



**Final Report**

For the Final Evaluation of the EU-UN Women Regional Programme

“Ending Violence against Women in the Western Balkans and Turkey:  
Implementing Norms, Changing Minds”

**Submitted by**

**Just Governance Group**

**to**

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

January 31, 2020

# Acknowledgements

The Just Governance Group wishes to thank the many individuals and organizations who supported the evaluation process by making themselves available for interviews and by providing helpful feedback on draft deliverables. Special thanks to the UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECA RO), UN Women offices and UNDP in Montenegro, and government and non-government partners in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey. Their cooperation was vital in understanding the nature and progress of the evaluated Regional Programme.

The evaluation greatly benefited from active involvement of the UN Women ECA RO and in particular for the support provided by Alia El-Yassir, UN Women ECA RO Regional Director, Yolanda Iriarte, UN Women ECA RO Regional Programme Manager and Isabel Suarez, the UN Women ECA Regional Evaluation Specialist who managed this assignment and provided guidance throughout the evaluation process with the active involvement of internal and external reference groups. Finally, we are grateful to the representatives and staff of the seven offices visited for all the dedicated time they invested in supporting the evaluation process and in facilitating the engagement and inclusion of a wide range of partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries of their work.

The evaluation was conducted by an external evaluation company, Just Governance Group. The evaluation team included the following members: Kimberly Inksater, Team Leader and International EAW Expert; Mónica Treviño, Evaluation Design and Quality Assurance; Ana María Golemac, Advisor; Marika Djolaj, Meredith Brown and Bergin Kulenovic, International Evaluation Consultants; Marija Babović, Regional EAW Expert and National Consultant; National Consultants, Zeynep Baser, Erinda Bllaca, Dzenita Hrelja Hasecic, Aleksandra Gligorovic and Olga Apostolova; and José Miguel López, Evaluation Support.

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\* For the European Union, this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo\* declaration of independence. For UN Women, references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

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# Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACEV	Mother and Child Foundation
ADRF	Albanian Disability Rights Foundation
AKDAM	Adana Women's Solidarity Centre
AWEN	Women Empowerment Network
BIBIJA	Bibija Roma Women's Centre
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CLCI	Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives
CRI	Center for Roma Initiatives
CRPM	Center for research and policy making
CSHRMC	Coalition "Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities"
CSF	Civil Society Facility
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
CWR	Centre of Women's Rights
ECA	Europe and Central Asia (region referenced by UN Women)
ECA RO	Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (UN Women)
EC	European Commission
EERG	External Evaluation Reference Group
EHO	Educational Humanitarian Organization
EU	European Union
EVAW	Eliminating Violence against Women
EWL	European Women's Lobby
FGE	Forumi Gruas Elbasan
FLD	Foundation of Local Democracy
FWS	Foundation for Women's Solidarity
GADC	Global Gender Alliance for Development Center
GKH	Gender Knowledge Hub
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic violence
HERA	Health Education and Research Association
HRDC	Human Rights in Democracy Center
IERG	Internal Evaluation Reference Group
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance

IS	Implementation Strategy
JGG	Just Governance Group
KADAV	Women's Solidary Foundation
KAGED	Capacity Development Association
KGSC	Kosovo Gender Study Center
LGBT Alliance	Alliance against Discrimination of LGBT
LULUDI	Roma Women and Youth Association
MHC	Helsinki committee for Human Rights of Republic of Macedonia
MOKID	Mardin Women Cooperation Association
MWL	Macedonian Women's Lobby
MYLA	Macedonian Young Lawyers Association
NCGE	The National Council for Gender Equality
NGO NOVA	NGO Nova-Center for Feminist Culture
NORMA	Lawyers Association NORMA
NRAWEOK	Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women Organizations of Kosovo
NRC	National Roma Centrum
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PESCANIK	Association of Women Sandglass
PCA	Project Cooperation Agreement
PMF	Performance Measurement Framework
ProDoc	Programme document
PM	Programme Manager
PSC	Programme Steering Committee
RO	Regional Office
ROM	Results Oriented Monitoring
RROGRAEK	Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women Organizations of Kosovo
RWA	Roma Women Association
RWRC	Roma Women Rights Center
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SO	Specific Objective
STL	Support to Life
TC	Technical Coordinator
TWG	Technical Working Group
TWU	Turkish Women's Union
TOR	Terms of Reference
ToC	Theory of Change

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
UWBL	United Women Banja Luka
VAW	Violence Against Women
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VDS	The Victimology Society of Serbia
WAVE	Women Against Violence Europe Network
WCC	Women's Counselling Centre
WSA	Women's Studies Association



# Executive Summary

## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The three-year Programme, 'Implementing Norms, Changing Minds' (Feb. 2017 - Jan. 2020) aimed at ending gender-based discrimination and violence against women and girls in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia) and Turkey, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged groups of women. An independent evaluation of the Programme was conducted by Just Governance Group, with the aim to provide systematic insights in the implementation process and achieved results and to provide recommendations for the second phase of the regional Programme (Feb. 2020 - July 2021). The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the achievement of results and performance of the Programme; the specific objectives (SO) included: i) identify and document lessons learned, good practices and innovations, success stories and challenges; ii) identify strategies for replication and up-scaling; iii) provide actionable recommendations for future programme development and maximize ownership by partners; and iv) assess the value added of UN Women regional programming. The evaluation was conducted in line with UN Women evaluation standards, with the support of the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) Regional Office of UN Women and with large participation of various relevant stakeholders. The evaluation applied OECD DAC<sup>1</sup> evaluation criteria and is aligned with United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for evaluation. The evaluation covered the period from 1 February 2017 to 30 November 2019 while the evaluation process, from inception to report submission, took place from July 2019 to January 2020.

## EVALUATION CONTEXT

Violence against women is highly prevalent in the Western Balkans and in Turkey, in both public and private spheres. This includes intimate partner and non-partner violence as well as attacks on women politicians, journalists or women performing public roles. The high prevalence of violence indicates strong patriarchal values backed by persistent discriminatory norms and attitudes. Women from disadvantaged groups are at greater risk of experiencing violence due to discrimination, poverty, low education level, and early and forced marriage.

