



**United Nations**

**Review of management and  
administration in the United Nations  
Entity for Gender Equality and the  
Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)**

**Supplementary paper to the Report of the Joint Inspection  
Unit (JIU/REP/2024/1)**

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## **Introduction**

1. In July 2024, JIU issued a Review of management and administration in the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)” (JIU/REP/2024/1). The Inspectors took note of UN-Women triple mandate of normative, operational and coordination which provides a unique opportunity for taking integrated approaches in addressing the root causes of gender inequality and influencing broader systems as well as eventual systemic change. These mandates should be pursued in balance and in a mutually reinforcing manner at the global, regional and country levels. The Executive Director in her Informal Briefing to the Executive Board in June 2023 indicated that the three UN-Women mandates are pursued in an integrated manner and that the resources devoted to development activities combine coordination, normative and operational work at the regional and country levels.<sup>1</sup>

2. The present Supplementary Paper contains additional observations which the Inspectors did not include in the main report. They pertain to each area mandated to the Entity by the General Assembly founding resolution 64/289. This document was subject to factual comments by UN-Women management prior to its finalization. Data and information therein were verified or amended according to the comments received. The present document, which is not an JIU official document, is available in English only and is not officially edited.

## **Observations regarding the normative mandate**

3. **Large normative scope.** UN-Women is responsible for supporting member states in setting global norms and standards for gender equality, women’s and girls’ rights and empowerment and in their implementation. In 2012, the United Nations Evaluation Group established a definition for the term normative work as “the support to the development of norms and standards in conventions, declarations, regulatory frameworks, agreements, guidelines, codes of practice and other standard setting instruments at the global, regional and national level. Normative work also includes the support to the implementation of these instruments at the policy level, i.e., their integration into legislation, policies and development plans, and to their implementation at the programme level.”<sup>2</sup> The implementation of this mandate encompasses providing substantive expertise and policy analysis and advise, creating a knowledge base on gender equality and incorporating good practices and lessons learned from regional and national experiences. UN-Women management indicated that the Entity engages with Member States through awareness-raising advocacy, and partnerships to build stronger national legislation and policies, particularly on ending violence against women, gender-responsive budgeting, and women’s leadership in politics and decision-making. Within the United Nations system, the normative work of the organization is part of global intergovernmental processes, including the Commission on the Status of Women, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council, the Human Rights Council, and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The Inspectors recognize the Executive Director’s conscious effort for the proactive engagement of the organization with the Security Council and the expansion of the normative framework with regard to the role that women play in peace and security at all stages of conflict prevention and resolution and recovery.

4. **Organizational units involved in normative mandate.** As stated in the main body of the report issued under JIU/REP/2024/1, this mandate is primarily funded by assessed resources and the posts within these units are primarily funded through assessed and

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<sup>1</sup> UN-Women Integrated Budget 2024 2025, Informal Briefing to the Executive Board.

<sup>2</sup> E/AC.51/2015/9: Evaluation of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, para 14.

regular resources (core).<sup>3</sup> At the headquarters level, the normative mandate is pursued with the executive leadership of the organization, namely the Executive Director and the Deputies and by several organizational sections mostly placed under the Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division: (a) Peace and Security, Prevention and Resilience, (b) Economic empowerment; (c) Governance and Participation; (d) Ending violence against women; (e) Research and data; (f) Intergovernmental support. The United Nations System Coordination Division also plays a significant role in bringing together the expertise and experience of agencies, funds and programmes contributing to the normative agenda. The Civil Society Division through its support to the Commission on the Status of Women is also a key internal stakeholder. The regional and country offices support the development and the implementation of regional normative standards and national policies and regulations.

5. **Agreed conclusion of the Commission of the Status of Women.** UN-Women is considered the principal organization entrusted with supporting Member States to develop as well as to implement the policy recommendations contained in the agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women. One of the challenges shared with the Inspectors relates to integrating normative aspects and the agreed conclusions into the operational activities of UN-Women offices. Strengthening the linkages between intergovernmental decisions and implementation of these decisions on the ground is critical to the achievement of the overall objectives and mandates of the organization. UN-Women management stated that Member states often refer to their national or regional standards as they negotiate the global normative frameworks.

