

META-SYNTHESIS SUMMARY REPORT

SUMMARY REPORT ON META-SYNTHESIS ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL OFFICES



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Internal Audit Report

UN Women Internal Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS)

Internal Audit Service (IAS)

UN Women

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SUMMARY REPORT

Report objective, scope and methodology

The UN Women Internal Audit Service (IAS) of the Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS) performed a meta-synthesis analysis of its internal audits of the six UN Women Regional Offices. The meta-synthesis was conducted between November 2023 and August 2024. The objectives of this meta-synthesis were to:

- Summarize insights and lessons learned from the Regional Office audits conducted by IAS during 2019–2023.
- Reflect on the extent to which Regional Offices provided oversight and support to their Country Offices (COs), Multi-Country Offices (MCOs) and NRAs on strategic objectives, programmes and operations.
- Benchmark Regional Offices in terms of governance, resources, structures and practices. The management oversight of field offices varied per region; therefore, practices observed were used for lessons learned purposes. Where possible, IAS benchmarked UN Women against other UN entities of similar structure, funding and typology framework to determine best practices.
- Identify ways headquarters business process owners can improve existing processes and controls for effective pivoting to the regions and countries.
- Propose an action plan for common areas of improvement.

The period of the review was from January 2019 to August 2024 to align with IAS' audits of Regional Offices (ROs). This meta-synthesis summarizes the assessment of the ROs based on four areas:

- **Governance, risk management and internal control system:** governance, roles and stakeholder expectations of ROs, office structure, delegations of authority, control environment and risk management.
- **Regional oversight and support:** active and adequate fulfilment of responsibility to support (technically and operationally), monitor and oversee COs in the region, role of MCOs and support to NRAs.

- **Strategic priorities, programmes and project management;** strategic positioning, priorities setting, coordination of gender mainstreaming, advocacy, resource mobilization, programme and project management, and management of programme partners.
- **Operations:** management of procurement, human resources (HR), finance and budget, information and communication technology (ICT), travel, assets, safety and security.

Each RO was rated for each criterion based on a four-level rating system (Satisfactory, Some Improvement Needed, Major Improvement Needed, or Unsatisfactory).

Table 1: Audit rating definitions

Satisfactory (S)	The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were adequately established and functioning well. Issues identified by the audit, if any, are unlikely to affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area.
Some Improvement Needed (SIN)	The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were generally established and functioning but need some improvement. Issues identified by the audit do not significantly affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area.
Major Improvement Needed (MIN)	The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were established and functioning, but need major improvement. Issues identified by the audit could significantly affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area.
Unsatisfactory (UnSat)	The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were either not adequately established or not functioning well. Issues identified by the audit could seriously compromise the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area.

IAS followed the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing* in preparing this report.

Overview of the audit ratings

For the purposes of this meta-synthesis analysis, IAS does not express an audit opinion on the overall state of governance, risk management and internal controls in Regional Offices because individual audit reports already include audit opinions. The results of individual Regional Office audits were discussed at the time of the audit with Regional Directors and relevant headquarters business process owners. Most recommendations were addressed to RO, although some

were addressed to headquarters. A high-level overview of the results of each audit are as follows:

Table 2: ROs audited from 2019 to 2023

Year of IAS audit: 2019		
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (APRO)	Satisfactory	12 recommendations
Year of IAS audit: 2020		
Regional Office for East and Southern Africa (ESARO)	Some Improvement Needed	15 recommendations
Year of IAS audit: 2022		
Regional Office for the Arab States (ASRO)	Satisfactory	12 recommendations
Regional Office for West and Central Africa (WCARO)	Some Improvement Needed	15 recommendations
Year of IAS audit: 2023		
Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECARO)	Satisfactory	8 recommendations
Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean (ACRO)	Satisfactory	7 recommendations

Key conclusions and recommendations

Key achievements and good practices

IAS acknowledges several achievements and good practices. For example, definition of the regional architecture in 2012 as a blueprint for the role of Regional Offices, which was still applicable in 2024; updates to policies and guidelines for delegation of authority, presence governance, planning, monitoring and reporting; and preparations for pivoting to regions and countries.