Despite the high prevalence of violence and its adverse impact on women's lives, reports to authorities are very low, and women rarely look for support from institutions or organizations. Prevailing attitudes that VAW is private, but also shame, embarrassment, lack of trust in the support system, and fear of retribution by the perpetrator are among the main reasons for not reporting. Additionally, lack of specialized services, geographical location, insufficient funding and reliance on work of civil society organizations, lack of standards, and lack of information about services and rights to protection limit the accessibility to essential services. Women from minority and marginalized groups, women with disabilities and those with refugee or displacement status face additional barriers to accessing support services.

All IPA beneficiaries (except Kosovo) have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and all of them (except Kosovo) have ratified the Council of Europe's Convention on

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (known as the Istanbul Convention), as the key regional instrument for prevention and protection of women from violence. The response to VAW is also shaped by the EU accession processes. National frameworks to promote gender equality exist for all IPA beneficiaries. Legislative reforms have been ongoing with the aim to align national legislation to the requirements and standards of Istanbul Convention and CEDAW.

## **EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

The evaluation adopted a summative approach to assess the achievement of objectives and a formative approach to document lessons learned to inform future programming. A utilization-focused approach was ensured by identifying the effectiveness of implementation strategies (IS), successful practices and actionable recommendations. The evaluation reflects a goal-based design that uses design documents to verify results and a theory-based design that relies on the Theory of Change (ToC) as the “logic of enquiry”. Principles of gender equality, human rights, feminist evaluation and system thinking approaches were integrated in the design, data collection and data analysis. The evaluation criteria applied in this assignment are relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability.

The evaluation was conducted through 4 phases: inception phase, data collection and analysis, validation and reporting. The evaluation used a mixed method that triangulated qualitative and quantitative data from programme and external documents (1000 documents reviewed) and interviews with a large number of stakeholders (270 interviews). Fieldwork used a census approach to gather data from eight stakeholder groups in the seven IPA beneficiary components and at the regional level: UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro, EU officials, national government officials, CSO implementing partners in regional and country components, external stakeholders, beneficiaries of the implementing partners’ activities, and representatives of United Nations/international entities involved in EVAWG initiatives. Content analysis was conducted by using synthesis products which were assessed between stakeholder categories, programme documents, publications and normative standards. Actual results compared to expected results were determined in cases where individuals or CSO interviewed confirmed or demonstrated the change expected or with objective evaluation processes summarized in publications or reports.

## **EVALUATION FINDINGS**

Evaluation findings are presented with reference to theory-based approach in addition to the following key evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

### **Theory of change**

The evaluation found that the Programme’s ToC is plausible as an ambitious high-level and long-term EVAWG framework for the Western Balkans and Turkey. The evaluation recognizes the role of civil society - particularly of women’s organizations - in democratic and rights-based reforms in reducing violence and discrimination against women. However, a context-specific implementation is required to address particular circumstances that can collaboratively be assessed with stakeholders who can lately assume ownership of the EVAWG initiatives implemented within the programme. The evaluation also found that the ToC is not feasible within the timetable of the Programme. Interviewees observed that reducing violence and discrimination against women and girls and changing attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate gender stereotypes and discrimination could not be achieved in the short term.

### **Relevance**

The relevance of the Programme's goals and objectives is unequivocal, as key areas and problems of gender inequalities in Western Balkans and Turkey have been targeted. Some interventions are even more relevant today than when the Programme was designed, as political and policy changes have challenged some of the achievements to date. Overall, the last few years in the region have been marked with criticism of the norms of gender equality and backlash against the Istanbul Convention.

The design of the Programme is therefore fully relevant to the needs of women in the region, especially survivors of violence against women and women from minority and marginalized groups who face multiple forms of discrimination. The Programme is also fully consistent with key policy frameworks and processes: EU accession and alignment with EU *acquis communautaire*, Istanbul Convention, Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, national strategies and action plans for gender equality or for EVAWG, as well as with EU's expectation related to active inclusion of civil society in reforms which is entailed in the EU's Civil Society Facility, the funding source for this Programme. Finally, the Programme is fully aligned with international and regional normative standards and contributes through diverse approaches and strategies to the more direct or indirect impact of civil society on the legal reforms that will further align national normative frameworks with international and regional standards.

Implementing partners and other stakeholders recognize many comparative advantages of UN Women, including competencies and expertise in elimination of violence against women and girls (EVAWG) and providing support beyond the mere funding of projects, such as technical support, strengthening expertise, management, project preparation and implementation skills of organizations, which were particularly beneficial to grassroots organizations. UN Women's flexibility, readiness to address unexpected circumstances and willingness to enable organizations to redesign activities in order to provide more effective results were particularly highly valued.

### **Effectiveness**

The analysis concerning the criteria of effectiveness assesses the extent to which an intervention's results contributed to achieving goals. To be able to make the analysis, the results should be as precisely defined as possible, indicators for measuring their achievement should be specific and data for respective indicators available. The complexity of the Programme, its wide regional remit and its wide and diverse scope in some cases did not enable definition of those specific and precise indicators, thus making the assessment of all the interventions in terms of desired results impossible. However, the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Programme has yielded some specific findings:

#### *Specific Objective 1: Enabling legislative and policy environment*

There is clear evidence that the Programme has contributed to an enabling legislative and policy environment in line with international standards on EVAWG and all forms of discrimination. The evaluation found that the Programme has strengthened women's organizations' capacity to monitor and produce shadow reports and to advocate for EVAWG nationally and regionally through networks, including networks incorporating organizations representing women from minority and marginalized groups. Shadow reporting, gap analysis and direct advocacy may have influenced, to varying degrees, at least 15 laws and policies in the region. Through the Regional Forum, a mechanism has been established for regional knowledge sharing and informal dialogue on the Istanbul Convention and EVAWG practices in the region. However, a formal inter-institutional mechanism that will sustain EVAWG efforts beyond the lifetime of the Programme would be beneficial.

