPI 6) and Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces (FPI 7).

In comparison, the least successful FPIs in terms of aggregate responses were: Transformative Financing (FPI 12), Gender Inequality of Risk (FPI 9), Equal Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs (FPI 4), and Climate Resilient Agriculture (FPI 3).

Common in both headquarters and RO/CO responses on the least successful FPIs were: Transformative Financing (FPI 12), Equal Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs (FPI 4) and Climate Resilient Agriculture (FPI 3).<sup>47</sup>

Three major factors explaining the lack of success in these FPIs most referred to by both headquarters and RO/CO responses were: inadequate funding for medium-term programmes; lack of capacity and guidance on thematic

<sup>46</sup> Response to online survey question G4.

<sup>47</sup> Response to online survey question G5.

areas; and insufficient articulation of UN Women's comparative advantage; followed by insufficient engagement duration and lack of partnership engagements.<sup>48</sup>

Based on the five FPI case studies, the evaluation identified a number of factors explaining the success or challenges of individual FPIs. Collectively, these endorse the FP intervention logic and the key elements: coherence through

standard (yet customizable) approaches; global and regional support structures; predictable funding; strong partnerships; programming at scale; and effective monitoring and knowledge management systems. However, some unique factors contributed to the success of individual FPIs, which are summarized below.

**TABLE 5. Success factors for selected FPIs**

CASE STUDY	SUCCESS FACTORS
<b>Women Count</b>	Timing and positioning, effective donor engagement, calibrated approaches, dedicated advocacy strategy, matrix management structure
<b>Climate Resilient Agriculture</b>	Alignment with national and regional priorities, leveraging partnerships, active participation of women's CSOs, women farmers, producers and cooperatives
<b>Access to Justice</b>	Anchoring in international commitments, overcoming fragmentation within UN Women approaches, leveraging partnerships
<b>Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces</b>	A multi-year commitment from an anchor donor providing seed funds and support for cross-regional policy support activities, with leveraged multi-year commitments from other donors at global and country level. Solid foundation and pre-existing programme, a responsive and adaptive management instituting a multi-pronged approach, where emphasis was placed on and global guidance provided to country teams on evaluation and strong knowledge management
<b>LEAP</b>	Bottom-up approach, flexibility and adaptability, replicable approach for UN system coordination, alignment with donor interests

The performance of FPIs was also affected by the overall enabling environment and corporate processes. While no systematic evidence could be gathered from various FPIs, specific mentions were made in interviews of the cumbersome procedures for procurement and recruitment which affected even the better implemented FPIs (Women Count). Delays in filling project-funded positions and in signing contracts with implementation partners were cited as impediments in some cases. While these issues

require corporate reforms at a higher level, UN Women's success in implementing large programmes requires more attention to matters of delegation with accountability. However, some lessons are being learned based on FPI experiences and are being implemented in new initiatives such as the Spotlight Initiative. These lessons require UN Women to be highly efficient in delivering under joint programming and multiple partnership modalities.

## FINDING 14

**There is clear evidence that the gender equality and human rights principles of the 2030 Agenda are built into the FPIs' comprehensive ToCs and monitoring frameworks, which place strong focus on intersectionality and the principle of leaving no one behind (LNOB). However, given the challenges related to monitoring and reporting FPI indicators, it is difficult to determine the extent to which FPI programming directly affected certain marginalized and vulnerable beneficiary groups.**

<sup>48</sup> Response to online survey question G6.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. In the 2030 Agenda, Member States pledged that no one will be left behind. This requires all stakeholders to focus on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable groups.

UN Women sought to reaffirm the vision of the 2030 Agenda by integrating the principle of LNOB in the 12 FPIs. Introduced in the same year as the 2030 Agenda, the FPIs aimed to operationalize a human rights-based approach while promoting “evidence-based and integrated policy development to localize and address multiple SDGs in a synergistic manner”.<sup>49</sup>

To this end, each FPI was designed to have an impact across multiple SDGs with a focus on their impact on women and girls, and with all FPIs contributing in some way to SDG 5, SDG 10, and SDG 17.

The LNOB principle was built into several key elements of the FPIs including their ToCs, outcomes, outputs and indicators (See Annex 11). Each FPI was designed to include at least one targeted action to meet the needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups, including but not limited to disabled women, youth, migrant women, refugees, rural women, and indigenous and minority populations. Specific elements of the LNOB principle were also evident

(to different extents) in the project documents and concept notes of several FPIs, most notably Women Count, Access to Justice, LEAP, Climate Resilient Agriculture and Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces.

While the planning and design of each FPI demonstrate a clear intention to meet the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups, it is much more difficult to ascertain the extent to which these goals were actually monitored and realized on the ground. As Finding 13 notes, difficulties in monitoring and reporting on FPI indicators arose as programme operations staff were unclear about how to effectively tag work linked to FPIs within the various UN Women reporting systems, which complicates the extraction and aggregation of FPI results.

The specific marginalized groups most often identified in entries related to the FPIs include displaced and refugee women in relation to LEAP; rural women in relation to Climate Resilient Agriculture and the Affirmative Procurement FPIs; and victims of sexual and gender-based violence benefitted through Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces, and the Prevention and Access to Essential Services FPIs. Notable gaps exist related to reporting on the benefits of FPI programming for indigenous and minority communities, and women with disabilities.

### OVERARCHING Q3. To what extent has the FPI approach enhanced engagement of partners around common GEWE goals?

#### FINDING 15

**FPIs fostered strategic partnerships with UN agencies and formed other multi-stakeholder partnerships, although most were within the remit and scope of the programmes themselves rather than longer-term institutional arrangements. The expectation that FPIs would primarily be partnership vehicles was not realized. However, FPIs supported substantive coordination, especially with governments, women’s machineries and other multi-stakeholder alliances.**

The FPIs represented the primary orientation of UN Women’s operational activities and were designed to serve as a partnership vehicle. As such, it was envisaged that they would bring partners together around a shared ToC, with collective results. This was further reinforced by the SP 2018–21 in which the FPIs were positioned as partnership vehicles to provide substantive coordination for results and fully leverage UN Women’s triple mandate (normative support, UN system coordination and operational activities).

While the extent and depth of partnership with different stakeholders varied across the FPIs, the evidence broadly shows that most FPIs established strategic,

multi-stakeholder partnerships at the country level with governments, implementing partners, women’s machineries, women’s rights CSOs and advocacy champions. The evaluation noted several good examples of partnerships between UN Women and different actors at different levels. Specific examples of corporate partnerships were found in Women Count, Climate Resilient Agriculture and the Access to Justice FPIs. Several concrete examples of the FPI programming modality’s success in linking and aligning diverse stakeholders under a common initiative; supporting a comprehensive, thematically focused resource mobilization strategy; and in building new strategic partnerships at the CO level were also evident.

<sup>49</sup> Flagship Initiatives Programmes booklet (2015).