Key conclusions on enhancements and recommendations

Detailed conclusions and recommendations by audit area

This report summarizes systemic issues related to the functioning of Regional Offices, related issues and causes at the corporate and regional level. The report makes 8 further recommendations to headquarters divisions and Regional

¹ **Accountability compact** refers to the elements that provide the answer to the questions “accountability for what”, “accountability by whom” and “accountability to whom”. **Source**

Offices to address areas for improvement. All 8 recommendations are considered **Medium** priority. Key improvements needed and recommendations are summarized below:

Accountability

- UN Women does not yet have an accountability framework and compact¹, which can result in difficulties in enforcing remedial actions for negative performance. **As an advisory note to support the recommendation, the accountability compact should be signed/acknowledged by all personnel with delegated authority at Regional, Multi and Country Office level. It should be informed by other frameworks and policies with accountability and delegation of authority requirements.**
- While the Delegation of Authority Policy was revised, some Regional Offices were not yet ready to assume high delegation limits of the revised Delegation of Authority policy.
- Although Regional Directors used performance evaluations to assess the performance of Country Representatives, it was not always effectively cascaded into individual accountability of the Country Representatives; for example, for positive and negative trends reported in Country Office quarterly business review reports. IAS notes that the Delegation of Authority Policy is clear on the measures to be taken for failure to adhere to the policy: however, the measures were not always or consistently enforced.

Recommendation 1 (Medium): The Director DMA, with the support of other divisions, to coordinate development and roll out of an accountability framework to clarify and delineate Regional Office roles vis-à-vis headquarters and field offices, including elements proposed in the Joint Inspection Unit report and new Delegation of Authority Policy.

Recommendation 2 (Medium): The Deputy Executive Directors, in consultation with the Directors DMA, PPID, SPRED and HR to develop and roll out an accountability compact for Regional Directors and clarify ideal/conducive dual reporting lines for all Regional Office functions.

Delegation of authority

JIU/REP/2023/3, link https://www.unjiu.org/sites/www.unjiu.org/files/jiu_rep_2023_3_english_0.pdf

- The new Delegation of Authority Policy became effective 1 May 2023, with increased delegation of authority thresholds and automated workflow steps for assigning delegations. Due to a limited number of exception-based reports and dashboards and no regular review of those exceptions, the increase of delegation of authority and limits might limit headquarters' visibility of field office activities and escalation of unusual events might not be adequately monitored. Notwithstanding this, in late 2023, PPID undertook an assessment of Regional Office readiness to adopt the new Delegation of Authority Policy, the scope of which mainly focused on the capacities of Regional Project Appraisal Committees. It was determined that three Regional Offices were ready for the full delegations as per the new policy while three were assessed as conditional delegations as they needed further training and guidance prior to full adoption. PPID undertook a second assessment of those three, and it was determined two were subsequently ready for full delegation.
- There were repeated post-facto approvals related to programme management and procurement because Regional and Country Offices did not undertake comprehensive root cause analyses of events that resulted in post-facto approvals and/or did not implement sustainable mitigation measures. This might expose the organization to risk; projects that do not meet UN Women quality assurance principles; inability to enforce contractual agreements with programme partners; and/or a lack of value for money in procurement under post-facto situations.
- **As an advisory note to support the recommendation, the quarterly business review reports should also be used to inform decisions regarding the types and level of delegations to be granted to different offices. Consideration should be given to automating the reports. The process for root cause analyses of post-facto approvals should also be strengthened to reduce their reoccurrence.**

Recommendation 3 (Medium): The Directors DMA, PPID and SPRED to collaborate to strengthen quarterly business review reports to monitor post-facto cases through exception-based dashboards/reports as part of the monitoring and oversight of Regional and Country Offices.

Typology and presence governance

- Regional Offices did not always monitor resolution of the approval conditions set by the Business Review Committee when a UN Women presence in countries was created or changed; some Regional Offices increased presence

without sufficient resources, and incorrectly used the non-resident agency typology which may spread core resources too thinly (*non-resident agencies are now referred to as non-physical presence (NPPs) in the updated 2024 Presence Governance Guidance*); the Presence Governance Policy and Guidance does not define the Cluster Office typology and its minimum requirements/expectations; the support that Regional Offices provided to different offices varied and was not always consistent; and quarterly business review reports identified key performance information, but actions were inconsistent or insufficient to address weak areas. Comparison of UN Women with other UN entities with a similar field structure indicated that UN Women may have too many offices in the field with less budget than other UN entities, which have more or a smaller number of offices but a higher budget.

