

# TRANSFORM

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The Magazine for  
Gender-Responsive  
Evaluation

## The Women's Political Participation and Leadership Issue

Women's political participation and leadership: a fundamental human right and a potential driver for transformative change

PAGE 2

Moving forward: six ways to advance women's political participation and leadership

PAGE 26

Evaluation approach: incorporating systems thinking and intersectional analysis

PAGE 39







Dear  
Readers,

Whereas women’s political participation has increased around the globe, women are still under-represented in political life. Promoting women’s political participation is vital because it improves outcomes at all societal levels.

As part of its implementation of the UN Women Corporate Evaluation Plan, the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service assessed UN Women’s contribution to women’s political participation from 2011 to 2017 through a systems thinking lens.

This issue of *Transform* magazine summarizes the main evaluation results and captures learning from past practices that can inform and strengthen future work in this area. It also examines UN Women’s position and strategic niche in promoting women’s political participation in the context of the Secretary-General’s call for the United Nations Development System reform to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. The evaluation emphasizes finding improved ways of working in partnership with UN agencies, civil society, regional organizations and governments to enhance the level and sustainability of results. It also highlights the need for prioritizing and increasing efforts to address marginalized communities and social norms change as vital parts of women’s political participation programming to address the structural causes and power imbalances that lead to women’s under-representation in political life.

In addition to the support of UN Women staff at Headquarters, Regional and Country Offices and other partner agencies, Independent Evaluation Service wishes to express appreciation for the support of UN Women Political Participation Unit and the leadership of the evaluation managers, Shravanti Reddy and Alexandra Capello, throughout the evaluation process.

*Verasak Liengsriwat*

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Think Beyond.  
Stay Ahead.

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The Women’s Political Participation and Leadership Issue



PAGE 2



Summing  
it all up:  
conclusions  
for the future

PAGE 10

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SENEGAL - COUMBA DIAW -  
FROM WHERE I STAND

MOVING FORWARD  
Six ways to  
advance women’s  
political  
participation and  
leadership

PAGE 26

LEARNING FROM THE  
EVALUATION:  
Response from  
management

PAGE 38

EVALUATION APPROACH:  
Incorporating systems thinking  
and intersectional analysis

PAGE 39



ON THE COVER Voters turn out in Dili to cast their vote for the parliamentary elections in the morning. A voter displays proof of having expressed her voice at the ballot box in Timore-Leste’s parliamentary elections.

©UNMIT/MARTINE PERRET, 7 JULY 2012



# Women's political participation and leadership:

## a fundamental human right and a potential driver for transformative change

From the local to the global level, opportunities for women's participation in political life are restricted. Women are underrepresented in parliaments, local governments, constitutional drafting bodies, political parties, executive branches and as heads of state and/or government despite their proven abilities, their positive impact for development and their right to participate equally in governance and decision-making bodies. Aside from political institutions and processes, there are a number of other public and civic spaces, such as the judiciary, civil society and the media, that influence women's political participation opportunities.

### WOMEN LEADERS AT DEMOCRACY DAY CELEBRATIONS

WOMEN LEADERS OF ALL AGES AT THE DEMOCRACY DAY CELEBRATIONS IN 2011. THE CELEBRATION WAS ORGANIZED BY UN WOMEN AND THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES TO RECOGNIZE THE WORK OF ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES AROUND INDIA. THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA MANDATES THE RESERVATION OF ONE-THIRD OF SEATS FOR WOMEN IN LOCAL BODIES. MANY STATES NOW HAVE 50 PER CENT RESERVATION FOR WOMEN.



### EXPERT'S VIEW

**Pippa Norris, Professor of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney**

"In a time when further progress in gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights are under threat, the work of UN Women has never been more timely or relevant. Women's political participation is critical for development and for advancing women's rights. The vital work of UN Women leads the world on these issues. To paraphrase Martin Luther King, the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards gender justice."