6. **Civil Society Division.** The founding resolution states the importance of civil society as historical partner.<sup>4</sup> The Civil Society Division at headquarters facilitates the participation of civil society stakeholders, especially women's networks and organizations in the intergovernmental processes while providing substantive support to the Member States for their productive engagement at the Commission, paving avenues to reach agreed conclusions. Over the years, the Commission has gained in importance. For example, the 67<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission gathered over seven thousand participants, including 4 heads of state and government and 116 ministers, more than 3 900 civil society participants from organizations accredited for the Economic and Social Council, 205 side events organized by Permanent Missions, intergovernmental organizations and United Nations entities, and about 700 parallel events of non-governmental organizations.<sup>5</sup> The capacity of the Civil Society Division, however, has remained unchanged despite such increase in participation and side events. There has also been expansion of its portfolio of functions, for example in terms of support and guidance to regional and country offices on civil society matters. More and more requests for participation from civil society stakeholders are anticipated. In this regard, the Inspectors welcome the establishment by the Executive Director in October 2023 of the global Civil Society Advisory Group which comprises feminist leaders from women's rights organizations, youth groups, academia, and male gender equality networks etc. The Group is expected to advise her on key strategic and political issues for the period 2022–2025.

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<sup>3</sup> Rationale for funding normative mandate with assessed contributions: see A/65/593: Revised proposal for the use of regular budget resources for the normative support functions of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

<sup>4</sup> General Assembly resolution 64/289 paras. 54 and 55: "Recognizes that civil society organizations, in particular women's organizations, play a vital role in promoting women's rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women; Requests the head of the Entity to continue the existing practice of effective consultation with civil society organizations, and encourages their meaningful contribution to the work of the Entity."

<sup>5</sup> Press release: UN Commission on the Status of Women reaffirms the role of technology and innovation, and education in the digital age in accelerating gender equality, 18 March 2023 and information provided by UN-Women management.

7. Implementing partners. Further to an internal IAS audit on the management process of implementing partners in 2019<sup>6</sup> UN-Women revised its Selection of Programme Partners Procedure in 2022.<sup>7</sup> UN-Women also promulgated an overarching Programme Partner Selection Policy and additional associated procedures (Initiate Programme Partner Project Procedure, Monitoring of Programme Partners Procedure, and Close and Learn from Programme Partner Project Procedure) in August 2023. While the capacity of implementing partners is arguably the most important consideration for their selection in entering into agreements with UN-Women, interviewees reported that the role of the organization in building capacity of such partners should also remain a major selection criterion to ensure civil society is eventually able to take over the gender equality agenda on the ground. In this connection, UN-Women has two distinct approaches to focus on capacity strengthening of civil society. The approaches provide UN-Women offices the opportunity to either build the capacity of civil society themselves; or engage implementing partners for strengthening this capacity. The first approach is the Small Grants Policy and Procedure, which is the mechanism for a small-scale catalytic contribution to expand institutional capacities of grassroots level Civil Society Organizations enabling them to drive significant change towards gender equality and women's empowerment, and evolve as potential Programme Partner for the future. The Small Grants are directly implemented by UN Women personnel to CSOs. The second approach is Grant-Making Work through its Implementing Partners. Using this approach, the Implementing Partners engaged by UN Women can support innovative and strategic initiatives by CSOs; or support the development or the strengthening of the capacity of CSOs. Additionally, as part of the selection of programme partners, when doing a risk-based capacity assessment of partners, UN-Women considers the factor of capacity building of the partners as an essential area, noting that the procedures provide for the modalities to develop capacity building plans as part of the Risk-Based Capacity Assessment. The intention is to ensure that strategic partners can take on the work of gender equality on the ground and to ensure the sustainability of results. UN Women also encourages CSOs to apply as consortiums in response to the Call for Proposals, where small CSOs can benefit from working with a lead consortium partner.