- **As an advisory note to support the recommendation, revisit performance targets and enhance accountability for achieving an agreed corporate set of performance indicators for Regional Offices and ensure effective utilization of the quarterly business review reports by Regional Offices to inform management and decision-making.**

Recommendation 4 (Medium): SPRED Business Transformation to:

(a) Revisit the presence typology in the Policy, Procedure and Guidance in line with the ongoing pivoting to the regions and countries initiative to address the inconsistencies between policy definitions and their current operationalization by various Regional Offices and the minimal requirements for roles and responsibilities of Regional Offices.

(b) Devise a mechanism to ensure the consistent application of different office typologies in alignment with the Presence Governance Policy, including effective socialization with regional and country stakeholders and a responsibility for Regional Offices to monitor the Business Review Committee's approval conditions for establishment or change of presence.

Monitoring and oversight

- The monitoring, technical support, and oversight functions were not always well elaborated and understood by Regional Offices, which created ambiguity in terms of roles and responsibilities for offices under their purview; some Regional Offices did not have adequate backstopping arrangements to technically support Country Offices; and there were instances whereby results reported by Country Offices and Regional Offices to demonstrate

achievement of Strategic Note indicators could not be substantiated by the Regional Offices.

- ***As an advisory note to support the recommendation, the Regional Directors could consider the possibility of grouping similar functions (while maintaining an adequate level of segregation of duties aligned with relevant UN Women policies and procedures) where there are limited resources; and defining criteria for formulating regional programmes and teams.***

Recommendation 5 (Medium): Regional Directors to strengthen the oversight provided to Country Offices and Non-Physical Presences by defining and effectively structuring the nature of technical and programmatic oversight with balanced efforts between regional and country oversight.

Resource mobilization

- Some Regional Offices retained the majority of project funding resulting in inadequate funds for Country Offices; and there was a perception of competition between Regional and Country Offices for resource mobilization. To address the perception, the Regional Directors could increase transparency about resource allocation methodology and improve processes for the involvement of Country Offices in the planning and resource mobilization of regional programmes. Furthermore, be more consistent with the funding allocation between Regional and Country Offices with the assistance of tools such as the core resource allocation tool (CRAT).
- Several Country Offices did not meet their revenue and expense criteria in 2022 and 2023.

Recommendation 6 (Medium): The Chief, Resource Mobilization and Donor Relations to continue clarifying the roles of Regional and Country Offices regarding Country Office resource mobilization and its workflows at country, regional and headquarters levels.

Funding for functions

- Some core functions did not have sustainable funding; some staff with policy advisory function/roles worked as project managers due to positions being funded by non-core projects; some Regional Offices did not have adequate policy adviser capacity; and sometimes there were challenges in applying direct project cost mechanisms. Management needs to consider changing the

funding model for policy adviser positions and transition towards more sustainable funding and/or direct project costs for policy advisory positions at Regional Offices. Management indicated that there are challenges with stagnant and shrinking regular resources, which contributes to the challenge, but will consider whether capacity could be addressed as part of the pivoting to the regions and countries, thus bringing increased cost efficiency and effectiveness.

- Some Regional Office functions did not have a dotted reporting line with the headquarters Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division (PPID) and Strategy, Planning, Resources & Effectiveness Division (SPRED) compared to operations areas such as Finance, Security and HR which have matrix accountability with their personnel outposted to Regional Offices and Country Offices. This might result in inadequate support and oversight of some critical functions by headquarters.
- Regional Offices could better align the ratio of operations to programme teams with the strategic priorities of Regional Offices to ensure proximity of technical expertise to countries and cost-effectiveness of operational functions, based on the size of project portfolio, number of countries covered per Regional Office and other relevant criteria.

Recommendation 7 (Medium): The Director, SPRED supported by PPID, HR and DMA to consider strongly encouraging offices developing new Strategic Notes to conduct functional analyses, especially where there is a significant change in office structure.

Human resources management

- Some Regional Offices took several months to fill vacant positions. Internal and external stakeholders stated that, in some instances, UN Women could not attract properly qualified personnel due to short-term contracts and limited regular resources.
- Recruitment of consultants was sometimes based only on a desk review of their CVs. Although this is allowed by the recruitment policies, IAS is of the view that desk reviews alone are not the most rigorous or transparent recruitment selection method. Therefore, Regional Directors to consider combining desk reviews with at least one other competitive selection methods e.g., interviews and written tests.