For example, the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls FPI brought together a multiplicity of partners – government, women’s rights organizations and other non-government actors, donor partners etc. – by anchoring the programme in UN Women’s integrated mandate and strong corporate positioning on the EAW agenda. The broad mandate enabled UN Women to push frontiers and enter new domains (e.g. urban transportation in Papua New Guinea); highlight niche unmet needs explore innovative designs, such as the mobile-phone based ‘Safety Pin’, other women’s safety audit tools and work with technology-friendly transportation providers. This has diversified UN Women’s partnership base and financing avenues for the programme. Recent evaluations also confirmed that the FPI’s collaborative learning and commitment among a wider range of public sector partners helped to build an improved sense of safety, hygiene and comfort among women and girls in markets and public transport in Papua New Guinea;<sup>50</sup> and similarly, the success of the FPI in uniting partners from the government and civil society to work towards a common goal was highlighted.<sup>51</sup>

The initial and continuous investment in participatory programme design and implementation was mentioned as one of the enabling factors for successful and sustainable partnerships under this FPI. In the case of the LEAP FPI, the clearly defined target groups – internally displaced persons, refugees, women and girls in the host communities that are articulated in the ToC – provided a good basis for the multi-stakeholder partnership framework.

However, implementation of the FPIs through strategic partnerships at the corporate level that could facilitate country-level collaboration has not been possible. The challenges in this regard are not specific to FPIs but reflect a larger reality of the UN system. The huge disparity in size and field programmatic footprint; the high priority accorded to GEWE by all UN agencies; and competition among UN agencies for funds undermined partnerships to more opportunistic than mainstream modalities. Although four UN agencies (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women) share a Common Chapter in their strategic plans, there were no clear examples of joint programming or results monitoring initiatives by these agencies that drew on the

FPI principles as partnership vehicles. The notable exception among FPIs was the Access to Justice FPI (the global Rule of Law joint programme with UNDP, UNODC) and the Rule of Law practice which as a policy implemented all its programmes through institutional partnerships with UNDP, UNODC, UNFPA and other agencies depending on the context. UN Women also negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding with UNDP specific to collaboration in the Rule of Law/Access to Justice domain.<sup>52</sup>

In the area of WEE, although the Climate Resilient Agriculture FPI was viewed positively by implementing partners at the field level, the institutional partnerships of the Rural Women Economic Empowerment (RWEE) programme with the Rome-Based Agencies were not fully leveraged at the corporate level, and some stakeholders expressed the view that there were major overlaps between the FPI and the RWEE that blurred the picture for partner agencies. Field activities in many countries did not feature the Rome-Based Agencies; however, the FPI held a regional coordination workshop with RWEE stakeholders to explore and maximize synergies between the programmes.

Perhaps the lesson from FPIs is that partnerships cannot be taken for granted and need major investment from several parts of the Entity, especially Policy and Programme units with their counterparts in other key agencies. The active involvement and guidance of the UN Coordination Division in facilitating structured dialogue cannot be overemphasized.

Further, a good example of how UN Women can scale up its programming through strategic partnerships can be found in the Spotlight initiative. The global, multi-year initiative provides a model for multi-stakeholder partnerships with donors, government, civil society and UN partners to address violence against women and girls in a comprehensive way. There was evidence that some lessons from the FPIs have been integrated into the Spotlight Initiative. Similarly, mutual lessons on delivering under joint programming and multiple partnership modalities should continue to inform implementation of the FPIs and UN Women’s global programming.

50 Impact Evaluation of the ‘Port Moresby: A Safe City for Women and Girls Programme, UN Women (2019).

51 Impact Evaluation of the ‘Quito: Safe City for Women and Girls Programme’, UN Women (2019).

52 Texts of the Memorandum of Understanding between UN Women and UNDP were made available by the Access to Justice team.

## OVERARCHING Q4: To what extent has the FPI approach enhanced collaboration and system-wide coordination on GEWE among UN agencies at global and country levels?

### FINDING 16

**The FPIs did not have an explicit operational plan for UN system coordination components and evidence of inter-agency coordination was mostly anecdotal. However, UN system coordination of GEWE faces specific challenges that are rooted outside FPI engagements.**

The FPIs were primarily set up as partnership vehicles to support UN Women's triple mandate. Recognizing that UN Women alone could not achieve an outcome or impact, the ToCs outlined the importance of stronger or new partnerships and better coordination.

There were gaps in the results monitoring and reporting system for FPIs in articulating and monitoring expected contributions to UN Women's UN system coordination mandate. As a large proportion of UN system resources for GEWE were directed through other agencies, the FPIs envisaged at least one corporate indicator per Outcome that would measure the collective results of all partners and reflect the impact of increased resources directed towards GEWE from other partners. This required that UN Women build the necessary engagement structures and resources to assess and report on the overall resources leveraged towards a transformative result.<sup>53</sup> However, this was not put into practice and COs only reported partner resources within joint programmes. FPIs did not trigger greater levels of engagement with UNCT members on UN coordination aspects.

Based on evidence from surveys and interviews, the evaluation noted that UN system coordination of GEWE faced specific challenges that were beyond the confines of FPI engagements. First, nearly every UN agency has a mandate and programming around GEWE, and these may be seen to overlap with some of UN Women's thematic areas. As a result, joint programming and resource mobilization create competitive spaces for prospective partners in an increasingly austere financing environment and few donors for GEWE. Second, the FPIs as communicated and promoted were seen more as UN Women's signature offerings rather than as multi-agency partnership vehicles, which created pushback from other agencies with their own flagship and signature programmes. Third, the FPIs were perceived by some agencies as UN Women's forays into competitive turfs and established strongholds, and therefore led to reluctance if not resistance, as well as raising concerns about UN Women's lack of comparative advantage and small field footprint. Finally, especially in larger, more

established agencies that have high expertise and sizeable gender equality programmes, there were also some issues around the acceptability of the system-wide coordination of GEWE (especially at country level) being bestowed on UN Women, which was considered by some to be much smaller in terms of resources and capacities. In this regard, UN Women's successful implementation of several FPIs, including Women Count, has dispelled some concerns over programme delivery and thematic leadership.

The evaluation also found that the idea of using FPIs to boost UN Women's UN coordination work did not develop consistently across the FPIs. While FPI menus were convenient for UN Women-only projects, they posed a challenge when accommodating the ideas of other UN agencies, donors and government counterparts. In addition, the term FPI was underplayed in consultations as it evoked a promotion of UN Women over other partners' identities. Another major challenge often mentioned was the lack of a robust system to capture UN coordination results. Many perceived the whole exercise of tagging, retrofitting and repurposing existing programmes to FPIs as a mechanistic alignment to serve corporate requirements rather than to foster a strategic programmatic orientation or to capture aggregated results of joined-up actions. The absence of higher-level measures made it difficult to gauge the tangible and added value of FPIs to UN Women's coordination mandate.

Some internal stakeholders also perceived FPIs to be more of an internal exercise, i.e. establishing clarity on UN Women's function and role rather than articulating a clear narrative of what UN Women was trying to achieve through UN system coordination. The online survey of staff suggests there was more agreement in field offices (53 per cent) than at headquarters (37 per cent) that FPIs were able to draw on UN Women's UN coordination mandate to ensure coherence and synergies with other agencies' GEWE initiatives.