© UN WOMEN/GANGAJIT SINGH CHANDOK

Women face multiple obstacles to participating in political life. Cultural norms; structural barriers (e.g., possession of identity documents required for voter and candidate registration); mobility or security challenges; child care and domestic work; discriminatory laws; disparities in financial resources and networks; and gendered institutions (e.g., male-dominated political parties) limit women's opportunities to run for and to be elected to political office. Gender bias in the media and violence against women in politics represent additional impediments to participation. Challenges and opportunities for gender equality also are shaped in large part by political context, making tailored interventions important.

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (UN Women) has a universal mandate to lead, promote and coordinate efforts to

advance the full realization of women's rights and opportunities. UN Women supports Member States to

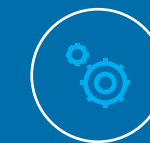
address structural barriers to women's political participation by leveraging its integrated mandate.



### Summary: UN Women Integrated Mandate



UN Women provides a **normative support function** through policy support for the advancement of normative frameworks and inter-governmental processes, including implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on Target 5.5



Through its **operational activities**, UN Women provides demand-driven policy advice, technical assistance and comparative knowledge to key national partners like constitutional committees; legislative drafting and electoral management bodies; parliaments; women leaders; and political aspirants. This involves partnerships for developing knowledge products and tools for country implementation. Support can also include capacity development to translate global norms into national policies, programmes, plans and practices.



Through its **UN system coordination function**, UN Women provides gender equality expertise to inter-agency coordination mechanisms, such as the UN Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism on Electoral Assistance and substantive contribution to policy papers issued by the UN Focal Point on Electoral Assistance, the Department of Political Affairs. Global advocacy and partnerships are integral aspects of this work, particularly in the areas of violence against women in politics and discriminatory laws.

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5:

#### Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

**Target 5.5:** Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

**Indicator 5.5.1:** Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments

Women remain underrepresented in leadership positions. While quotas have been implemented to boost women's participation in politics, parity is far from reality and women remain underrepresented in leadership positions.



UN Women’s response to the under-representation of women in political life is defined within its Strategic Plans, covering the period 2011-2017 and was one of six core thematic areas that UN Women aimed to contribute to at the global, regional and national levels with an estimated investment of US\$203.5 million in 100 countries. Its work focused on five sub-thematic areas:

- constitutional and legal reform, including temporary special measures;
- inclusive electoral processes;
- parliamentary support;
- local government;
- and violence against women in politics.

The work also addressed one cross-cutting area of leadership in political life. In 2015, UN Women developed the Women’s Political Empowerment and Leadership Flagship Programme to deepen the transformative potential of UN Women interventions in this area. Key partners in this work include United Nations entities, intergovernmental mechanisms, international organizations, regional and sub-regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia, the private sector, and bilateral donors.

As a driver for change, UN Women committed to evaluate its global contribution to women’s political participation from

2011 to 2017 to support learning and accountability. The aim is to strengthen organizational performance by assessing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of its contributions and to analyze UN Women’s positioning and strategic niche in this area. The results of the evaluation are meant to support decision-making and implementation of the current Strategic Plan, within the context of the 2030 Agenda and the *Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: ensuring a better future for all* (A/72/684-E/2018/7).

Women’s political participation  
sub-thematic and  
cross-cutting areas



Constitutional and legal reform, including temporary special measures (TSM)



Local government



Parliamentary support



Violence against women in politics



Inclusive electoral processes



Leadership



EXPERT'S VIEW

**Aili Mari Tripp, Wangari Maathai Professor of Political Science and Gender & Women's Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison**

“UN Women has been the most important international actor in influencing changes in women’s political participation. Today, the gender gap in political participation is larger than the gap in education, health or even economic opportunity. Yet women’s presence in political leadership influences peace-building, the shape of social policies, economic development and many other areas of UN activity and concern. This makes UN Women’s efforts in this area all the more significant. As a voice for global change, it has transformed global norms regarding gender equality in politics. It is a source of pressure on Member States. It serves as a coordinating body for various UN agencies working in this area. The work of its country offices and the funding UN Women provides result in a wide range of activities that enhance women’s political leadership – from support for constitutional and legal reform and women’s capacity building in parliament to the creation of more inclusive electoral systems, and more recently, raising awareness of violence against women in politics. In all of these activities, the agency has worked at both national and local levels, seeking to cast the widest net to include women who fall to the margins of their societies, either as a result of ethnicity, race, caste, class or other differences.”