- Some consultants' fees were not properly justified or aligned with the Special Service Agreement policy.
- Some ROs had training and development plans; however, IAS observed that *non-mandatory* training was not monitored to ensure completion by personnel. Furthermore, some personnel were not fully compliant with *mandatory* training over long periods of time. Majority of personnel at ROs and COs had not yet started mandatory training, as confirmed by learning reports.
- Some personnel did not complete their performance evaluations by set corporate timelines, even after several extension of due dates.

Advisory note: *Regional Directors to improve monitoring and accountability for the completion of mandatory training at Regional and Country Offices; ensure effective monitoring of non-mandatory training; enforce accountability for the timely completion of personnel performance evaluations; and strengthen mechanisms to ensure consistent competitive selection for the recruitment of consultants.*

Procurement and construction

- Limited and unstable capacity in procurement functions impacted the effectiveness of procurement strategies and plans. Some Regional Offices did not have clearly documented, longer-term procurement strategies and plans to prepare for their region's foreseen programme delivery, support and oversight; and to approach procurement strategically in terms of Long-Term Agreements for repetitive goods and services, particularly procurement related to construction, cash-based interventions, etc.
- Construction processes are still relatively new within UN Women; therefore, experience in this field was not yet optimal. The role of Regional Offices versus headquarters in overseeing and supporting Country Offices in construction related projects were still not yet harmonized and well-understood. As per the Guidance Note on Key Considerations and Principles regarding Programme versus Procurement Actions², construction services are not considered a programmatic partnership, but rather a procurement

² Link, <https://unwomen.sharepoint.com/manage-ment/LF/Repository/Key%20Considerations%20and%20Principles%20Regarding%20Programme%20Partnerships%20Versus%20Procurement%20Actions%20Guidance.pdf#search=construction>

activity. IAS observed that several Country Offices engaged programme partners to implement infrastructure/construction activities. The Offices should have used the construction management services contract³ under the custody of the Procurement and Travel Services, which was developed in 2017 instead of partner agreements. Regional Offices did not provide sufficient support and guidance to the Country Offices for construction projects, which resulted in some payments for incomplete works, substandard quality of building work, and/or some buildings that remained idle because the constructed premises did not meet the target populations' needs. Country Offices did not have or hire construction engineers to validate the work from start to finish, and to check that the technical work aligned with the invoices and FACE forms submitted by programme partners for liquidations.

Recommendation 8 (Medium): *The Chief, Procurement to issue reminders to Regional and Country Offices about the updated requirements of procurement policies; UN Women's Financial Rules and Regulations; and the checklists and guidelines to operationalize these policies. Ensure effective risk management by strengthening controls for construction work, including submission of construction projects to the Headquarters Infrastructure Review Committee, and managing construction as a procurement process rather than a programme partnership.*

Information Communication and Technology (ICT)

- The information security compliance reports conducted as part of offices' self-reporting highlighted high compliance rates, but actual controls were not consistently applied.
- ICT infrastructure and telecommunication procedures require a disaster recovery plan and annual testing in accordance with UN Women standards. Some disaster recovery plans were outdated and not tested annually.
- Most personnel at Regional and Country Offices had not yet started the two mandatory information security training courses as confirmed by learning reports. Only two regions had completion rates around 55 per cent while the rest were below 50 per cent.

³ Link, <https://unwomen.sharepoint.com/manage-ment/LF/ layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7BC4B82FA0-8F45-4158-BDBA-16C1E94AEFB9%7D&file=Construction%20Management%20Services%20Contract.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true&DefaultItemOpen=1>

- Country Offices managed ICT risks internally if they had local ICT focal points or outsourced to UNDP. However, some service level agreements with UNDP did not have provisions for incident management and cybersecurity management. Some stakeholders also raised concerns that some Regional and Country Offices had signed service level agreements without prior consultation with headquarters.

Advisory note: *Regional Directors to use the increased delegation of authority for ICT processes to improve the IT posture of Regional and Country Offices in collaboration with headquarters IST to provide training to ICT focal points; ensure completion of mandatory ICT training; roll-out of destruction protocols for IT equipment and systems; and effective management of cyber and information risks. At a corporate level, senior management to consider revising the service level agreements with UNDP to improve incident and cybersecurity management and consider centralizing the signing of service level agreements with UNDP.*

Security

- Some business continuity plans were outdated and were not tested on an annual basis. Some BCCMA self-reporting dashboards depicted low compliance rates for business continuity and crisis management due to outdated and untested protocols at Regional and Country Offices. Some Regional Offices committed to carry out multi-office business continuity and crisis management application (BCCMA) tests to create an interactive emergency environment with which to assess the preparedness of each Country Office within their regions.
- There were discrepancies between the corporate Enterprise Data Management portal which is used to track locations and leases and the security database on locations. Stakeholders suggested an alignment exercise should be conducted to resolve this issue.