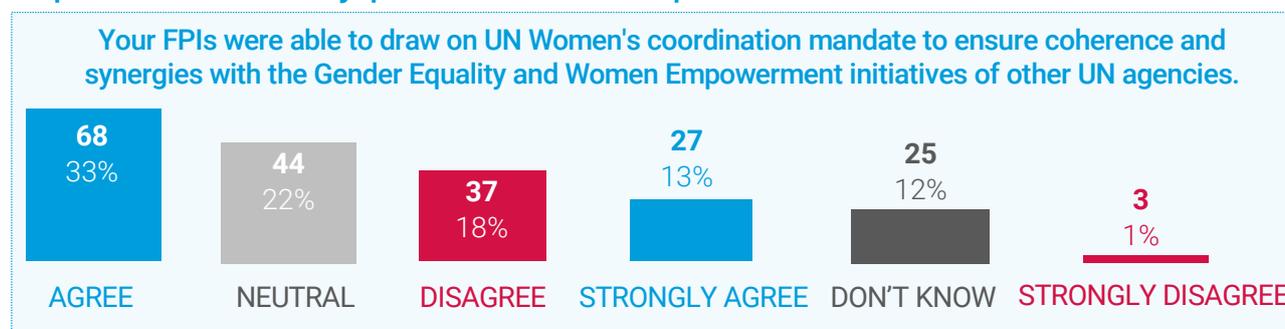
<sup>53</sup> Flagship Initiatives Programmes FAQs (2015).

Only 37 per cent agreed that the FPIs' rationale and ToCs were/are adequately understood and approved by other agencies.

The more positive views in field offices could be explained by more institutionalized mechanisms, inter-agency interactions and UN system coordination at the country level.

**FIGURE 11.**

**Responses to online survey question E.2. from headquarters and RO/CO levels**



Source: Online survey conducted by the evaluation team, question E.2 (Annex 9).

In conclusion, the success of the FPIs and their strategic position for UN system coordination was shaped not only by existing assets, but also by the extent to which UN partners recognized UN Women's added value and demand for its UN coordination efforts. Further, as highlighted in various evaluations, UN Women has yet to fully identify and consistently leverage its comparative advantage in relation to other UN organizations. While the contribution of the FPIs in advancing UN Women's UN system coordination mandate was not clear, the evaluation recognized

the significant positive trajectory and contributions that UN Women has made in supporting countries to take steps towards stimulating catalytic change across the UN system. Given the increasing emphasis on SDG 5, UN Women's role in promoting and advancing GEWE within the UN system was perceived as highly valuable. Corporate and decentralized evaluations revealed that, in many countries, UN Women facilitated system-wide and inter-agency efforts that promoted and advanced GEWE at different levels.

**OVERARCHING Q5: To what extent has the FPI approach enhanced resource mobilization and donor relations, and provided flexible and predictable funding?**

**FINDING 17**

**There has been distinct growth in revenue, multi-year commitments and average donor agreement sizes since 2016. However, FPIs had a minor share of these trends and have experienced a steady decline since 2017, even though overall non-core resources grew for UN Women during this period.**

UN Women has seen a steady increase in its resources since 2014, and in 2019, for the first time, revenue crossed the US\$ 500 million threshold, the estimated optimum funding envisioned at the Entity's establishment. Growth was driven by increases in contributions to 'other resources', which reached US\$ 357.4 million in 2019 from US\$ 235.3 million in 2018; while contributions to 'regular resources'

at US\$ 143.0 million, were down from US\$ 149.0 million in 2018. In addition, 'assessed contributions to the regular budget', as approved by UN General Assembly, increased to US\$ 10.2 million from US\$ 8.0 million in 2018.<sup>54</sup> Programme expenditure in 2019 reached US\$ 329.2 million, 37 per cent higher than in 2015.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> UN Women Financial Report and Audited Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2019, and Report of the Board of Auditors, page 49.

<sup>55</sup> UN Women Financial Report and Audited Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2019, and Report of the Board of Auditors, page 61; and the same for the Year Ended 31 December 2015, page 55.

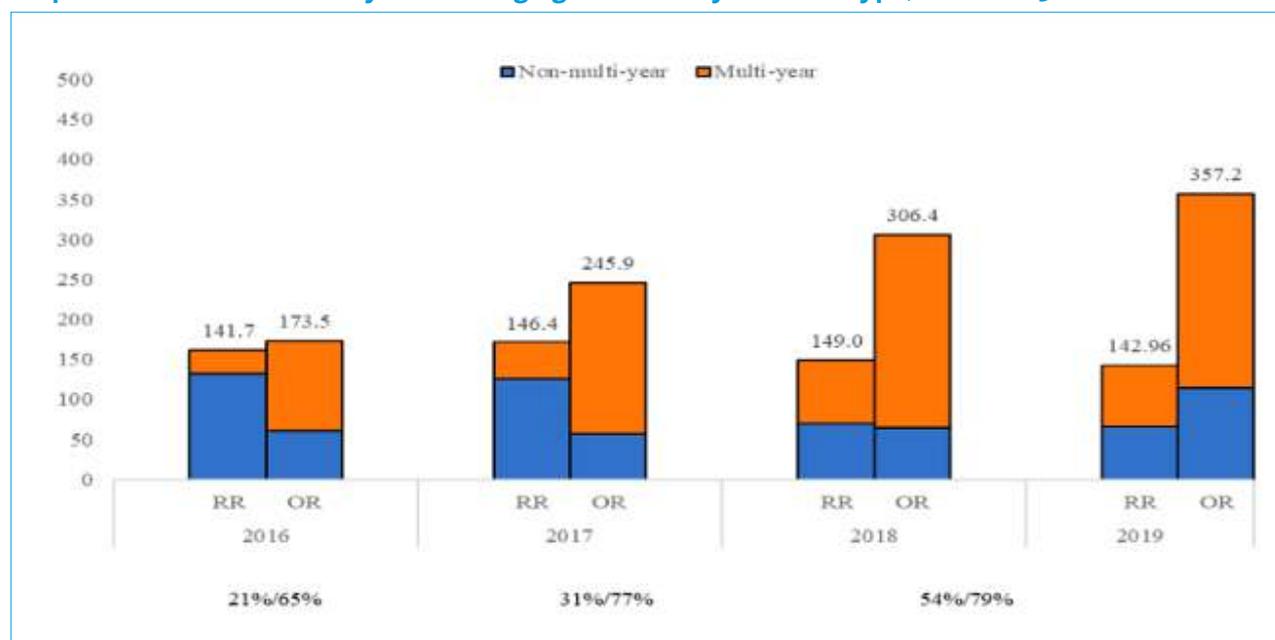
A review of the Structured Dialogue on Financing reports for 2019 and 2020 provides evidence of an increase in multi-year donor commitments; the average commitment value of regular resources; and average value of other resource agreements.

The proportional value of multi-year funding agreements rose steadily during 2016–2019 from 21 per cent to 54 per cent for regular resources, and from 65 per cent to 79 per cent for other resources. Although the total value of

regular resources remained flat at around US\$ 142 million, the value of other resources more than doubled, from US\$ 173 million to US\$ 357 million.

There has been a steep decrease in the share of lower value agreements (less than US\$ 150,000) from 49 per cent in 2016 to 26 per cent in 2019, while high-value agreements (over US\$ 5 million) increased from 2 per cent to 6 per cent of UN Women's programme portfolio.<sup>56</sup> This was to some extent facilitated by a policy decision that any agreements below US\$ 150,000 would need approval by the Directors of DMA and the Programme Division.