LIBERIA - MAKING ELECTIONS COUNT FOR WOMEN

# World and regional averages of women in parliament

## Global level and regional level

- Single house or lower house
- Upper house or senate
- Both houses combined

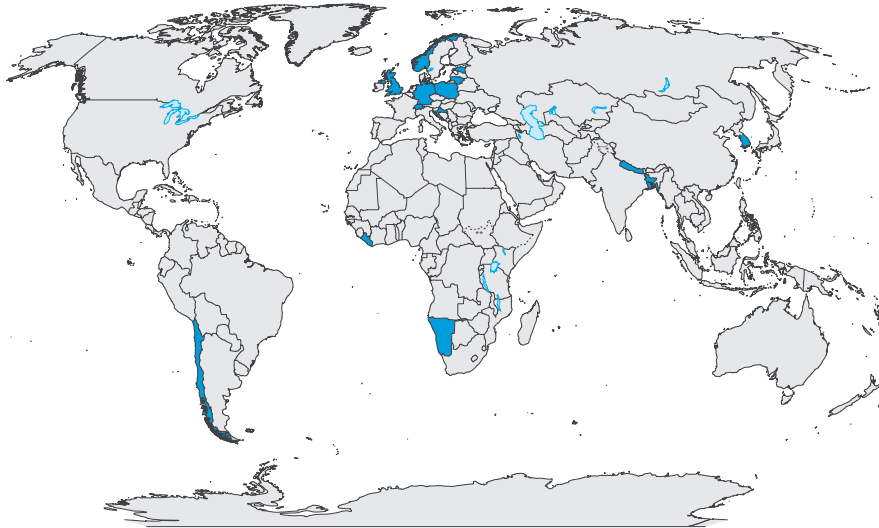
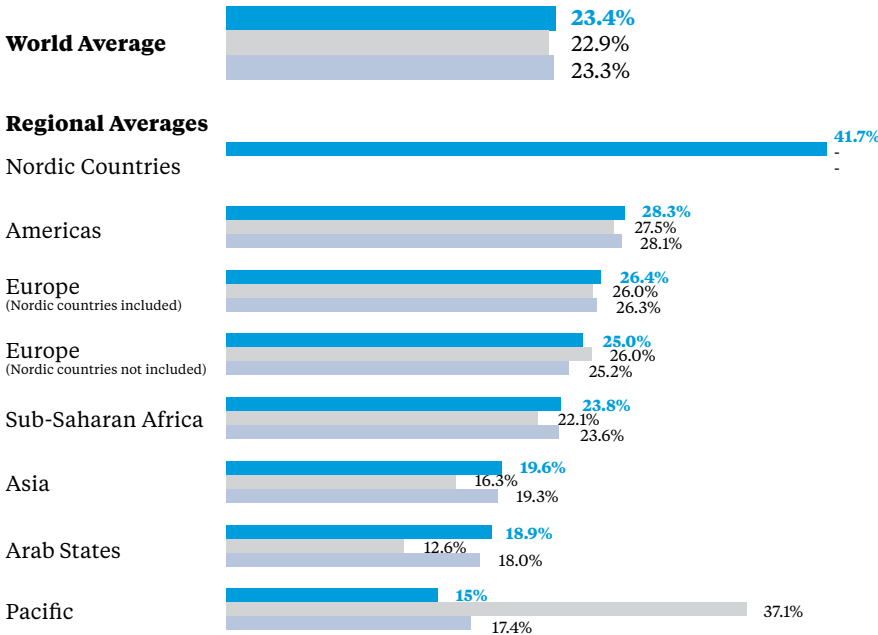
Regions are classified by descending order of the percentage of women in unicameral parliaments or the lower house of parliament. The regional groupings used herein are those of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