#### *Specific Objective 2: Promoting favourable social norms and attitudes*

The Programme has also contributed to promoting favourable social norms and attitudes to EVAWG and discrimination at the micro or local level, although stakeholders have clearly recognized that this objective requires more intense efforts over a longer period of time. Beneficiaries interviewed confirmed the effectiveness of community-based awareness raising activities on discrimination, stereotypes and harmful practices that led to heightened

awareness, a shift in attitudes and behavioral change in some cases. Peer to peer approaches were particularly effective. The evaluation found that the Programme partially increased the knowledge of CSOs to implement innovative communication approaches for behavioural change through capacity building on communication for behavioral impact (COMBI) methodology that took place under the Gender Lab initiative. At least 5 CSOs in the region implemented strategic communication initiatives after attending COMBI training. In their own assessment of their capacities, 50% of eight CSOs felt their capacities were strengthened, while others did not.

*Specific Objective 3: Empowerment of women and girls to advocate and use available, accessible and quality services*

Evaluation data cannot definitively confirm whether the Programme has empowered women and girls to advocate and use services. However, it did find improvements in the following three dimensions of the supply-demand cycle for services for survivors: i) the enabling environment for the delivery of quality of services was strengthened, namely through legislation and policy aligned with the Istanbul Convention and local support for multi-agency coordination mechanisms; ii) the supply improved through the enhanced capacity of service providers and case management tools that standardize procedures and consider the needs of women from minority and marginalized groups; and iii) women's demand for better access to support services increased thanks to heightened awareness of their rights, self-confidence, and self-advocacy.

The Programme has progressed towards the results confirmed above thanks to the strength of CSOs in EVAWG, the commitment of governments to legislative and policy reform, and prior collaboration between UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro, the European Commission, CSOs and government officials. However, for some IPA beneficiaries, factors that restrict EVAWG process relate to political context and weak government commitment to lead reforms and allocate public budget to EVAWG efforts. The implementation strategies adopted by the Programme have been effective in advancing results. The strategy to strengthen women's organizations, especially networks engaging organizations representing women from marginalized and minority groups, provided the basis for enhancing EVAWG policy and legal advocacy and was applied as a cross-cutting *modus operandi* in all results areas.

**Impact**

It should be kept in mind that this is a three-year Programme working on changing norms and behaviours at micro, mezzo and macro levels, and therefore, it cannot be expected that impact is already significant in all areas. Due to the short duration of Phase I, the evaluation cannot confirm whether the Programme has reduced violence and gender-based discrimination against women by addressing the root causes of gender inequalities. The following phenomenon is also important to note: when more rightsholders know about their rights and how to advocate for them, reporting rates of violence tend to increase. However, the evaluation can confirm that there is progress towards the Programme goal of reducing violence and gender-based discrimination. It appears that more women are reporting violent crimes in communities where the Programme has been active. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests a shift in attitudes about gender equality.

The evaluation confirmed indices of progress towards political empowerment among women's organizations, especially smaller and grassroots organizations, and women beneficiaries. The Programme created resources and opportunities for women's organizations to strengthen their EVAWG advocacy skills through training, knowledge sharing and engagement with government officials. As a result, CSOs' agency, or their ability to advocate for EVAWG in reform processes at different levels, has increased, and they have positioned themselves as a point of reference on EVAWG in their communities, nationally and regionally. The Programme has also provided a safe space for women who have experienced discrimination or violence to share and reflect on their experience and their access to international human rights mechanisms, quality support services and legal aid/advice. As a result, individual women's ability to advocate for their rights increased.

Relationships and power dynamics among women's organizations and between them and authorities also changed as a result of the Programme. The visibility of smaller women's organizations (grassroots or organizations representing women from minority groups) increased through partnering with larger organizations. Engagement between networks representing marginalized women and EU institutions improved as well. Importantly, CSO-government relations improved in the Western Balkans.

### **Sustainability**

Sustainability of results vary greatly across the Programme objective areas and across the region. The evaluation assessed and confirmed the following aspects of sustainability across three key factors:

*Legal and policy framework.* There is a relatively high probability that results incorporated in the legislative and institutional reforms related to the EU accession will be sustained over time as this is a clear priority of government and civil society. Obligations related to CEDAW also contribute to obtaining sustained results, given that IPA beneficiaries actively participate in this mechanism and CEDAW Committee recommendations. The Programme achieved many results related to the alignment of legislation and policies with the Istanbul Convention and/or CEDAW. In other cases, CSOs provided recommendations for legal amendments, the sustainability of which strongly depends on the government's recognition of their importance. Frequent changes of government and changes in government priorities and allocation of resources were among the factors identified that inhibit the sustainability of results.

*Institutional.* Due to the absence of regional gender equality mechanisms, there are no instruments to sustain current or potential regional results. However, processes of regional cooperation are advancing through different regional initiatives, frameworks and cooperation mechanism (e.g., Regional Cooperation Council). Early signs of ownership of Programme results by national government stakeholders are fragile, as their sustainability is dependent on scarce financial resources.

*Social.* There is some progress in the development of partnerships at local, national and regional levels. Sustainability prospects are higher when partnerships have a long history and were strengthened by the Programme (e.g., CSOs organized in networks or platforms for jointly monitoring and reporting to international human rights mechanisms or cooperating in the provision of services with established referral mechanisms).

The evaluation found that there is no institutionalized CSO participation at the regional level. The Regional Forum, although positively evaluated, does not have an impact beyond 'soft' exchange of experience and information. The institutionalization of CSOs participation in inter-institutional mechanisms at national, sub-national and local levels varies across the region. There are examples where CSOs' involvement in national legislative and policy reforms is more permanent, while in other cases there is currently no significant participation of CSOs in key VAWG and gender equality legal and policy reform mechanisms. Similarly, there are good examples of services institutionalization provided by CSOs or their participation in local multisectoral response to EVAWG; however, this is not a systematic trend across the region.

The replication or upscaling of results was not implemented during the first phase of the Programme. The following are examples of promising new practices, services, and methods that were piloted and implemented which should be assessed and replicated across the region with necessary contextual adjustments: i) the femicide survey; ii) the multi-sector or multi-agency coordinated response mechanisms among local essential service providers; iii) grassroots approaches to raise awareness and influence behaviours; and iv) networking methods in monitoring women's human rights, EVAWG and reporting to international mechanisms.