**FIGURE 12.**  
Proportional value of multi-year funding agreements by resource type, 2016–2019



Source: Structured Dialogue on Financing the Results of the UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021 (UNW/2020/7)

High-quality (pooled, multi-year, lightly earmarked) non-core resources were a core proposition of the FPI approach and critical determinants of their sustainability. There were high expectations – although without dedicated targets – that the FPIs would raise significant levels of funding to implement multi-year programmes at scale and with impact. That UN Women had a commitment to use FPIs to drive and expand programming is evident from the UN Women briefing on the SP 2014–2017, including its FPIs (UNW/2016/CRP.2), which notes that “UN Women has committed to use its FPIs to grow joint programming, focus results and drive resource mobilization efforts”.

A comparison of UN Women's annual resource trends with the audited FPI revenue trends – as provided in the corporate financial system – indicates that FPIs were not a major resource modality for UN Women: for the years 2016–2019, their share rose from 10.5 per cent to 15.0 per cent in 2017 and fell to 5.4 per cent in 2019. The absolute values mobilized also showed a sharp decline since 2017. Therefore, while FPIs made some contribution, they were not the most significant channels for the increase in multi-year resources since 2016. However, the large discrepancy between the audited figures and (much higher) SPU estimates provides room for more positive interpretations based on the latter.

**TABLE 6. UN Women resources growth trends, US\$ million**

	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Regular resources</b>	141.7	146.4	149.0	143.0
<b>Other resources</b>	178.1	214.2	235.3	357.4
<b>Assessed contributions</b>	7.6	8.3	8.0	10.2
<b>Total (audited figures)</b>	327.4	368.9	392.3	510.6
<b>FPIs (audited figures)</b>	18.7	32.2	27.7	19.3
<b>FPI/other resources</b>	10.5%	15.0%	11.8%	5.4%

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team from UN Women Audited Financial Statements and audited FPI revenue data provided by FMS.

In the absence of any data on FPI revenue targets for the SP 2014–17 and SP 2018–2021, the evaluation took note of a report on revenue pipeline projections for 2017–2020 entered into LEADS, which also shows the breakdown of FPI and non-FPI values for each year<sup>57</sup>. The data for 2017–2020 clearly shows FPIs to be the main intended modalities of financing, accounting for over 50 per cent of all other resources for each year. These projections were consistent with the note in the same report that, following the launch of the FPIs in January 2016, 38 per cent of field offices immediately aligned their Annual Work Plans (AWPs) to the FPIs, and that FPIs would account for about 60 per cent of UN Women’s portfolio in 2018–2019.<sup>58</sup>

A comparison of audited data from FMS for FPI revenues against the pipeline projections appearing in LEADS showed actual realization rates ranging from 30 per cent to 54 per cent during 2017–2020. Therefore, UN Women has been consistently unable to meet its FPI revenue projections for FPIs since 2017. However, this was not seen as a failing of FPIs in themselves.

The rationale of FPIs was accepted by donors in principle as evidenced by the following:

According to FMS data, during 2016–2019, FPIs received US\$ 97.9 million (US\$ 105.3 million to June 2020) through dedicated FPI fund codes, for specific FPIs mentioned in the respective donor agreements, which represents 9.9 per cent of other (non-core) resources received during 2016–2019.

Of more than 218 contributors to UN Women, 73 contributed amounts ranging from US\$ 11,000 to US\$ 11.7 million, and 24 contributed in excess of US\$ 1 million to the FPIs.

Of the top 20 donors to UN Women’s overall resources, 13 also contributed to the FPIs.

Attracting pooled funding was the one area in which all FPIs – even the most successful Women Count – were unsuccessful. As a result, FPIs were unable to access the benefits of simplified processes linked to common donor agreements, results reporting and communications.

**FIGURE 13.**  
**Estimated available or pipeline funding (leads by year / US\$ million)**



Source: Structured Dialogue on Financing: Financing the UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021 (UNW/2017/8)

57 Structured Dialogue on Financing: Financing the UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021 (UNW/2017/8), Impact of FPIs on pipeline development, paras 24–28.

58 Annual Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2014–2017, paras 64–67.

**TABLE 7. Actual FPI revenue against pipeline estimates, 2017–2020 US\$ million**

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 YTD	2017–2020
<b>Pipeline estimate</b>	Not available	170	232	173	35	610
<b>Probable pipeline value</b>	Not available	116	150	111	21	398
<b>Of which: FPI pipeline estimate</b>	Not available	91	141	110	24	366
<b>and probable FPI pipeline value</b>	Not available	59	90	65	14	228
<b>Actual FPI revenue (FMS data)</b>	18.7	32.2	27.7	19.3	7.4	86.6
<b>Realization rate (Actual against Probable)</b>	Not available	54.6%	30.8%	29.7%	52.9%	38.0%

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team

## FINDING 18

**Due investments were not made in the formulation phases to pre-test the acceptability of FPI modalities and funding instruments, which had an effect on donor engagement. Resource mobilization strategies for FPIs did not sufficiently communicate the differentiation from pre-existing pooled funds at UN Women. The prospect of 12 FPI funds may also have been somewhat overwhelming and transaction intensive for donors.**

The evaluation notes the following factors affecting resource mobilization by FPIs:

- **Advance donor engagement.** As a significant initiative with major ramifications to donor funding modalities, the FPIs merited due advance engagement with donors (such as inclusion in reference groups and advisory structures) over the proposed modalities, especially to pre-test reactions to the conceptual rationale of the 12 FPIs and, more specifically, to the pooled funding proposals, given that other funding modalities were in place and used by the same donors. The unexpected lack of take up by donors of pooled-funding modalities overturned a key expectation of pooled and single reporting that would have reduced transaction costs. The evaluation could not confirm whether such consultative mechanisms were instituted before finalizing the FPIs, but advance consultation may have averted unrealistic expectations.
- While **pooled funding for each FPI** would have been beneficial for UN Women, for donors the opposite was found. The prospect of formally dealing with 12 FPI instruments was more cumbersome and transaction heavy for donor representatives. Some UN Women personnel and some donors/members of the Executive Board expressed the view that fewer, better packaged FPIs aligned with the five UN Women Impact areas would have been a lot simpler and manageable for donors.
- It was challenging to **convince donors of the merit of global policy support components** (which were later proven to be key success factors in the FPIs). Donors were more inclined to fund country-level programming but could not justify funding a headquarters-based global policy support facility when they were already funding UN Women core resources.
- Lack of a **concerted resource mobilization policy/strategy and action plan.** Resource mobilization processes for 12 FPIs at global, regional and country level implied a complex web of multiple engagements for donors and warranted effective coordination and relationship management. However, there was no policy/strategy and action plan at the time that clearly articulated donor coordination among FPIs.<sup>59</sup> The lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities for resource mobilization and a degree of competitive and fragmented donor engagement and mobilization (e.g. donor round tables were held for each FPI with the same donor representatives) added to the lack of attraction for donors. Finally, with challenges in raising funding at headquarters level, resource mobilization efforts also increased at the country level.

<sup>59</sup> The Resource Mobilization Strategy only came into effect in 2018 and was not mentioned significantly in the evaluation.