#### **Observations regarding the operational mandate**

8. **Operational activities.** The founding resolution envisages operational activities considered as technical support to Member States. UN-Women management and donors have demonstrated an appetite for developmental and programmatic operational activities, including in the humanitarian segment. The current financial structure emphasizes the importance of the operational side of the mandate which generates most other resources (non-core). As for any organizations heavily relying on earmarked contributions, strategic planning must factor in funding constraints and UN-Women management must ensure that earmarked-funded activities are aligned to strategic priorities. The risk of such misalignment is to become driven by the availability of funds (supply-driven approach). Rather, UN-Women should ensure it pursues an integrated approach of strategically aligning operational with normative and coordination activities to meet the needs on the ground (demand-driven approach). Interviewees with regional directors and country representatives, as well as relevant Headquarters directors, were reassuring in this regard. The Inspectors found that the strategic notes of the country offices were prepared with deep involvement in the process of the Common Country Assessment and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework where it has its footprint, aligning its strategic priorities with the national priorities. An overview of UN-women

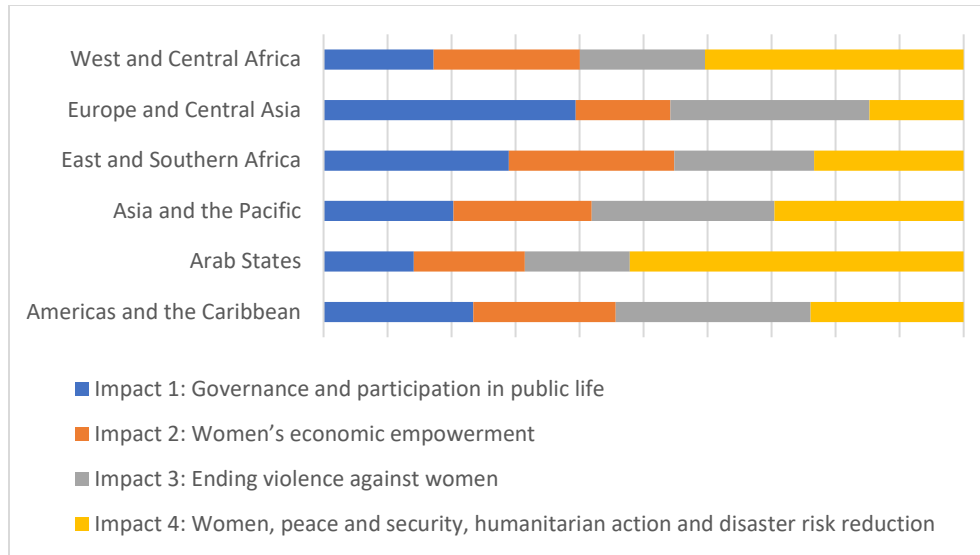
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<sup>6</sup> IEAS/IAS/2019/006: UN-Women Implementing Partners Management Process, November 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Programme Partner Management Policy (2023), Monitoring of Programme Partners Procedure (2023) and Selection of Programme Partners Procedure (2023).

activities per its main impact areas (on expenditure basis) in the different regions is presented in figure I.

figure I: UN-Women activities in four impact areas in 6 regions. Percentage based on expenditure in 2022.



Source: UN-Women transparency portal

9. **Towards a holistic approach to programmes.** The review reveals that efforts have been made in recent years by UN-Women management, at various levels, to move towards a more holistic approach to improve the quality of programming to avoid “confetti programmes”, an expression used by one interviewee. These are supported by measures aiming to enhance capacity at all stages of the project and programme lifecycle (design, implementing, monitoring, reporting). In this regard, several quality assurance mechanisms are in place at country and regional levels according to the financial thresholds considered. They ensure a technical review of project documents, including partners selection and make recommendations for approval, rejection or revision. The Global Project Appraisal Committee (now Project Oversight Committee since 2023) is the corporate instance in this regard. To make the best use of these appraisal mechanisms, the Inspectors suggest continuing to intervene at various stages of programmes and projects and roll out quality assurance mechanisms across the organization., including at early stages before engaging with donors.