## **Efficiency**

The Programme has efficiently and effectively allocated resources to create a foundation for further EVAWG reforms in alignment with the Istanbul Convention and quality essential services in the region. Ensuring Programme-supported reforms are linked to public funding allocations will ensure sustainability of EVAWG initiatives. Leadership and management of the Programme has been effective to maximize results. Results-based management and reporting could enhance results and contribute to communications on Programme achievements. The Programme overcame challenges related to limited capacity among CSOs to respond to Calls for Proposals. Minor delays occurred due to the time required to conduct capacity assessments and arrange the onboarding of new implementing partners.

## **KEY LESSONS LEARNED**

The Programme, following a high-level EVAWG ToC, assumed it was feasible to implement the framework in the Western Balkans and Turkey due to the shared EU accession process in the region. The assumption is partially true; however, the political context, language differences and size of Turkey have affected the Programme's ability to cultivate government and civil society relations and to implement results across the three thematic components. Implementation in a specified geographic area (e.g., one province) may increase synergies between initiatives (as was evident in the Western Balkans).

The Programme assumed the EU normative framework and accession process would foster an EVAWG regionality<sup>1</sup>. This assumption was accurate due to UN Women's leadership to promote this regionality through regional women's networks, regional research, and the Regional Forum. In Phase II, regionality should be maintained through the application of regional research and the replication of good practices across the Western Balkans and Turkey.

The Programme assumed that government officials would be willing to engage in law and policy reform initiatives with UN Women, UNDP in Montenegro, and CSO implementing partners. This assumption was accurate when two factors were present: i) when women's CSOs had prior experience in advocating for law reform, and ii) when national governments were committed to reforming legislation to align with the Istanbul Convention.

UN Women and the EC assumed CSOs would have the capacity to implement EVAWG initiatives in a short time frame and with a small budget. This assumption was accurate, especially when considering the depth of CSOs' experience coupled with the project management support provided by UN Women. In future implementation, both UN Women and experienced CSOs can transfer knowledge and skills to grassroots women's organizations to increase their participation and effectiveness.

The Programme made an accurate assumption when it chose to support initiatives based on CSOs' ongoing work. This allowed implementing partners to test innovative methods, expand services, become licensed service providers, and enhance gender equality and VAWG content. The replication of successful practices can be shared in Phase II.

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<sup>1</sup> Term used to describe the characteristic of this Programme being regional, thematically and geographically.

The Programme assumed minority and marginalized women to form certain groups of women identified mainly by ethnicity, language, migration status, and abilities (women with disabilities). This assumption is accurate and corresponds to EC priorities for some IPA beneficiaries (e.g., Syrian refugees in Turkey); however, the implementation of Phase I demonstrates that an intersectional approach requires support for a broader range of women (e.g. women from other ethnicities, sexual orientation, gender identity, survivors of armed conflict).

## **KEY CONCLUSIONS**

### *Theory of Change*

A strong shared perception and knowledge of the ToC is important to strengthen and enhance participation and ownership, thus increasing the probability of sustainability of EVAWG initiatives.

### *Relevance*

By ensuring the coherency between the needs of women who have experienced discrimination/violence and the national/regional priorities and strategies, the Programme has helped keep VAWG on the policy and political agenda.

The Programme is supporting the EU accession process of IPA beneficiaries by aligning activities with the implementation of the Istanbul Convention and meeting needs of women, especially from minority and marginalized groups. This provides the opportunity for CSOs, government stakeholders and UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro to collaborate in the implementation and tracking of EVAWG initiatives. Such collaboration will enhance ownership and sustainability of the reforms.

### *Effectiveness*

The Programme was able to strengthen women's networks to: i) monitor and report on regional normative standards and mechanisms (Istanbul Convention and GREVIO); ii) analyze and enhance accessible networking practices among women's CSOs (especially those working with women from minority and marginalized groups) through research and specific EAW advocacy initiatives; and iii) incorporate intersectional approaches into networks and CSOs who apply networking methods in their local contexts. These good practices could be further improved and replicated.

The use of shadow reports produced by CSOs for international and regional bodies (e.g., CEDAW and GREVIO) or national governments and the use and acceptance of legislative and policy proposals by national or subnational government bodies do not appear to be closely tracked and reported by the Programme. However, individual interviews and reports indicate women's CSOs and networks have influence in treaty-bodies and national government bodies.

The regionality of this Programme is achieved principally through normative standards (acquis communautaire and Istanbul Convention), regional research, regional networks, and the Regional Forum. The establishment of a formal regional inter-institutional mechanism with structured dialogue between CSOs, government and EU institutions would support the sustainability of the regional vision and the results achieved to date.

Engaging influencers, changing behaviours among individuals and changing professional practice are long term endeavours. Although the Gender Lab led to experimentation and innovation, the precise results are not known yet. Changing behaviours of individuals will require sustained training or mentoring, and methods to measure expected behavioural change need to be carefully planned.

UN Women is recognized for its technical EAWG expertise in the region, but the evaluation findings suggest that preliminary capacities and innovations within the Gender Lab could be strengthened if more support and time were provided to test the application of innovative awareness-raising activities influencing behavioural communication methodologies.

In SO 2 and 3, initiatives to educate and empower women and communities, especially minority and marginalized communities, that adopted peer to peer and grassroots engagement have achieved positive results. These peer to peer approaches combined building the capacity of volunteers and raising awareness among targeted women and men on women's rights, available services, gender stereotypes and harmful practices. They provide the opportunity structure that facilitates women's agency.

The Programme has made significant advances in supporting the enabling environment and improving the supply side of accessible and quality service provision to women who experience violence, especially women from minority communities and women with disabilities. Initiatives that address the demand side by responding to women's needs, including services provided by CSOs or private lawyers, have reached women across the region; however, the impact of the services on women or the degree of empowerment of individual women is not assessed directly.

#### *Efficiency*

Effective management and efficient allocation and use of resources have contributed to the achievement of results grounded in EU normative standards, namely the Istanbul Convention. An assessment of the degree of implementation of the Istanbul Convention following initial legal, policy and service reforms will help identify capacity, financial and service gaps and future priority actions.

#### *Sustainability*

There is greater potential for sustainability and ownership of results in SO 1, linked with legislative and policy reforms initiatives, as a consequence of aligning with international and regional standards under the EU accession process, and with national priorities where inter-institutional mechanisms (between government and civil society) exist to support the reform process. There is also greater potential sustainability in SO 3 where Istanbul Convention standards are integrated into laws and policies on service provisions and in municipalities where multi-sector response mechanisms that include CSO service providers are functional.