Advisory note: *Regional Directors and the Global Security Adviser to conduct an intense needs analysis of security risk management in Regional and Country Offices with high security risk profiles and solicit minimum resources from the corporate budget to ensure security controls are adequately implemented.*

Management comments and action plan

The Regional Directors and headquarters business process owners accepted the above recommendations and provided action plans which are included in this report. Implementation of some of the recommendations has already begun. Management comments and additional information provided have been taken into account in this report, where appropriate.

Lisa Sutton

Lisa Sutton, Director

Independent Evaluation and Audit Services

RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

Observation	Recommendation	Responsible Unit	Priority	Action Plan	Implementation date
<p>Observation 1. The role and responsibilities of RO</p>	<p>Recommendation 1. The Director DMA, with the support of other divisions, to coordinate development and roll out of an accountability framework to clarify and delineate Regional Office roles vis-à-vis headquarters and field offices, including elements proposed in the Joint Inspection Unit report and new Delegation of Authority Policy.</p>	DMA	Medium	<p>While management agrees with this recommendation, this will need to take into consideration some key components for the successful development and implementation of an accountability framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Clarity on UN Women’s combined assurance model, to understand the current oversight mechanisms between the three lines, also clarifying areas where there may be potential gaps or duplication. This will require the full development of UN Women’s three lines model into a formal internal legislative document. b. Enhanced maturity of the risk management framework to ensure that this is fully integrated into the planning, monitoring and reporting processes, particularly from a system perspective; planned for Quantum Phase 2 and to ensure that risk obligations are monitored. c. Full implementation of the Statement of Internal Control mechanism. d. Enhanced accountability mechanisms to ensure performance monitoring results are aligned to designated responsibilities and agreed upon targets aligned to approved plans, including the exercise of delegations of authority and compliance with policies. <p>In the context of the above, the implementation of an accountability framework will most likely be carried out in a phased manner. With the ongoing pivot to regions and countries, the new Strategic Plan will provide the adequate context to be able to close this recommendation.</p>	31 December 2026
	<p>Recommendation 2. The Deputy Executive Directors, in consultation with the</p>	DEDs’ Offices;	Medium	<p>With the ongoing pivot to regions and countries, the new Strategic Plan will provide the adequate context to be able to</p>	31 December

Observation	Recommendation	Responsible Unit	Priority	Action Plan	Implementation date
	Directors DMA, PPID, SPRED and HR to develop and roll out the accountability compact for Regional Directors and clarify ideal/conducive dual reporting lines for all Regional Office functions.	DMA Directorate; SPRED Directorate; PPID Directorate; HR		close this recommendation.	er 2026
Observation 2. RO delegation of authority and accountability	Recommendation 3. The Directors DMA, PPID and SPRED to collaborate to strengthen quarterly business review reports to monitor post-facto cases comprehensively and continuously through exception-based dashboards/reports as part of the monitoring and oversight of Regional and Country Offices.	DMA Directorate; PPID Directorate; SPRED Directorate	Medium	Management notes this recommendation and advises that Programmatic and Lease post-facto cases are already monitored as part of the Quarterly Business Review. DMA commits to supporting required data to ensure post-facto cases can be effectively monitored. PPID has initiated a process for analysis of the root causes of programmatic post-facto cases and will continue strengthening this root cause analysis to inform further management actions.	Ongoing Root cause analysis: 31 December 2025
Observation 3. Improvements in office typology	Recommendation 4. SPRED Business Transformation to: a) Revisit the presence typology in the Policy, Procedure and Guidance in line with the ongoing pivoting to the regions and countries initiative to address the inconsistencies between policy definitions and their current operationalization by various Regional Offices and the minimal requirements for roles and responsibilities of Regional Offices. b) Devise a mechanism to ensure the consistent application of different office typologies in alignment with the Presence Governance Policy, including effective socialization with regional and country stakeholders and a responsibility for Regional Offices to monitor the Business Review Committee's approval conditions for establishment or change of presence. .	SPRED/BT	Medium	(a) Management agrees with this recommendation and proposes to revise the Policy after the promulgation of the next Strategic Plan (SP) to ensure that the revised Policy fully aligns with the aims of the SP. In addition, given the forecasted changes to capacities in Regional Offices in light of pivoting to regions and countries, clarifying the roles of ROs is best carried out once this project is further advanced. (b) While understanding and respecting the accountability of the Regional Offices, management will seek to strengthen this process as part of the business planning and QBR mechanisms.	Q1 2026 31 March 2026
Observation 4. Effectiveness	Recommendation 5. Regional Directors to strengthen the oversight provided	RDs	Medium	To enhance oversight, it is important that Regional Offices allocate adequate human resources for this task.	Q2 2025 30 June