10. **Clarifying United Nations “gender spaces”.** In its response to the corporate questionnaire, UN-Women management stated there is no duplication of mandate with other United Nations entities. However, the Inspectors do see, if not duplications, potential tensions with other United Nations entities’ mandates and activities when it comes to gender issues. This has been acknowledged in interviews by field representatives who are confronted with concrete difficulties when it comes to the division of labor between United Nations entities. Some interviewees view this question as a more fundamental one about the business model the organization should pursue going forward. Some voiced that it would be beneficial to decline programmes/projects not fully aligned with strategic priorities as they create additional tension in the structure. This risk was also highlighted by several independent sources in recent years.<sup>8</sup> Some argued that dynamics between

<sup>8</sup> For example: (a) the Independent Review of the UN System’s Capacity to Deliver on Gender Equality (February 2023), (b) the UN Women Corporate Evaluation of UN Women’s UN System Coordination and Broader Convening Role in Ending Violence

United Nations agencies have prevented UN-Women from “fully owning its power to mobilizing and catalyzing the UN System around gender equality”<sup>9</sup> and its “original feminist vision for which it was created to serve as a normative agency that holds all Member States across the world to the goals of gender equality, and a coordinating body that works *through* the System to effect change.”<sup>10</sup> In this regard, the UN-Women’s approach centres on advancing women’s rights, agency, and leadership across its programming thematic areas while also promoting positive social norms that create an enabling environment for gender equality. While Inspectors note that UNFPA, UNDP, UN-Women and UNICEF have committed to working coherently and collaboratively among and beyond the four entities through a set of common and complementary indicators, including Sustainable Development Goals indicators, in their respective strategic plan in line with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, they concur with the Independent Review of the UN System’s Capacity to Deliver on Gender Equality (2023) that the delineation between mandates of some United Nations entities might not be entirely clear.<sup>11</sup> In some instances, United Nations agencies do play a support and co-lead role, while in others, competition for funding between agencies can be high at the country level. For example, per a recent independent evaluation of UNFPA, “gender-based violence and humanitarian assistance are two spaces where productive collaboration in support of gender equality is a challenge, and agencies tend to pursue their own initiatives.”<sup>12</sup> The Inspectors believe that a more effective implementation of the coordination and operational mandates assigned to UN-Women must be based on a large recognition of this role, recognizing and providing UN-Women with authority, responsibilities and resources to enable leadership and use its expertise to support efforts towards gender equality and empowerment of women in the United Nations system and beyond.

11. **Emphasis on joint programming.** In that context, the Inspectors note the emphasis on joint programming stated in the strategic plan which is seen as having high leveraging potential for UN-Women considering its size and capacity.<sup>13</sup> In doing so, UN-Women management positions the organization as a player in the United Nations Development System. This inclination also aims at achieving systemic and transformative change as opposed to small standalone projects. It should be noted that Sustainable Development Goals 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) is one of the areas with a high concentration of joint programmes in the system. The Inspectors learned, however, that the overall level of resources directed to gender-focused joint programmes remains limited.<sup>14</sup> For example, UN-Women has been a core agency in the Spotlight Initiative.<sup>15</sup> The engagement of UN-Women in joint programming with other United

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Against Women, IES, 2021 and (c) Evaluation of UNFPA support to gender equality and women’s empowerment 2012–2020, UNFPA Evaluation Office, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> JIU interview notes.

<sup>10</sup> Independent Review of the UN System’s Capacity to Deliver on Gender Equality (February 2023).

<sup>11</sup> For example, UNFPA’s role in gender responsive sexual reproductive health, gender-based violence, and humanitarian assistance; UNDP’s work on women’s political participation, economic empowerment and gender-based violence.

<sup>12</sup> UNFPA Evaluation Office, Evaluation of UNFPA support to gender equality and women’s empowerment 2012–2020, page 70, 2021.

<sup>13</sup> UNW/2021/6, para. 115.

<sup>14</sup> According to the report of the Secretary-General on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, in 2022, only 8 per cent of funding for joint programmes was for programmes focused on Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals despite such gender-focused joint programmes making up 38 per cent of the number of total joint programmes. In 2023, only 38 per cent of multi-partner trust funds reported having allocated 15 per cent or more of their funds to gender equality as a principal objective. Moreover, in 2022, the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund dedicated 13 per cent of its resources to programmes with gender equality as principal objective, which represented half the percentage compared with 2021 (26 per cent). See E/2022/62.