## Country level

Women heads of state<sup>1</sup> (11/152 = 7.2%) and women heads of government (11/193 = 5.7%)

- Bangladesh (HG)
- Chile (HS/HG)
- Croatia (HS)
- Estonia (HS)
- Germany (HG)
- Liberia (HS/HG)
- Lithuania (HS)
- Malta (HS)
- Marshall Islands (HS/HG)
- Mauritius (HS)
- Namibia (HG)
- Nepal (HS)
- Norway (HG) Poland (HG),
- Republic of Korea (HS/HG)
- Switzerland (HS/HG)
- United Kingdom (HG)

Note: (HS/HG) = The head of state is also the head of government.  
<sup>1</sup> Only elected heads of state have been taken into account



Source: Women in Politics 2017 Map, created by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW TO MANAGE OR CONDUCT AN EVALUATION AT UN WOMEN?

HOW CAN EVALUATION BE A DRIVER FOR CHANGE TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT?

HOW IS GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATION DIFFERENT FROM OTHER EVALUATION?

# HOW TO MANAGE GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATION

## EVALUATION HANDBOOK



Find out how UN Women manages gender-responsive evaluation with the new UN Women Evaluation Handbook: *How to manage gender responsive evaluation.*

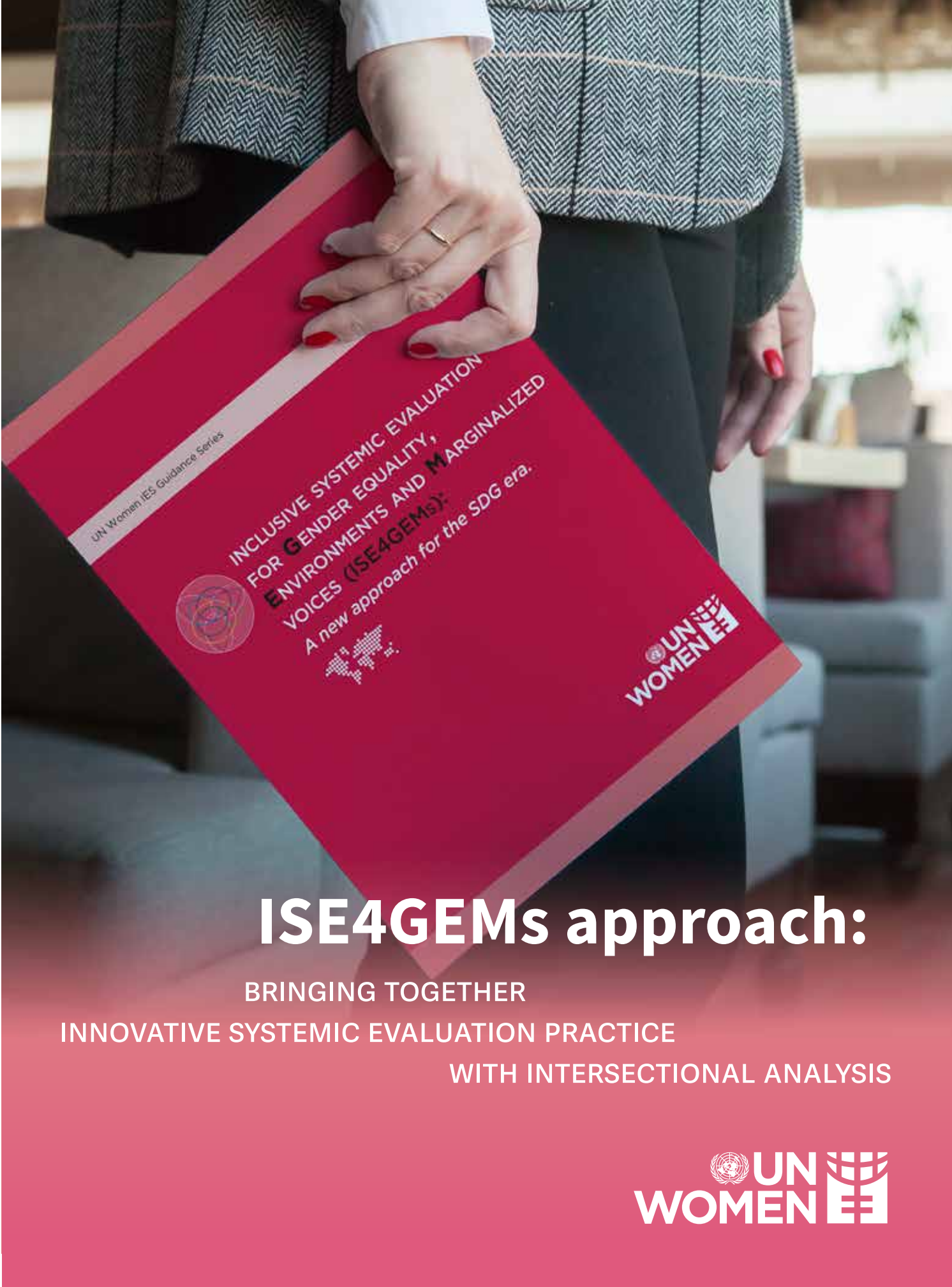
The Handbook is available at: <http://genderevaluation.unwomen.org>