Observation	Recommendation	Responsible Unit	Priority	Action Plan	Implementation date
of RO oversight mechanisms covering their regions' typologies	to Country Offices and Non-Physical Presences by defining and effectively structuring the nature of technical and programmatic oversight with balanced efforts between regional and country oversight.	SPRED/BT; PPID/PSM; RDs		In terms of enhancing programmatic monitoring and oversight, the Business Transformation Section in SPRED and PPID will work together to identify additional indicators to measure programme quality and programme/project management maturity to add to the QBR. PPID will separately explore ways that ROs can maintain regular oversight and monitor DRF implementation, building on RMS reporting, for the next SP cycle.	2025
Observation 5. Resource Mobilization	Recommendation 6. The Chief, Resource Mobilization and Donor Relations to continue clarifying the roles of Regional and Country Offices regarding Country Office resource mobilization and its workflows at country, regional and headquarters levels.	SPD/PSP (first sentence); RDs (second sentence)	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UN Women Strategy for Public Partnerships & Resource Mobilisation (2022-2023), prepared by the Public Partnerships Section through a consultative process, was promulgated in 2023, following a briefing of the Executive Board. It was discussed with Regional Offices through the established Regional Dialogues and with Country Offices through the Learning Cafe. The Strategy outlines the roles and responsibilities at HQ, regional and country level. • With regards to private sector resource mobilization, the responsibility for developing and evaluating private sector partnerships is shared by the Country Offices (CO) and Regional Offices (RO) as per the PSE Procedure. The Regional Directors have the authority to make the final call on whether a CO partnership should move forward, which ensures there is no conflict of interest when weighing the risks and benefits of a potential private sector partnership. Further clarification on roles and responsibilities will be established through a consultative process with HQ, ROs and COs to ensure alignment with their current capacities and implementation of UN Women's Private Sector Engagement Strategy 2023-2025. • Furthermore, the Public Partnerships Section and the Private Sector Partnerships Section will develop a new Partnerships and Resource Mobilisation Policy in 2025, aligned with the development of the new Strategic Plan (2026-2029). 	31 December 2025
Observation 6. Funding for	Recommendation 7. The Director, SPRED supported by PPID, HR and DMA to	SPRED/BT; SPRED/SPU;	Medium	a) The Business Transformation team is available, on request, to conduct functional analyses, in conjunction	Q1 2025 31

Observation	Recommendation	Responsible Unit	Priority	Action Plan	Implementation date
core positions	consider strongly encouraging offices developing new Strategic Notes to conduct functional analyses, especially where there is a significant change in office structure.	SPRED/Budget; PPID/PSM; PPID/Directorate; HR; DMA		<p>with relevant colleagues such as HR, during the development and implementation of new Strategic Notes, particularly when an office has experienced significant changes in its structure, level of resourcing, or similar. While it is beyond the remit of the Director, SPRED, to make such functional analyses mandatory, management agrees to strongly encourage offices affected by significant changes to consider such analyses.</p> <p>b) Regular Resources, particularly since it is forecasted that Regular Resources may decline in coming years. Against this backdrop, management wishes to avoid additional constraints which would even further reduce flexibility in allocating Regular Resources. Through a combination of Direct Project Costing and the pivoting to regions and countries initiative, management will ensure that technical expertise is accessible closest to where it is needed. The DPC team is working to ensure that additional guidance, tools and training are available to ensure that UN Women teams and offices globally can adequately cost their projects.</p>	March 2025
Observation 7. Procurement	<p>Recommendation 8.</p> <p>The Chief Procurement to issue reminders to Regional and Country Offices about the updated requirements of procurement policies; UN Women’s Financial Rules and Regulations; and the checklists and guidelines to operationalize these policies.</p> <p>Ensure effective risk management by strengthening controls for construction work, including submission of construction projects to the Headquarters Infrastructure Review Committee, and managing construction as a procurement process rather than a programme partnership.</p>	DMA/Procurement; RDs on second para	Medium	<p>DMA continues to carry out regular training of procurement colleagues, including sending reminders of key policies.</p> <p>DMA will discuss with PPID/PMSU the split of roles and responsibilities in relation to construction, given that the role of the Procurement function is limited to contracting of construction when UN Women carries out construction directly.</p>	31 December 2025