<sup>15</sup> The European Union and the United Nations have been collaborating since 2017 through the Spotlight Initiative to empower, promote, and protect the rights of women and girls worldwide, deploying investments in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America,

Nations entities is a direction that is well-supported by the Executive Board as confirmed by the responses to the JIU survey. The Executive Director reported in her annual report that joint programmes represented 31 per cent of UN-Women programmes expenditures. UN-Women was engaged in over 700 joint programmes with other United Nations entities, roughly doubled compared with 2012. UN-Women rarely acts as Administrative Agent, which as per the UN Sustainable Development Group guidelines terminology, means it assumes responsibility of financial and administrative management (for 2022, less than 3 per cent of joint programmes in which UN-Women is part). According to UN-Women management, joint programming benefits are as follows. Firstly, joint programming is well in-line with UN-Women's coordination mandate and its positioning with the United Nations development system, providing coherence to its work especially as gender equality and empowerment of women is multifactorial in nature. Secondly, it brings expertise from various organizations to better achieve impact at scale (e.g., joint programming on economic empowerment). Joint programming is seen as a more efficient use of resources and can reach a critical mass for larger undertakings and greater impact for beneficiaries which can be advocated jointly. However, challenges are as important: joint programmes are not always possible due to the misalignment of priorities between entities imposing compromises to the least common denominator. They sometimes rely on more complex governance and management structures which may lead to administrative and operating inefficiencies and time-consuming processes generating tensions. Joint programmes also require a higher level of expertise which UN-Women has difficulties competing with. Acknowledging that results attribution may be more challenging in the context of joint programming, the Inspectors encourage UN-Women to continue its effort to measure the benefits of such programmes and devise mechanisms to overcome other challenges.

12. **Joint programmes portal.** In terms of good practice, UN-Women maintains an intranet page dedicated to joint programming which contains the Guidance Note produced by the Sustainable Development Group (2022) to be used by UN-Women programme managers, as well as other relevant presentations and guidance material. At this stage, UN-Women management does not have a dedicated repository of all programmes it participates in jointly with other entities and data is reported from various sources (such as the multi-partner trust fund office, the information management system of the United Nations Development Coordination Office and UN-Women financial reporting, the Transparency portal). Going forward, the Inspectors hope that Quantum will provide opportunities for more comprehensive information about joint programmes.<sup>16</sup>

13. **Humanitarian affairs.** Since (October) 2022, UN-Women is a member the Inter-Agency Standing Committee which is the humanitarian coordination forum in the United Nations system. This was seen as a way to promote gender-responsive humanitarian actions. Indeed, UN-Women management indicated that in recent years, the steeper increase in number of posts has occurred in Headquarters units supporting countries working on humanitarian emergencies and crisis contexts (e.g., Peace & Security, Prevention & Resilience), as well as country offices (Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Türkiye, Uganda, and Ukraine). While UN-Women was not established as a humanitarian agency, and now as a member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, under the current growingly volatile geopolitical situation coupled with such existential and consequential threats like climate crises, the Entity and its staff are frequently forced to face emergency situations in which women and girls are one of the first to be impacted. It is therefore legitimate and necessary for UN-Women to explore its role as a humanitarian actor under such circumstances. However, the Inspectors question whether the organization has the

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and the Pacific. As part of this initiative and in response to the corporate questionnaire, UN-Women stated that “the Spotlight Initiative received USD 169.7 million between 2018 and 2022”.

<sup>16</sup> Quantum is the Enterprise Resource Planning system launched in January 2023.

programmatic capacity to directly tackle all these conflicts and humanitarian crises. The added value that only UN-Women can realistically provide in that context should be assessed. The Inspectors would rather support gender mainstreaming in the humanitarian coordination mechanism using UN-Women's coordination mandate, and demanding action and accountability of other humanitarian organizations to addressing the specific needs of women and girls - i.e. indirectly ensuring more support for women and girls through influencing other agencies. UN-Women management stated that it has reflected on the expertise and capacity of the organization developed the Humanitarian Strategy 2023-2025, taking its comparative advantage into consideration. Alongside directly supporting women affected by crisis, the cornerstone of UN-Women's humanitarian strategy is gender mainstreaming in the humanitarian coordination mechanism using its coordination mandate, and demanding action and accountability of other humanitarian organizations to addressing the specific needs of women and girls - i.e. indirectly ensuring more support for women and girls through influencing other agencies. In this regard, the Inspectors are of the view that the Entity is most fitted to catalyse and supplement, not supplant, the ongoing humanitarian activities on the ground by adding gender responsive perspective along the development, humanitarian and peace and security nexus unless the Entity maintains a pre-existing vantage local presence with sufficient capabilities, including those to secure safety of its staff and affiliated personnel.