Feedback from a number of interviewees highlighted that several COs felt the FPI thresholds (US\$ 1 million per country per year) were unrealistic and therefore unachievable. Resource mobilization responsibilities were added to programme staff's workload without the necessary exposure to important skills and support for donor mapping, donor intelligence and

donor pitching. Since the FPIs, some steps have been taken to strengthen these areas, including donor engagement and intelligence.

The additional burden of resource mobilization on programme staff without due training, and the lack of strong oversight and coordination from headquarters, only blurred the distinct architecture of FPIs. Over time, it was no longer clear how to demarcate FPIs from non-FPIs in donor agreements and reporting.

**TABLE 8. Regional distribution of programme expenses by Outcome area, 2019 (US\$ million)**

Outcome area	America & Caribbean	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	East & Southern Africa	Europe & Central Asia	West & Central Africa
Peace, security and humanitarian	7.07	23.27	18.05	11.73	6.83	15.39
Ending violence against women	8.50	6.37	18.02	10.81	9.16	3.51
Economic empowerment	9.95	2.73	10.10	10.59	3.70	5.27
Leadership and governance	5.46	2.36	8.69	17.34	7.59	6.96
Global norms and standards	2.71	3.86	5.87	3.23	0.73	0.49

Source: Scorecard of UN Women's Strategic Plan, Resources 2018–2021<sup>60</sup>

**TABLE 9. Average value of regular resource commitments and other resource agreements, 2016–2019**

		2016	2017	2018	2019
Regular resources	Total commitment value (US\$ million)	141.6	146.4	149.0	142.9
	Number of commitments	115	119	115	119
	Average commitment value (US\$ million)	1.23	1.23	1.3	1.2
Other resources	Total agreement value (US\$ million)	173.5	245.9	306.4	357.2
	Number of agreements	248	235	250	261
	Average agreement value (US\$ million)	0.7	1.05	1.23	1.37

Source: Structured Dialogue on Financing the Results of the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021 (UNW/2020/7)

60 Overview of results from implementation of the Strategic Plan, including latest figures and data available on <https://www.unwomen.org/en/executive-board/strategic-plan>



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5

LESSONS AND  
CATALYTIC  
RESULTS

# 5. LESSONS AND CATALYTIC RESULTS: SELECT FPI CASE STUDIES

## 5.1 FACTORS OF PERFORMANCE

Based on the five case studies, the evaluation identified a number of factors explaining the success or challenges experienced by various FPIs. Collectively, these factors endorse the concept of the FPI intervention logic and key elements: coherence through standard (yet customizable) approaches; predictable funding; strong partnerships; programming at scale; and effective monitoring and knowledge management systems. However, some unique factors contributed to individual FPI's success, which are summarized below.

### 5.1.1 WOMEN COUNT

**Timing and positioning:** In the evaluation's view the most important factor for the success of the programme was UN Women's timing and positioning, which helped identify, articulate and maintain a comparative advantage in data and gender statistics. UN Women took the lead in addressing the huge gaps in monitoring gender indicators across the SDGs, with a mix of upstream and downstream interventions.

**Effective donor engagement:** A major differentiator for the Women Count FPI was its success in convincing donors to support strong headquarters-based technical expertise. Donors' appreciation of the need to support the recruitment of staff at the headquarters level who could provide clear guidance to countries was a turning point. Women Count was among the few FPIs that received adequate and multi-year funding for the global support component, which was key to progressively implementing the programme across regions. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was an important anchor donor that contributed to galvanizing more partners and support for the FPI.

**Calibrated approaches:** Women Count followed an incremental approach to rolling out the programme based on the experience of pathfinder countries. The programme's success depended on national commitment to strengthen

gender statistics and the buy-in of national statistical bodies was critical. Progress was faster in countries which had a well-established national statistics system or were committed to periodic investment in data collection and statistical analysis. The FPI's incremental approach enabled calibration based on what works and what doesn't work.

**Dedicated advocacy strategy:** Women Count had a dedicated advocacy strategy which was instrumental in bringing stakeholders to the table for resource mobilization, but also saw donors as advocates for gender statistics. Donor participation in high-level awareness raising events also led to the addition of new partner countries and donors.

**Matrix management structure:** Women Count provided regional specialists in each region who had two lines of reporting to the regional directors and also to the headquarters-based programme leader. Similarly, country programme staff reported to regional specialists while also reporting to country representatives at country level. This allowed effective backstopping and the exchange of lessons learned on the way forward and strengthened operational support to implementing countries. The role of the regional policy specialists was very useful in coordinating country-level implementation and developing a suitable regional knowledge product.

### 5.1.2 CLIMATE RESILIENT AGRICULTURE (CRA)

**Alignment with national and regional priorities:** Alignment with national and regional priorities is key for traction and scalable investments. The CRA FPI, even without funding for a global support component, saw high national demand and donor interest in WCA and ESA given the implications of climate change on food security. The impact of climate change on agriculture and food security has been a major priority for national governments and is reflected in the UN Integrated Strategy for Sahel (UNISS). The ToC provided a common framework for several countries to embark on WEE in climate resilient agriculture value chains, which represented a good fit with national investment priorities. UN Women invested in regional policy advisers in WCA and ESA to backstop the countries implementing CRA projects.

**Leveraging partnerships:** Demonstrating comparative advantage in agriculture and climate change has not been an easy task for UN Women. However, success in working with specialist partners – the Rome-Based Agencies FAO, WFP and IFAD in an ongoing RWEE Programme – enabled UN Women to introduce innovative approaches through the CRA FPI and directly reach a far bigger number of beneficiaries and deliver at scale, which has been a key factor in eliciting donor interest. UN Women also worked with a number of agriculture research, extension support and financing institutions to strengthen climate-smart practices and enhance women's access to resources and markets.

### 5.1.3 ACCESS TO JUSTICE (A2J)

**Anchoring in international commitments:** The SDG 16+ agenda has been the main driver of A2J programming across the UN system. SDG target 16.3 promotes the rule of law at national and international levels and ensures equal access to justice for all. This has provided additional entry points with governments for UN Women COs which were developing the bulk of their programmes around SDG 5 and to an extent SDG 10. With the Pathfinders Initiative and adoption of the flagship Justice for Women Report recommendations as the larger blueprint for the UN system as a whole, UN Women's comparative advantage and identity have been recognized.

**Overcoming fragmentation within UN Women approaches:** The cross-cutting nature of the subject and overlaps with the WPS and EVAW pillars led to fragmentation in programming as well as donor engagement and resource mobilization for A2J. Fragmentation in corporate approaches at UN Women led to separate programming and resource mobilization for transitional justice

programmes which affected positioning, strategic communications and resourcing of A2J programmes. This has gradually been addressed through comprehensive approaches including post-conflict and peace contexts which are more appealing to donors and development partners. Using A2J as a programming framework rather than a programme has enabled flexible approaches for COs to integrate A2J components as elements within programmes or as a means to other ends such as EVAW, WEE and WPS.

**Leveraging partnerships:** UN Women has approached A2J primarily through partnerships, instead of pursuing isolated programmes. Working with UNDP – the global leader in SDG 16, UNODC (interface with criminal justice elements) and UNOSG (heading the Global Rule of Law Focal Point) provides a strong foundation for joint programming and advocacy within the UN system as well as within countries.