# Evaluation findings at a glance

FINDINGS	
Relevance	<div><div>1.</div><div>Women’s political participation is a highly relevant area of work and will remain so during the era.</div></div> <div><div>2.</div><div>Women’s political participation programming is not sufficiently relevant to the needs and interests of marginalized women.</div></div> <div><div>3.</div><div>Corporate vision and strategy on WPP is clear, while sub-thematic areas may require further clarity.</div></div> <div><div>4.</div><div>UN Women has been responsive to country contexts by successfully adapting to political opportunities and challenges in many countries (with room for risk management strengthening).</div></div> <div><div>5.</div><div>UN Women draws its relevance for working on this politically sensitive thematic area from its position as both an impartial actor and the global lead agency on gender equality and women empowerment.</div></div> <div><div>6.</div><div>A focus on women’s political empowerment is essential and important, but sustaining gains requires addressing and influencing social norms on gender equality.</div></div>
Effectiveness	<div><div>7.</div><div>UN Women has been very effective in assisting Member States in strengthening inter-governmental norms, policies and standards at the global level.</div></div> <div><div>8.</div><div>The challenges UN Women faces at the country level to implement its coordination mandate on women’s political participation are connected to competing interpretations of mandates and roles, as well as priorities and capacities.</div></div> <div><div>9.</div><div>UN Women has contributed to strengthening normative frameworks at the country level; further monitoring for signs of regression and implementation extending to the sub-national level would support the sustainability of these gains.</div></div> <div><div>10.</div><div>UN Women has contributed to strengthening women’s capacity and influence in parliaments; there is scope to work with partners to increase constituency outreach capacity and shift parliamentary procedures and norms.</div></div> <div><div>11.</div><div>UN Women has been effective in supporting gender mainstreaming in a number of electoral management bodies, a more consistent application of an electoral cycle process would further strengthen and sustain results to support inclusive electoral processes.</div></div> <div><div>12.</div><div>UN Women has contributed to raising awareness on the emerging issue of violence against women in politics at the global level and is well positioned to build on some early operational responses and lessons to accelerate progress.</div></div> <div><div>13.</div><div>UN Women has shown leadership in establishing a global methodology for tracking SDG indicator 5.5.1b on women’s representation in local governments that can be leveraged to bolster its coordination and operational work at the country-level, and synergies with local governance.</div></div> <div><div>14.</div><div>Corporate frameworks to guide UN Women’s efforts on transformational leadership would strengthen efforts to develop women’s capacity to engage as leaders in political life and facilitate synergies across thematic areas.</div></div>
Efficiency	<div><div>15.</div><div>Shortage of staffing in terms of overall numbers and varying levels of specialized expertise at the sub-national, country and regional levels affect UN Women’s ability to plan for and deliver results.</div></div> <div><div>16.</div><div>Despite recent increases in funding and pledges demonstrating potential donors’ interest, women’s political participation work is under-re-sourced and could benefit from a more, comprehensive thematic fundraising strategy that addresses regional differences.</div></div> <div><div>17.</div><div>UN Women’s external women’s political participation knowledge products are highly valued. At the same time, there is demand for increased cross-country, cross-regional and cross-thematic communication and internal knowledge management on women’s political participation to share experiences, lessons learned and strategies for addressing challenges.</div></div> <div><div>18.</div><div>Closing corporate gaps identified in reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation systems would allow for better assessment of women’s political participation results.</div></div> <div><div>19.</div><div>UN Women can build on and improve its strong partnerships on women’s political participation by coordinating at the country level and expanding outreach to organizations of marginalized groups, regional and sub-regional organizations and political parties.</div></div>
Sustainability	<div><div>20.</div><div>There is no explicit definition of sustainability for women’s political participation, and it is not consistently prioritized or incorporated in planning documents.</div></div>