#### **Observations regarding the coordination mandate**

14. **Coordination mandate is specific to UN-Women.** The role of leading and coordinating the work of the United Nations system on gender equality and the empowerment of women was assigned to UN-Women in its founding resolutions as an additional mandate not carried by any pre-existing entity.<sup>17</sup> The Strategic Plan 2022-2025 incorporates a dedicated outcome on United Nations system coordination for gender equality in the Development Results Framework which is broken down into several indicators; some of them on the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women at corporate and United Nations Country Office levels and others focusing on advancing gender equality and empowerment of women through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework or a thematic outlook (women peace and security, disaster risk reduction, political participation, youth). UN-Women management reported that coordination activities are embedded in initiatives and programmes at various levels within the organization. The United Nations System Coordination Division works to promote accountability, ensure effective United Nations system coordination and coherence and support gender mainstreaming across the United Nations system.

15. **United Nations System Coordination Division.** The Division is placed under the Deputy-Executive Director managing the portfolio on Normative Support, United Nations System Coordination and Programme Results. The objective set by the founding resolution was to promote accountability, ensure effective coordination and coherence, and gender mainstreaming across the system.<sup>18</sup> This objective was ambitious and forward-looking but the funding available remained limited, despite that resources directed to coordination can be funded from voluntary contribution and assessed. In this context, the Division is one of the less capacitated at Headquarters and this may impact the delivery of the mandate. Adding to this, the director of the division is not a formal member of most of the management committees. In the past, the Division reporting line was not aligned with those of other Divisions dealing with the normative and operational mandates - the recent consolidation of these aspects under the same Deputy-Executive Director is expected to place the Division in a better position to get a fuller picture of all coordination activities

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<sup>17</sup> General Assembly Resolution 64/289, para 53

<sup>18</sup> General Assembly Resolution 64/289, para. 53.



within the organization. While the Division is categorized as a revenue center, mobilizing non-core resources for coordination is a difficult task as it does not meet donors' preferences and results are challenging to demonstrate - as confirmed by many officers interviewed, including by the Independent Evaluation Service.

16. **UN-Women within the United Nations Development System.** The mandate on coordination became even more essential and critical due to the reform in the United Nations Development System and UN-Women's membership in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. UN-Women is an active participant in the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and contributes its cost-sharing part to the funding of the Resident Coordinator system. The coordination feature assigned to the organization represents one of its comparative value proposals to the system. As widely documented, UN-Women has sought to work in closer collaboration with other United Nations entities to promote gender equality and empowerment of women in line with resolution 72/279 on the Repositioning of the United Nations development system. In this section, the Inspectors examine some of the major initiatives and related achievements in this regard.

17. **United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.** One of the major achievements under its coordination mandate has been the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) which was built to enhance the accountability of United Nations entities for gender mainstreaming at the entity level, further complemented in 2018 by the UNCT-SWAP applied to the United Nations Country Team level. The coordination work paid off as the number of participating entities in the Action Plan has grown from 55 in 2012 to 73 in 2022 and the system-wide compliance rate for the common set of indicators included in the plan has increased from 31 per cent to 67 per cent.<sup>19</sup> The information collected through the UN-SWAP is an important input in the reports presented by the United Nations Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system and on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. In 2019, JIU reviewed the Action Plan and found that it had proven to be an effective framework for tracking system-wide progress and a useful benchmark and catalyst for gender mainstreaming in most participating entities.<sup>20</sup> The UNCT System-wide Action Plan Gender Equality Scorecard was meant to be an equivalent accountability framework for gender mainstreaming at the UNCT level and its uptake has increased significantly since its adoption in 2018. In 2022, 76 country teams reported against the UNCT-SWAP, up from 38 in 2020 and 9 in 2018.