### 5.1.4 SAFE CITIES AND SAFE PUBLIC SPACES (SC/SPS)

**A multi-year commitment from an anchor donor, with a range of donors supporting multi-year commitments to several SC/SPS programmes:** The ability of UN Women to demonstrate stories of change at impact level has allowed uninterrupted multi-year funding from the 'anchor' donor (Spain), and from some country-level donors (e.g. NZAID, USAID and the Netherlands). The major value added was

that the programme provided cross-regional technical support and a global package of tools with dedicated induction sessions/missions combined with seed funding to COs to start up programmes adapting the global framework. This has strengthened COs' capacity to run and provide specialized technical assistance to cities.

**Built on solid foundation and pre-existing programme:**

The SC/SPS FPI was developed based on a pre-existing programme, a very solid grounding, established brand and a robust method for adaptation at the country level. The SC/SPS began with five starter countries in 2010 and grew to more than 51 cities in 2020. This strong foundation positioned the SC/SPS FPI ahead of the curve to quickly consolidate and adapt compared to other FPIs initiated at the same time.

**A responsive, adaptive management approach:**

UN Women's management experience in this pioneering FPI highlights the importance of incorporating versatile expertise, strong quality assurance, effective knowledge management and attention to developing and validating programme documents. The intensive and inclusive approach from design to evaluation; high-quality global guidance and tools; the type of expertise provided; and the length of programmes were the drivers for this FPI's effectiveness and efficiency.

**Instituting a multi-pronged approach:**

A common feature of the SC/SPS FPI was its holistic, integrated, long-term and multi-stakeholder engagement focusing on systematic and transformative actions rather than stand-alone, one-off interventions. The FPI also succeeded in providing a common package of ready-to-use global guidance

and tools, with demonstrated adaptation in several cities. This has helped UN Women to consolidate the gains from the Global Programme and reinforced coordinated, coherent and strategic planning with clear and tangible results at different levels.

**Robust monitoring and evaluation:** A key distinguishing feature of the SC/SPS FPI was the focus on integrated evidence-based programming and evaluability of results at outcome and impact level, which made it attractive for decision makers and donors. A significant accomplishment was the FPI's success in terms of building a common conceptual understanding and clear pathways for short, medium and longer-term results across the chain of results.

**Strong knowledge management system:** The FPI was successful in institutionalizing a multi-faceted learning approach which stimulated collaborative learning and commitment across a broad range of stakeholders. Many appreciated the viable conceptual and evaluable design of the FPIs and its adaptability into local contexts. In addition, the intentional participatory programme design; the sequencing of the overall programmatic approach; and intentional regional/cross-country support were strong elements of the programme.

## 5.1.5 LEAP

**Bottom-up approach:** Unlike some of the FPIs, which were first formulated at the global level and later populated in the field, the LEAP programme, prior to its launch as an FPI, had been developed and started in Arab States in response to the Syrian crisis. The first cohort of projects were implemented in Jordan in 2012 and later (from 2014) in Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon. Having been tested and piloted, including its key implementation models, the LEAP was further refined at the global level through FPI development and consultation processes in 2015. Consequently, the LEAP was widely implemented at the country level, through joint programmes or adopted as a programmatic approach under SP Output 14: More women play a greater role and are better served by humanitarian response and recovery effort.

**Flexibility and adaptability:** While transformative results were expected through integrated implementation of the key components of the LEAP's ToC, COs were afforded the flexibility to pick and choose those areas that mattered most to their local context. Therefore, the LEAP and

its corresponding ToC were viewed as a global framework with a menu of services to strengthen the pre-existing position of UN Women and to respond to emerging opportunities.

**Replicable approach for UN system coordination:**

Having a successful and replicable approach, such as the LEAP in the humanitarian setting, provided a channel/key entry point to engage with other UN partners and other humanitarian actors (as observed in most of the joint LEAP programmes where UN Women executed the programmes as the lead agency). Being able to provide a framework to draft local LEAP joint programmes with other UN partners, such as UNHCR and UNFPA, provided a valuable conceptual/logic framework (ToC) and a tool to mobilize partnerships as a joint programme.

**Alignment with donor interests:** One of the key success factors for LEAP's resource mobilization was its programmatic approach, pairing donor interest based on the needs and context on the ground. The LEAP had a donor

champion which recognized the value UN Women brought to the crisis response setting, its alignment with donor priorities and provided support from the launch of the project.

Other fundamental lessons learned from the FPI experience included:

- a.** the need for steady and sustained support with clear accountability, support mechanisms and a whole of organization approach for such massive corporate programmatic approaches;
- b.** the imperative of a realistic operational plan and capacities;
- c.** commensurate investment in implementation support, monitoring and RBM capacities at country level, consistently complemented by technical support from headquarters and ROs;
- d.** the need for due investment in formulation phases to pre-test the acceptability and feasibility of such modalities before wider roll-out;
- e.** advance engagement with donors over the proposed modalities, especially to pre-test reactions to the conceptual rationale vis-à-vis other funding modalities;
- f.** adequate investment in socializing such frameworks with the wider stakeholder base; and
- g.** the need to drive standardized approaches to advocate and report on significant aggregated results.

# 6. CONCLUSIONS

## CONCLUSION 1



**The FPIs were a much needed and significant corporate initiative to strengthen UN Women’s programmatic focus, thematic coherence and operational effectiveness to attain the SP objectives towards GEWE. The FPIs represented a way of consolidating UN Women’s then fragmented and subscale programme footprint using coherent approaches that could be scaled up as well as aggregated for corporate results monitoring and reporting.**

The FPIs were introduced in the context of a newly structured entity with a long tradition of operating and supporting numerous but small initiatives, with a majority implemented by civil society partners. As a transformative paradigm, FPIs represented the first corporate endeavour to test programmatic approaches and provide opportunities for corporate learning and adaptation. Nonetheless, there was considerable variance in the success of the 12 FPIs. Some were developed based on pre-existing global programmes and thrived organically, while the nascent FPIs struggled to quickly take off and gain traction.

## CONCLUSION 2



**The FPI implementation experience during 2016–2017 and under SP 2018–2021 revealed successes and challenges, as well as adjustments and adaptation based on results. However, as FPIs represented the Entity’s first experiences with transformative programming, both successes and challenges hold valuable lessons in programming and change management for the next SP.**

The FPIs contributed to greater awareness and adoption of focused and strategic programming approaches across all areas of UN Women’s work. They provided a coherent framework to operationalize UN Women’s five Thematic Priorities across regions, and to package and brand UN Women programming in ways that could be consistently marketed and communicated to donors and other stakeholders.

There was a fair degree of consensus that FPIs have had modest successes as programmes; however, they have had definite success as programming structures to guide UN Women’s field programmes.

- FPI elements that delivered well: Organization-wide mindset shifts towards programmatic approaches; unifying theories of change; global and regional policy support mechanisms.
- FPI elements that were less satisfactory: Pooled funding and resource mobilization; inadequate systematic higher-level review and guidance mechanisms to ensure some standardization and use of good practices and processes; monitoring of FPI operational efficiencies; and results from economies of scale.