Sustainability is further supported due to the Programme's alignment with national priorities. EAWG is recognized as an important policy issue, evidenced by national gender equality and EAW policies. Although there are early signs of national ownership of results in legislative reform and service provision, institutional gender equality mechanisms that could sustain broader EAW reforms and replicate successful practices from the Programme are not sufficiently equipped with human and material resources.

Civil society is strengthened and able to continue EAWG law and policy advocacy, communication advocacy, and service provision. However, more stable and long-term inter-institutional gender equality and EAWG mechanisms and financial resources are required to replicate and continue reforms, awareness-raising initiatives and service provision nationally and sub-nationally. Regionally, there is not a sustainable mechanism to maintain Programme results.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**



## Short term Recommendations

*Recommendation 1:* Discuss the ToC more widely with Programme stakeholders and partners, especially the expected results and its application to IPA beneficiaries' action plans (activities) so they understand how they are contributing to the regional framework.

*Recommendation 2:* Increase support to initiatives addressing sexual violence against women and girls.

*Recommendation 3:* Strengthen internal measurement, tracking and reporting on results achieved within direct UN Women activities and CSO implementing partners' activities so that results (including results of initiatives that can be upscaled) and lessons learned can be captured across the region.

*Recommendation 4:* Adjust the Regional Forum methodology to facilitate dialogue and reflection on successful pilot initiatives that can be replicated to advance the implementation of the Istanbul Convention across the region.

*Recommendation 5:* Further support the participation of CSOs in the development and monitoring of an enabling environment for EAW through shadow reporting, reforms, and tracking for accountability the policies and practices of national governments against the Istanbul Convention and CEDAW.

*Recommendation 6:* Increase Gender Lab technical assistance to CSOs and mentoring between CSOs in the region in order to enhance experimentation and measure success.

*Recommendation 7:* Continue support to local multi-sector coordination mechanisms and study common or divergent practices across the region, promoting an evolution from referral to integral service provision mechanisms.

*Recommendation 8:* Continue to support women's access to justice through human rights mechanisms, free legal aid and training of lawyers (engaged by CSOs or working as sole practitioners), and prepare lawyers and other personnel with soft skills to facilitate women's legal and social empowerment through self-advocacy.

*Recommendation 9:* Adjust and replicate innovative practices and skills development among service providers for better access of women to VAW support services.

*Recommendation 10:* Consider increasing support to services that provide psycho-social support or treatment to male aggressors so that good practices in the region can be identified and shared for replication.

*Recommendation 11:* Continue to strengthen women's organizations' implementation strategy across the Programme.

*Recommendation 12:* Adjust call for proposal methods to engage grassroots women's organizations, especially organizations from minority or marginalized groups, and build capacity for results-based planning and measurement.

*Recommendation 13:* Prepare an implementation strategy based on CSOs' experience gained during Phase I that incorporates an intersectional approach to the empowerment of women victims and survivors of VAW that can be replicated by CSOs, especially CSOs offering legal aid and other support services to women.

*Recommendation 14:* Strengthen or establish inter-institutional EAWG mechanisms that engage government and women's organizations, especially those representing minority and marginalized women. These mechanisms can

coordinate and monitor progress on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention (where feasible in the national context) and enhance ownership of Programme results.

### **Longer term recommendations**

*Recommendation 15:* Strengthen regional cooperation among national gender equality mechanisms through regular conferences, regional research, campaigns or similar initiatives. Ensure civil society participation in this regional mechanism.

*Recommendation 16:* Prepare an impact assessment methodology in order to evaluate the impact of the Istanbul Convention's implementation in the region and plan for future EVAWG initiatives.

*Recommendation 17:* Link EVAWG with work on gender responsive budgeting to further enhance relevance with EU accession processes and to operationalize legislative and policy commitments.

*Recommendation 18:* Conceptualize a regional social marketing EVAWG campaign that is designed to address a concrete behaviour (examples drawn from public health initiatives) and that includes metrics for evaluating the campaign's effect changing attitudes and behaviours.

*Recommendation 19:* Strengthen joint UN Women and EC advocacy efforts on EVAWG among governments in the region.

# PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

This draft report contains a description of the evaluation process and a comprehensive analysis of the data collected as part of the Final Evaluation of the Regional Programme “Ending Violence against Women in the Western Balkans and Turkey: Implementing Norms, Changing Minds” (the Programme) implemented by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) with a financial contribution from the European Union through the European Commission and supported within the EU-UN Women contract (Instrument for Pre-Accession Agreement IPA 2016/380-469). The Terms of Reference (TOR) that guided this evaluation process are summarized in **Annex 1**.

The report is organized in three parts:

- Part one contains introductory information in four sections: i) the purpose and scope of the evaluation, ii) the methodology, iii) limitations, and iv) the context within which the Programme was implemented.
- Part two contains the analysis of data and the findings organized in six sections: i) Theory of Change (ToC), ii) relevance, iii) effectiveness, iv) impact, v) efficiency and vi) sustainability.
- Part three includes i) lessons learned, ii) conclusions and iii) recommendations.

The report is the main deliverable of the evaluation. It incorporates inputs from the presentation on preliminary findings and the case study analysis of four Programme implementation strategies. For more consistency, supplementary information can be found in the annexes. Key terms used in this report are described below in Table 1.

Table 1: Glossary of Terms

Term	Uses and definitions
Beneficiaries:	<p>Co-beneficiaries of IPA refers to UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro.</p> <p>Beneficiaries of CSO implementing partners refers to the organizations or individuals who were targeted by activities implemented by the CSOs.</p> <p>Programme beneficiaries is a term used by UN Women for CSO implementing partners in reports to the European Commission.</p>
Components:	<p>Geographic components or implementation sites in this Regional Programme refer to a set of activities implemented in an IPA beneficiary country (country components) or across the region (regional component).</p> <p>Thematic components refer to activities implemented within the framework of the three specific objectives.</p>





Gender-based violence	The Programme focuses on VAWG and this is the term used in the report; however, where CSO implementing partners or government policies refer to gender-based violence, the evaluators use GBV.
Implementing partners	UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro implement the Programme activities in cooperation with civil society organizations, referred to as implementing partners. These partners have entered into PCAs with UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro.
Programme	All elements of the Regional EAW Programme functioning within the same ToC and results framework.
Project	Initiatives that contribute to the programme results framework.
Regionality	Term used to describe the characteristic of this Programme being regional, thematically and geographically.