18. **UN-Women engagement within country teams.** At the country level, the coordination mandate is exemplified by the work of UN-Women with resident coordinators and the United Nations Country teams, for example by leading UN Gender Theme Groups<sup>21</sup> or by engaging in joint programmes. The Inspectors were told that overall Resident Coordinators have been appreciative of UN-Women's active engagement in United Nations Country Teams. More than 80 per cent of field representatives considered that United Nations agencies are receptive to including a gender perspective in United Nations system activities in their region/country in the context of a reinvigorated Resident Coordinators system and the new generation of country teams. UN-Women is active in integrating a gender perspective into processes such as the Common Country

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<sup>19</sup> See <https://gendercoordinationandmainstreaming.unwomen.org/un-swap>

<sup>20</sup> JIU/REP/2019/2: Review of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

<sup>21</sup> Gender theme groups are interagency coordination mechanisms that aim to strengthen the collective approach and response by UN country teams. They provide policy advice, coordination on programming issues within the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, and technical support on gender equality and women's empowerment. In 2018, jointly with UNFPA, UN-Women led the UN Sustainable Development Group in updating the guidance on the functioning of these key instruments through the "UNSDG resource guide for gender theme groups".

Assessment and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework as mentioned in the observation regarding the operational mandate. A strategic entry point for integrating gender equality and women's empowerment into the implementation of the Cooperation Framework has been through the Gender Equality Markers (GEM), which are now mandatory in UN INFO and utilized by 91 UNCTs. Gender Equality Markers are planning tools to track how the country teams are allocating resources towards gender equality and women's empowerment at the joint-workplan level. The UNCT - SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard has also played a pivotal role as a mechanism driving gender mainstreaming, bringing together United Nations Country Teams to evaluate gender mainstreaming in their policies, programs, and operations, and to identify areas requiring action to advance gender equality. The surveys conducted at regular intervals with a wide range of stakeholders within the United Nations Development system (resident coordinators, UNCT members, operations managers, for example) consistently indicated that gender equality and empowerment of women agenda receives a high-level of support.

19. **Regional Coordination Specialists.** The dedicated capacity for driving the coordination mandate at the field level is limited but is the responsibility of all UN-Women personnel. The Inspectors welcome the fact that the 2024-2025 Integrated Budget includes provisions for six full-time Coordination Specialist positions (P4) to be posted in each Regional Office. It is a positive development considering that responsibilities for strategic planning and coordination were previously shared as part of one single position. According to terms of reference consulted by the Inspectors, the Coordination Specialist will manage and implement activities to enhance system-wide coherence on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Reporting to the Regional Director and the Director of the United Nations System Coordination Division through a matrix reporting, the specialist will also liaise with several divisions at Headquarters as well as with the Office of the Focal Point for Women in the United Nations System part of the United Nations Secretariat (dealing with gender parity matters). Such technical support will be provided to the regional directors and to country representatives, and their offices, as requested. The vision is that the expected deliverables and tasks for engaging with United Nations Country Teams, the Gender Theme Groups and the Resident Coordinator Offices in countries where UN-Women is not present will remain consistent with countries where the organization is physically located.

20. **Gender Equality Coordinators.** UN-Women does not have an office presence in approximately 70 countries where United Nations Country teams do operate. In that case, the coordination role has been provided so far by UN-Women regional offices in concert with headquarters. Over the past several years, UN-Women and the United Nations Development Coordination Office have been exploring the establishment of Gender Equality Coordinator positions housed in the Resident Coordinators' office with a dual reporting line to the Resident Coordinator and UN-Women (which function within UN-Women has yet to be clarified). The objective is to provide technical and policy advice to the Resident Coordinator and the members of the Country Team on the integration of gender equality perspectives into programmes and activities conducted by the team. The Inspectors were informed that the initiative has not materialized due to a lack of funding. UN-Women management is therefore exploring opportunities to mobilize non-core resources. The Inspectors note that the Independent Review of the United Nations System's Capacity to Deliver on Gender Equality includes a recommendation for strengthening gender expertise within United Nations Country Teams by establishing gender advisor positions in the Resident Coordinators' offices since such expertise is not covered by current core positions. The recommendation is currently under review and the relevance of the concept of Gender Equality Coordinator should further be considered in light of the outcomes of these discussions.