## CONCLUSION 3



**The FPIs were highly successful in embedding a corporate mindshift towards programmatic approaches, and also demonstrated the scalable impact of focused and standard approaches unified by clear theories of change, facilitated by global and regional policy support. Generally, these approaches are now used in UN Women’s programming.**

The FPIs’ singular biggest achievement has been their success in engendering an organization-wide appreciation of the necessity and benefits of more focused and impactful programming through consolidation. This represented a big shift from a tradition of fragmented and somewhat disjointed and subscale interventions to more strategic, medium-term results-focused approaches and programme instruments, underpinned by clear theories of change that enabled standard and scalable (yet customizable) implementation. These elements are now applied in programming irrespective of a programme’s classification as an FPI or otherwise. Strong headquarters and regional policy support was an important ingredient in FPI designs to ensure coherence and consistency of implementation, as well as cross-fertilization of knowledge and good practices. FPIs that were successful in mobilizing resources for global and regional policy support benefitted significantly from these components, which enabled effective delivery at scale and over a large global footprint.

Donor advocacy and recognition of the effectiveness of such mechanisms played a major role in securing predictable funding for global and/or regional specialists in FPIs such as Women Count (global, regional and country level), Climate Resilient Agriculture (two regions) and Access to Justice (one region).

#### CONCLUSION 4



**Elements that were weak and constrained several FPIs from performing to their potential were: quality assurance mechanisms, resource mobilization, financial tracking and reporting, corporate performance monitoring against FPI differentiator metrics, and initiatives around structured partnerships.**

There has generally been a growth in multi-year funding and larger-value donor agreements for UN Women since 2016. While not attributable to the FPIs, this trend correlates to the narratives and campaigns for multi-year and larger funding commitments also espoused and promoted by the FPIs and Strategic Notes. However, no FPIs were able to mobilize pooled funding, and resource mobilization was unsuccessful in most FPIs.

A major expectation from the FPIs was that they would become the vehicles for UN Women to reach the US\$ 500 million annual revenue threshold. The FPIs were expected to mobilize large magnitudes of high-quality, non-core funding to enable larger, multi-year programmes across regions, with economies of scale reflected in management ratios. However, FPIs could not meet the high expectations of revenue that had to be raised. Factors affecting corporate resource mobilization for FPIs included: inadequate investment in formulation phases to pre-test the acceptability of FPI resource mobilization modalities and funding instruments; lack of adequate donor understanding of the FPI architecture and additionality over pre-existing donor modalities, including already existing pooled trust funds; and the overwhelming prospect of donor engagement on 12 additional instruments, which represented new transaction costs for donors. However, in general, there has been a growth in multi-year funding and larger-value donor agreements for UN Women since 2016. While a number of business and operational processes were introduced for the FPIs, there was no systematic investment to strengthen areas that were the key differentiators of FPI performance. In particular, capacity and skill gaps in programme management, resource mobilization, knowledge management, structured partnerships and donor engagement, advocacy and communications, were inadequately addressed across FPIs.

Importantly, the organization did not have processes and controls in place to ensure complete and accurate recording of FPI funds for management purposes due to insufficient operationalization of the pre-agreed protocol as well as the substantial changes in FPIs' business model since their inception to date. As a result, UN Women did not build a strong evidence base to inform the FPIs' transition into TPs and their contributions to the results of SP 2018–2021. The FPIs were somewhat less prominent in SP 2018–2021 and did not have any dedicated operational performance indicators, although their ToCs were formally included in the narratives of the new TPs/Outputs.

#### CONCLUSION 5



**UN Women has elaborated a cogent approach on collaborative and comparative advantage in delivering its mandate over the years; however, its strategic position for UN coordination is shaped by several factors including the extent to which the UN and other partners recognize its added value and demand for its thematic coordination efforts.**

COs implementing the FPIs faced a distinct set of inhibiting factors for UN system coordination, including: overlapping mandates and programming around GEWE; the perception of the FPIs more as UN Women signature offerings rather than as multi-agency partnership vehicles; the perception of the FPIs by some agencies as forays into competitive turfs and established strongholds; and issues of acceptability over system-wide coordination (especially at country level) being bestowed on UN Women. Some FPIs and offices took steps to address this, but most recognized the need to do more, and to be enabled to do more. While the contribution of the FPIs in advancing the UN system coordination mandate was not clear, the evaluation recognized the significant positive trajectory and contributions that UN Women has made in supporting countries to take steps towards stimulating catalytic change across the UN system.

While the extent and depth of partnerships with different stakeholders varied across FPIs, the evidence broadly shows that individual FPIs established strategic partnerships at the country level. Nonetheless, there was no clear strategy to support FPIs to evolve into the partnership vehicles they were primarily set up to achieve. Due to limited consultations with key partners to secure buy-in for FPIs from the beginning and to build structured partnerships based on the ToCs, the FPIs were seen and implemented as 'UN Women' initiatives rather than as truly partnership vehicles.

**CONCLUSION 6**

**FPIs were not stand-alone and independent modalities and their success depended to a great extent on the overall enabling environment and business processes. Although much emphasis went into substantive programmatic aspects, a similar degree of emphasis was not evident in corporate level monitoring of their performance to draw lessons and adapt from the implementation experience. Clear accountabilities for business processes and overall leadership of FPIs as corporate programming instruments were not established.**

Although FPIs were a major corporate initiative, most FPIs were implemented in stand-alone and uncoordinated ways, with limited external stakeholder engagement, appropriate governance, risk assessment (including pilot testing) and mitigation plans. Corporate mechanisms were not sufficiently followed up, especially since 2018, to ensure uniform operationalization, accountability, ownership, and authority for quality assurance and thematic coherence. Other key factors affecting operationalization of FPIs included: insufficient higher-level direction and monitoring of the efficacy of FPIs as a leading corporate modality; capacity and skills gaps in programme management; limited success for resource mobilization and inadequate processes and controls to ensure complete and accurate recording of FPI funds for management purposes; absence of dedicated operational performance indicators; and inadequate knowledge management and learning/feedback loops to test and improve the cost-effectiveness of individual FPIs, and the FPI modality as a whole.

This perpetuated a variety of approaches across FPIs which evolved their own knowledge mechanisms and COPs, depending on internal leadership and the availability of resources. Some FPIs, such as Women Count and Safe Cities, established a number of good practices in donor engagement, coordination, partnerships, monitoring and knowledge management and highlighted the potential of the FPI approach. A number of FPIs, especially Women Count, Safe Cities, and Essential Services and Prevention were implemented effectively and established large programmatic footprints. Some of these programmes existed before the FPIs were established but were subsumed within the FPI architecture

**CONCLUSION 7**

**FPIs exhibited a huge diversity of performance, results and early impacts. However, the common success factors across FPIs validated the FPI logic and rationale of coherence and standardization, programming and scale, predictable funding, strong partnerships and effective monitoring and knowledge management.**

Some individual FPIs such as Women Count, Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces and LEAP posted consistently good results across regions, while others such as Climate Resilient Agriculture and Access to Justice demonstrated results in fewer regions. The five case studies identified a number of common factors explaining the success or challenges: coherence through standard (yet customizable) approaches; predictable funding rooted in strong alignment with donor priorities; strong partnerships; programming at scale; and effective monitoring and knowledge management systems. These are strong endorsements of the strength and potential of FPIs as a corporate programming modality to be mainstreamed across regions and thematic areas. In addition to the common factors cited above, individual FPIs had specific ingredients that contributed to their success, which could be replicated or adapted to other FPIs.