# 1 Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

## 1.1 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the achievement of results and performance of the Programme “Ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Turkey: Implementing Norms, Changing Minds” in accordance with the Terms of Reference (TORs) and recognized evaluation criteria specified above. Specific objectives for the evaluation are set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Specific objectives of the evaluation

	Identify and document lessons learned, good practices and innovations, success stories and challenges within the Programme, to inform future work of UN Women on EVAW thematic area
	Identify strategies for replication and up-scaling of the Programme’s best practices
	Provide actionable recommendations for future programme development and maximize ownership by partners in the region covered by the Programme
	<p>Assess the added value of UN Women regional programming, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ leveraging regional partners,</li> <li>▪ linking with regional normative frameworks (e.g. Istanbul Convention, EU acquis communautaire),</li> <li>▪ fostering regional integration and cooperation,</li> <li>▪ facilitating learning and exchange sharing among IPA beneficiaries and within the region,</li> <li>▪ mobilizing the women’s movement, and</li> <li>▪ increasing coherence, harmonization and standardization of programmatic approaches, amongst others.</li> </ul>

### 1.1.1 Users of the Evaluation

The targeted users of the evaluation are civil society organizations, government counterparts, the European Commission, development partners in the region, UN agencies and the Programme personnel of UN Women in the Western Balkans and Turkey, UNDP in Montenegro, and UN Women’s Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECA RO). The evaluation was conducted during the last months of implementation of the Programme’s first phase (Phase I), in January 2020. A second phase (Phase II) of the Programme is envisioned, upon completion of the current programme, from the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2020 to the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2021.

The Internal Evaluation Reference Group (IERG) has contributed to the evaluation process through interviews during the data collection phase and the validation of findings in the first draft report. External Evaluation Reference Group (EERG) members participated in interviews and will have the opportunity to review the second draft report. They will be users of the evaluation report.

## 1.2 OBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

The “Ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Turkey: Implementing Norms, Changing Minds” programme is a three-year programme funded by the European Commission under the Instrument for Pre-Accession countries II. Phase I of the Programme started officially in February 2017 and ended in January 2020. The Programme aims to end gender-based discrimination and violence against women in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) and Turkey. The total budget is €5,681,220.39, comprised of €681,220.39 from UN Women’s Core funding and €5,000,000 provided through the European Commission (EC) and its Civil

Society Facility (CSF). The CSF supports the development of a civil society capable of participating in the public debate on democracy, human rights, social inclusion and the rule of law.

**1.2.1 Specific objectives and implementing strategies**

The Programme seeks to achieve its aim through the following specific objectives and implementation strategies, as set out in Table 3.

*Table 3: Programme Specific Objectives and Implementation Strategies*

<b>SO 1:</b> To create an enabling legislative and policy environment on eliminating violence against women and all forms of discrimination.	<b>SO 2:</b> To promote favourable social norms and attitudes to prevent gender discrimination and violence against women.	<b>SO 3:</b> To empower women and girls (including those from disadvantaged groups) who have experienced discrimination or violence to advocate for and use available, accessible, and quality services.
<b>IS 1:</b> Influencing laws and policies.	<b>IS 3:</b> Challenging norms and exclusionary practices.	<b>IS 4:</b> Increasing access to women-centered quality essential services.
<b>IS 2:</b> Strengthening women’s organizations.		

**1.2.2 UN Women and civil society implementation**

The Programme channels most of its interventions through, and in support of, civil society organizations. In particular, the Programme engages women’s organizations, especially those working and representing women from minorities and disadvantaged groups.

In Phase I, the regional Programme provided financial and technical support to 65 civil society organizations (CSOs) for the implementation of selected activities through Project Cooperation Agreements (PCAs).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> PCAs are a form of engagement with partners for the implementation of selected activities in accordance with the UN Women Programme Operations Manual.

## 1.3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

### 1.3.1 Evaluation design

The final evaluation adopted both summative and formative design and processes. The summative approach assessed the achievement of the objectives while providing a public account of the progress made in Phase I. This reflects a goal-based design that compares design documents and work plans to verified results. The formative approach focused on identifying lessons learned during Phase I to inform future programming in Phase II. A utilization-focused approach facilitated the formative approach by identifying the effectiveness of implementation strategies, identifying successful practices that can be replicated, and prioritizing actionable recommendations.

The evaluation applied the standard evaluation criteria of Relevance, Effectiveness, Impact, Sustainability and Efficiency.

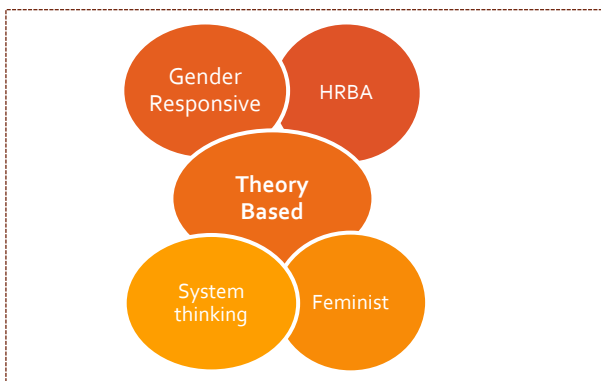
### 1.3.2 Evaluation questions

During the inception phase of the evaluation, the initial list of questions from the TOR was reviewed and the number of main questions was reduced by consolidating similar questions. Other questions and sub-questions were re-framed to make them more focused, while a few others have been rephrased to more clearly address the analysis of the implementation strategies. Furthermore, the questions addressing the criterion of impact were reformulated to better reflect the relatively short implementation period for the Programme. The final evaluation matrix includes 19 principal questions within the five standard evaluation criteria. Please see the matrix in **Annex 2**.

### 1.3.3 Approaches

The evaluation TOR suggested a number of approaches, including human-rights based (HRBA), gender responsive, theory-based, system thinking and feminist evaluation theory (see Figure 1). Please see the table in **Annex 3** describing the application of these approaches in this evaluation. Although the aspects of these mutually reinforcing approaches were integrated in the design, in data collection and in the analysis, the evaluation was primarily driven by a theory-based approach. This theory-based approach facilitates a goal-based design and summative evaluation methodology.