## ISE4GEMs approach:

BRINGING TOGETHER  
INNOVATIVE SYSTEMIC EVALUATION PRACTICE  
WITH INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS





# Summing it all up:

*Conclusions for the future*

# Harness UN Women’s comparative advantage to contribute to the 2030 Agenda

**1** The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals framework’s systemic approach situates UN Women as the key UN actor and thought leader for providing integrated policy advice on women’s political participation.

The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals framework are systemic in nature and highlight the inter-relatedness and inter-dependence of the 17 goals, with gender equality and women empowerment as a cross-cutting issue throughout. For the UN system to be ‘fit-for-purpose’ to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, there is widespread recognition that it should

working across governments and societies to address and respond to cross-cutting challenges.” Grounding its work in international frameworks and commitments related to women’s political participation, UN Women is seen as an impartial and highly credible actor. It has been able to position itself and contribute results to women’s political participation during the evaluation period by leveraging its

UN Women has the potential to draw on internal synergies within and across three main areas:

- 1. It’s Strategic Plan’s outcome areas.
- 2. Cross-cutting areas for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (e.g., social norms, transformative leadership and marginalization).
- 3. It’s integrated and universal mandate to coordinate work on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, as well as undertake normative and operational work.

to act as the key agency and thought leader within the United Nations Development System to provide inte-

and with new internal and external frameworks supportive of strengthening synergies. However, it has not yet optimized its potential to do so. It would also include communicating its work on women’s political participation, as part of a broader policy framework for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, and highlighting the key connections that can be leveraged internally and in leading the way for partners to better understand, think and act systemically in their own women’s political participation efforts.

ENDORSEMENT OF SYSTEMS THINKING APPROACH BY UN CHIEF EXECUTIVES BOARD FOR COORDINATION (CEB/2017/1), 20 JUNE 2017.

“The interconnectedness and indivisibility of the 2030 Agenda and the realities of the world in which we work require us to deal with complexity at an unprecedented scale. As such, we need to identify, understand and develop appropriate ways of applying systems thinking to collectively define and address the challenges that we confront. We need to think across and beyond one area of expertise or mandate and to understand how our actions contribute to the overall United Nations objectives. We need to analyse the environment as a set of complex, live ecosystems and to understand underlying organizing principles, as well as the linkages, interactions, dependencies and power distribution among components and constituencies. And we must strategically identify leverage points in these systems to achieve maximum impact. United Nations leaders, therefore, must shift from linear thinking to non-linear systems thinking.”



## UN Women six thematic areas of work from 2011 to 2017:



1. Women’s voice, leadership and participation



3. Ending violence against women and girls



5. Governance and national planning



2. Women’s economic empowerment



4. Women’s peace and security



6. Global and normative framework

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