Unique elements in the Women Count FPI were the timing and positioning of UN Women in gender data gaps; use of matrix management structures for backstopping and feedback loops; dedicated advocacy strategy; strong and transparent donor engagement; and the use of calibrated approaches to rolling out programmes. Key elements in the Climate Resilient Agriculture FPI were alignment with national/regional priorities to enable traction and scalability; building on existing partnerships with specialized agencies; as well as partnering with a diversity of national actors – agriculture research, extension support and financing institutions. In Access to Justice, anchoring the programme in the SDG 16+ agenda and the flagship Justice for Women report; overcoming fragmentation with transitional justice programming; and a concerted structured partnership approach were key to establishing a strong foundation for Rule of Law and Access to Justice components across regions. The Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls FPI benefitted from the predictable, multi-year funding from an anchor donor at global level; multi-year funding from several donors at country level, building on the solid foundation of a pre-existing global

programme; and a multi-pronged approach supported by a common package of global guidance and tools. In contrast, the success of the LEAP FPI emanated from bottom-up approaches, drawing on the success of a country-level programme to build a major regional programme aligned with the thematic and geographic priorities of an anchor donor.

## CONCLUSION 8



**In summation, the FPIs were a bold and ambitious corporate initiative and carried risks associated with any major corporate change endeavour. The FPIs intervention logic remains highly relevant to UN Women’s SPs, and their experiences – both successes and failings – provide valuable lessons for the continuance and reinforcement of programmatic approaches.**

UN Women has made significant corporate investment in embedding FPIs into its corporate culture, with some essential adjustments based on lessons learned over the past four years of implementation. The FPIs hold tangible value as corporate programming instruments for scalable impacts, which are becoming ever more imperative for all development actors.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the evaluation framework; the analysis that informed the findings and conclusions in this report; and consultations with the Evaluation Reference Group, the Senior Management Team and PPID on the way forward.

### RECOMMENDATION 1

**UN Women should explicitly state thematic programme focus, field delivery footprint and reaffirm “second generation FPIs” as a programmatic instrument based on field capacity and resource mobilization targets in the next SP 2022–2025.**

UN Women’s levels of revenue and programmatic footprint continue to necessitate effective programming instruments and modalities to deliver scalable impacts and enhance operational efficiencies. The lessons from implementing FPIs could be used to design improved “second generation FPIs” with better features and controls to serve the aims and targets of the next SP 2022–2025. Therefore, UN Women needs to explicitly reaffirm the importance of programmatic approaches to its SP and define appropriate corporate programming instruments whether these continue to be called FPIs or by other names. In this regard, due attention could be given to optimize (reduce) FPIs to a more pragmatic and transaction-light number that are grounded in an evidence-based Theory of Action to ensure programming impact and effectiveness towards measuring and reporting high-quality results in major areas of work.

### RECOMMENDATION 2

**UN Women senior leadership should drive accountability for implementation of agreed corporate programmatic approaches and supporting business processes by clearly anchoring oversight and supervisory responsibilities for the “next generation FPIs” in PPID.**

To ensure interface between headquarters and field offices on corporate programming modalities, UN Women should strengthen management arrangements including use of effective matrix management elements to enhance programme delivery, knowledge management and results accountability for strategic programmes. The matrix structure should clarify accountability, oversight and supervisory responsibilities at global, regional and country levels. This would include responsibilities for supervision and monitoring of the “next generation FPIs” according to established indicators (see Recommendation 5).

### RECOMMENDATION 3

**UN Women should clearly define how it will leverage its UN coordination mandate and UN reform to amplify GEWE results through its programming and establish its own programmatic footprint, where UN Women is recognized as the key thematic programme leader.**

The high priority given to GEWE among all UN agencies and an increasing emphasis of UN system-wide approaches reinforce the need for structured partnerships and joint programming modalities among UN agencies to attain global GEWE outcomes. Notwithstanding past challenges in structuring corporate partnerships with other agencies, UN Women should embark on early engagement with both donors and other UN agencies to explore and secure consensus over structured partnerships for the key GEWE pillars/impact areas foreseen in SP 2022–2025 and common to most agencies. This should include exploring common results frameworks, governance structure, resource mobilization plans and joint programming modalities, at least with agencies that have already worked with UN Women on FPIs, albeit in an ad hoc or unstructured way. Partner agencies would need to be highlighted

in such arrangements, which should not be perceived or overly identified as UN Women led and ipso facto undermine common objectives.

#### RECOMMENDATION 4

**Develop global, regional and country “second generation” FPI modalities for each of the planned GEWE pillars, with theories of change and analysis of actions that link the normative support, UN system coordination and operational activities aspects of UN Women’s integrated mandate. In addition, differentiate actions and results at the global, regional and country level.**

Building on the lessons from FPIs, there would be merit in more clearly delineating the criteria for global, regional and country level modalities and how they are integrated, interlinked and coordinated. Having distinct templates for the three levels would enable differentiated branding, communications and resource mobilization strategies. While taking into consideration local and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) priorities, country Strategic Notes could be structured around the proposed modalities/templates. Recognizing that it may not always be possible to implement the recommended corporate programming modalities, UN Women should designate programmes as “second generation FPIs” based on clear criteria and with specific authority and accountability. Given the need for corporate monitoring of the modalities as a whole, there is benefit in establishing or assigning a Programme Coordination unit or group at headquarters to monitor progress in the various elements of the “second generation FPI” programme architecture. This would include persons with specific lead roles in five areas: UN engagement coordination as it relates to programmes; donor relations; results monitoring and analysis; knowledge management; and communications.

#### RECOMMENDATION 5

**UN Women should establish clear responsibilities and an accountability framework for each planned GEWE pillar/impact area across the whole organization.**

UN Women should conduct a comprehensive skills and capacity gap assessment in respect of the key elements of the programmatic approach and develop appropriate

human resource strategies, including resourcing, in conjunction with the ongoing change management process. UN Women should introduce organizational effectiveness and efficiency indicators to track the uptake of programmatic focus through indicators including, but not limited to, multi-year funding, average agreement values, and increase in share of FPI value in country, regional and global programming.

#### RECOMMENDATION 6

**UN Women should implement a full integration of its strategic planning, budgeting, results monitoring and financial systems so that planning, resource mobilization, budgets and expenditure of SP initiatives are clearly reported through the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system.**

UN Women should operationalize its upcoming SP upfront as part of its planning process, including its adaptation in UN Women’s new ERP system, so that planning, results (corporate and project level), resource mobilization, budgets, revenue and expenditure of SP initiatives are clearly identified, tracked and reported through the audited ERP system (rather than through other tools not subject to end-to-end process and quality controls). UN Women should implement its new corporate result-based budgeting and financial ERP system, attaining full integration of SP planning, resource mobilization, budgeting and expenditure into the system with end-to-end process and quality controls, to enable unambiguous tracking and allocation of SP initiatives and results, both at the corporate and project level.

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**Produced by the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Service of UN Women (IEAS)**

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