21. **Tracking gender equality funding.** Originally created by the OECD-Development Assistance Committee and adopted for the United Nations system in 2013 by the UNSDG/UNDG,<sup>22</sup> the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women eventually made the gender equality marker a mandatory standard of financial data as part of its initial indicator framework in 2012. The embedding of the marker in financial management systems was spearheaded by UN-Women in the context of the Finance and Budget Network of the UN System Chief Executives Board, where the Entity led the sub-working group on the gender marker. The 2018 Secretary-General High Level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality requested harmonization of the gender equality marker and consistent implementation at the entity and country teams levels and in inter-agency pooled funds. The system-wide UNCT-GEM was adopted as a mandatory marker in UN Joint Work Plans which cover the entire footprint of the United Nations development system at country level in UN INFO in 2019<sup>23</sup> and implemented as UN INFO was rolled out. UN-Women plays a key role as custodian of the UNCT-GEM and in its coordination function with a focus on quality assurance of the UNCT-GEM, providing helpdesk support, training and guidance at global the level and through its leadership in country-based UN GTGs. At the interagency pooled fund level, with the support of UN-Women, the Peacebuilding Fund set up a model of implementation of the marker in combination with financial targets that was successfully emulated by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office. In November 2022, considering that the gender equality marker had reached a level of maturity in its implementation across the UN system, it was endorsed as the seventh United Nations mandatory data standard for systemwide reporting of financial data to IATI and the OECD. This illustrates how UN-Women has played a strategic role in bringing greater levels of coherence to the to the work of the United Nations system advancing gender equality and empowerment of women in the United Nations at the entity and country teams levels.

#### **Views of UN-Women personnel**

22. UN-Women staff members see themselves involved in all mandates of the organization and the proportion of them relating their own contribution or the contribution of their office/unit to one mandate only is minimal (table 1). The Inspectors noted with a great sense of encouragement the passion prevalent among staff and affiliated workforce for pursuing the mandate by integrating those three dimensions as their hallmark approach. Moreover, field representatives considered that UN-Women is relatively successful in delivering on its triple mandate in an integrated manner at the regional and country level (table 2).

Table 1

#### **Views of UN-Women staff members regarding their unit/office contribution(s) to each of UN-Women’s mandate**

	Rare contribution	Secondary contribution	Primary contribution	Exclusive contribution
Normative mandate	5%	21.7%	56.5%	9%
Operational mandate	7.2%	19%	57.3%	15%
Coordination mandate	7.2%	28.6%	51.1%	12.9%

Source: JIU survey to UN-Women personnel (2023).

<sup>22</sup> See United Nations Development Group: Gender Equality Marker Guidance Note September 2013, available at <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/gender-equality-marker-guidance-note>

<sup>23</sup> UN INFO is part of the United Nations’ efforts to improve coordination, transparency and accountability for results by tracking the UNSDG’s contributions to Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, see: <https://help.uninfo.org/un-info/what-is-un-info>

Table 2

**Opinion of field representatives on the success of the organization on delivering on triple mandate in an integrated manner**

(Number of responses and aggregate percentage of “very successful” and “successful” responses)

	<i>Regional Directors (number of)</i>	<i>Country representatives (percentage)</i>
Mandate integration at country level	4	83
Mandate integration at regional level	4	71
Mandate integration at global level	3	59

Source: JIU questionnaire to UN-Women field representatives (2023).

**Conclusion**

23. As this paper shows, the Inspectors are aware that over the years UN-Women has developed and expanded many initiatives to enrich and substantiate each of its three mandated areas. Conscious efforts have been made to integrate the outcomes from all three mandated areas. No doubt that it is easier said than done particularly given the current constraints in funding structures. But the Inspectors expect the Entity’s management, backed by their ingenuity and expertise, to always make one extra push to connect the outcomes of normative mandate to the other outcomes of operational mandated activities, or vice versa, through effective coordination channels. With this additional push, it is to be hoped that UN-Women can further balance its triple mandate and prove its indispensable force multiplier role in cascading impacts towards dynamic transformative changes in gender equality and women’s empowerment.