Figure 1: Interconnected evaluation approaches



The evaluation team has used an explicit theory of change (see Figure 4 for the graphic ToC) as a “logic of enquiry,” complemented and used in combination with the classical elements of formative and summative evaluation design and data collection techniques. This approach allowed the evaluators to draw conclusions about whether and how this unique regional intervention contributed to results.

The ToC used for this purpose is the one found in the Programme design document (the ProDoc). The Programme’s ToC relies largely on the EVAW ToC

(Prevention and Access to Essential Services) set out in the 2015 Global Flagship Programming Initiatives document of UN Women;<sup>3</sup> however, it is adjusted to reflect the regional Programme’s context. The Flagship Programme’s ToC is in **Annex 4**. The Programme’s ToC, as summarized narratively in the Inception Report, is in **Annex 5**.

**1.3.4 Defining the Universe**

The data collection universe<sup>4</sup> contemplated all groups of stakeholders involved in the Programme without a formal sampling within the stakeholder groups. The resulting method was a regional census *t*.

The priority unit to reach during data collection was the entire group of implementing actors. Interviews were conducted with UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro and all implementing organizations with PCAs<sup>5</sup> who contributed to the Programme’s results. Beneficiaries who participated in programme activities implemented by CSO implementing partners were identified by UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro and CSOs for interviews; however, women survivors of violence who accessed services provided by public providers, CSOs or private lawyers were not reached in this evaluation due to concern for their privacy and well-being.<sup>6</sup> S O3 achievements related to empowerment and impact assessment were based on publications or anecdotal information.

The eight categories of stakeholder groups and the evaluation’s reach is set out in Table 4 and Table 5 below.

*Table 4: Categories and number of stakeholders interviewed*

	<b>Stakeholder category</b>	<b># interviewed</b>
1	UN Women personnel (national and regional) and UNDP in Montenegro	20
2	EU officials at headquarters and EU Delegations	10
3	National government officials	24
4	CSO implementing partners in national components	85
5	External stakeholders. This group includes members of the external evaluation reference group (EERG) and representatives of other organizations	11
6	Beneficiaries of programme activities	96
7	Representatives of United Nations or other international entities involved in EVAWG initiatives.	15
8	CSOs implementing partners in regional component and their national partners	9

Source: JGG informant registers.

<sup>3</sup> See *Elimination of Violence Against Women (Prevention and Essential Services) Theory of Change* in : <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/un-women-flagship-programmes-booklet-en.pdf?la=en&vs=357>

<sup>4</sup> In statistics, the universe is the synonym for the population. It refers there to the population group of potential informants in the evaluation.

<sup>5</sup> Sixty-six PCAs were signed in Phase I.

<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that one CSO in Montenegro did include a survivor of violence in a beneficiary interview; the woman is now a volunteer in the shelter run by the CSO.



Table 5: Number of Individuals Interviewed by Component and Category

Implementation Sites	Number of Interviewees by Stakeholder Category								Total by component
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Albania	4	1	2	6	2	12	0	0	27
BiH	2	1	4	9	1	3	0	0	20
Kosovo	2	2	2	12	2	25	4	0	49
Montenegro	2	1	7	7	0	25	3	1	46
North Macedonia	3	1	3	15	1	17	2	1	43
Regional	2	2	0	1	3	0	0	6	14
Serbia	1	1	1	27	0	7	3	0	40
Turkey	4	1	5	8	2	7	3	1	31
<b>Total by category</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>270</b>

Source: JGG informant registers.

The census approach required significant time and resources dedicated to data collection from seven IPA beneficiaries and produced a large amount of data for analysis in the final phase. This census method ensured participation of a diverse range of stakeholders and met the need of UN Women ECA RO to obtain a full picture of all implementing partners' actions in order to better plan Phase II of the Programme. In retrospect, while this census approach aided the evaluation team with the formative aspects of this evaluation, it was challenging for the summative goal-based analysis of results.

The evaluators addressed this challenge by cross-referencing data from interviews with project documents of the implementing CSO. In category 3 (government officials), results were confirmed in **four law and policy reform activities**. In category 6 (beneficiaries), ninety-six individuals who were beneficiaries of the Programme were selected to meet with the evaluators by UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro in collaboration with the CSOs. **These beneficiaries correspond to 21 initiatives implemented by the Programme**. Table 7 describes the type of beneficiary interviewed.

Table 6: Classification CSOs' Beneficiaries

Type of beneficiary	Total	Percentage
Local public service provider	42	43.75%
Women's organization (participant in training or service provider)	27	28.13%
National government	9	9.38%
Individual female rightsholders	8	8.33%
Organization or network representing women from minority or marginalized groups	5	5.21%
Individual male rightsholders	4	4.17%
OSCE programme assistant; support to referral mechanism	1	1.04%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: JGG informant registers

### 1.3.5 Data Collection Techniques

The evaluation used mixed methods of document review, interviews, and facilitated reflection. Fieldwork focused on gathering data from the eight stakeholder groups that have been engaged with the

Programme. Additionally, interviews with UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro and the discussion groups with CSO implementing partners examined the plausibility and feasibility of the ToC.

Approximately 1000 documents and communication products were reviewed (see **Annex 6** for a summary of documents used as sources). The majority of Programme documents were received in July 2019 and periodically during and after the data collection phase; however, some initiatives started in July and progress reports and deliverables from implementing partners were not received prior to report writing. See **Annex 7** for a list of organizations whose representatives participated in interviews.

### 1.3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed multiple steps including quality review of 114 interview templates, compilation of data in a software application, and synthesis and triangulation by team members. Content analysis was conducted by using synthesis products which were assessed between stakeholder categories, Programme documents, publications, and normative standards, namely the Istanbul Convention. The data was analyzed to serve the purposes of three deliverables: preliminary findings' presentation, the case study analysis of the implementation strategies and this report.