Observation	Recommendation	Responsible Unit	Priority	Action Plan	Implementation date
Observation 8. HR management	Advisory note. Regional Directors to improve monitoring and accountability for the completion of mandatory training at Regional and Country Offices; ensure effective monitoring of non-mandatory training; enforce accountability for the timely completion of personnel performance evaluations; and strengthen mechanisms to ensure consistent competitive selection for the recruitment of consultants.	RDs; HR	Advisory Note	UN Women Human Resources agrees with this recommendation. In this regard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring and compliance tools/dashboards will be made available to offices for better oversight Contract extensions will be subject to completion of performance evaluations as communicated by the DED A revision of the consultant policy has been undertaken and being revisited again for further enhancements based on lessons learned and practices. Mechanisms are being strengthened in submitting and reviewing requests to ensure consistency in application of established guidelines and procedures. HR Team has been conducting trainings, issue regular updates and guidance since publication of new policy 	
Observation 9. ICT	Advisory note. Regional Directors to use the increased delegation of authority for ICT processes to improve the IT posture of Regional and Country Offices in collaboration with headquarters IST to provide training to ICT focal points; ensure completion of mandatory ICT training; roll-out of destruction protocols for IT equipment and systems; and effective management of cyber and information risks. At a corporate level, senior management to consider revising the service level agreements with UNDP to improve incident and cybersecurity management and consider centralizing the signing of service level agreements with UNDP.	RDs; DMA/IST	Advisory Note	While the action plan and dates should be confirmed by the RDs for regional elements, the IST team can provide support as below: The IST team at HQ has successfully rolled out centralized and automated scripts that have assisted several Country Offices in complying with various Information Security Compliance requirements. These include naming conventions for corporate devices, the least privilege principle, and vulnerability management for corporate software. The IST team has also provided online training courses to all IT personnel with access to the Microsoft Enterprise Skills Initiative (ESI) for training on Microsoft products, as well as training courses on Meraki (networking) through the Agora platform. The IST team also provides guidance and updates on developments to all IT personnel through quarterly global ICT network meetings. While the review of UNDP or any other lead agency providing IT support for Country Offices is specific to each Country Office, the	

Observation	Recommendation	Responsible Unit	Priority	Action Plan	Implementation date
				<p>IST team provides support in reviewing the requirements for those offices as requested.</p> <p>In addition, DMA Management agrees to consider a plan of action to assess different parts of IT management, policies and procedures including cyber and data security as well as oversight of IT functions globally.</p>	
<p>Observation 10. Safety and security</p>	<p>Advisory note. Regional Directors and the Global Security Adviser to conduct an intense needs analysis of security risk management in Regional and Country Offices with high security risk profiles and solicit minimum resources from the corporate budget to ensure security controls are adequately implemented.</p>	<p>RDs; DMA/Security</p>	<p>Advisory Note</p>	<p>DMA/security agrees with this recommendation, and will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct need analysis in consultations with all ROs and COs fulfilling “high” or “very high” security risk level criteria. 2. Based on the analysis, review whether existing resources are adequate and, if not, identify and utilize additional resources to address the need. <p>This is an intense process of information gathering, collation, and analysis, including potential travel and likely to require consultancy support, in which case the action is subject to availability of funding for the review.</p>	<p>1 January 2027</p>

UN WOMEN EXISTS TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS.

As the lead UN entity on gender equality and secretariat of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, we shift laws, institutions, social behaviors and services to close the gender gap and build an equal world for all women and girls. Our partnerships with governments, women's movements and the private sector coupled with our coordination of the broader United Nations translate progress into lasting changes. We make strides forward for women and girls in four areas: leadership, economic empowerment, freedom from violence, and women, peace and security as well as humanitarian action.

UN Women keeps the rights of women and girls at the centre of global progress – always, everywhere. Because gender equality is not just what we do. It is who we are.



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