The facilitated reflection on the ToC and the analysis of data related to the ToC allowed the evaluators to examine the causal link between the expected results and the observed results, and to test assumptions in the ToC. The evaluators have therefore used this theory-based evaluation as an approach to evaluation (i.e., a conceptual analytical model) and not a specific method or technique. The ToC was used to structure the evaluation inquiry and analyze data related to the implementation strategies, the civil society modality, and progress towards the desired objectives and goal.

Actual results compared to expected results could be determined definitively (as opposed to anecdotally from the Programme personnel or progress reports alone) in cases where results were verified by:

- i) Individuals who were interviewed (96 beneficiaries participating in programme activities and four government officials responsible for law reform) confirmed or demonstrated the change expected in a result statement;
- ii) CSOs who were the intended target (beneficiary) of a result statement (e.g. result 1.1) and provided information on changes (e.g., capacity strengthening) to the evaluators;
- iii) Objective evaluation processes summarized in publications or reports.

## 1.4 LIMITATIONS ENCOUNTERED

The evaluation process encountered a number of challenges that had to be addressed by Just Governance Group and the evaluation task manager at UN Women ECA RO. The challenges presented operational limitations that were addressed promptly so that the quality of data collection and analysis were not negatively affected.

The challenges can be grouped into two main issues that coincided and resulted in delays during data collection and at the end of the evaluation process. The first group of issues is related to human resources. Two senior members of the core team reduced their roles and responsibilities due to health

reasons. Kimberly Inksater, a co-team leader assumed the team leader responsibilities and the other co-team leader, Dr. Monica Treviño assumed a quality assurance role. The original senior international evaluator, Anamaria Golemac Powell, reduced her role to that of advisor and quality assurance. Recruiting other senior international evaluators (three in all) to cover data collection in five countries delayed the data collection phase by almost one month. Data collection occurred from late September and ended in the second week of November. Data synthesis and analysis was comprehensive and required additional level of effort by the core team. This data analysis could not be completed in time to meet the original schedule with an earlier data collection phase. While the original dates for deliverables were not met, it is important to note that data quality and data analysis were not compromised. A table detailing the challenges and their management can be found in **Annex 8**.

## 2 Context

### 2.1 NORMATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Obligations of the IPA beneficiaries related to the prevention and elimination of VAW and the protection of women victims and survivors of violence are defined by the commitments to international and regional normative frameworks and shaped by national legislative reform and the EU accession processes. All IPA beneficiaries in the region of the Western Balkans and Turkey (except Kosovo) – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Turkey – have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which defines the obligations of State Parties in addressing gender-based violence against women in General Recommendation 35.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 2: Areas of Programme implementation



The key regional instrument for prevention and protection of women from violence is the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (namely, the Istanbul Convention). This is the first legally binding treaty that seeks to criminalize different

forms of violence against women and girls by providing a comprehensive framework for national legislation, institutional mechanisms and the engagement of civil society to EVAWG. All IPA beneficiaries (except Kosovo) have ratified the Istanbul Convention.<sup>8</sup>

Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania and Turkey are EU candidates; negotiations are open between the EU and Serbia, Montenegro and Turkey. The progress in the reforms and alignment of national frameworks with EU *acquis communautaire* is regularly monitored and reported in annual Progress Reports prepared by the European Commission (EC). Reforms related to the promotion of gender equality are particularly important for several negotiation chapters, such as Chapter 19 on social policy and employment, Chapter 23 on judiciary and fundamental rights, and Chapter 24 on justice, freedom and security. Negotiations regarding these three chapters are opened with Montenegro, while for Serbia,

<sup>7</sup>UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. General recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19. 26 July 2017. Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1305057?ln=en>

<sup>8</sup> Serbia and North Macedonia have reservations to articles 30 (compensation to victims) and 44 (territorial jurisdiction), and North Macedonia has reservations to articles 55 (ex parte and ex officio proceedings) and 59 (residence status).

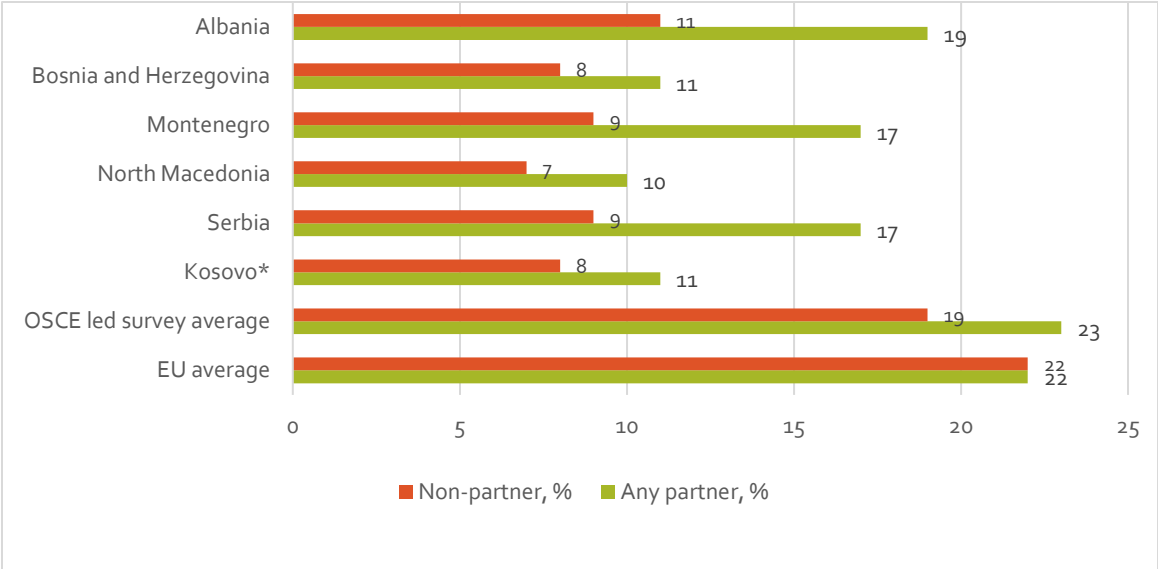
negotiations are opened for chapters 23 and 24, but not 19.<sup>9</sup> Negotiations on the three above-mentioned chapters have not been opened for Turkey.

National frameworks to promote gender equality exist in all IPA beneficiary states. Frameworks for responding to VAWG are defined in separate strategic frameworks (strategies or action plans on EVAWG or domestic violence), except in Serbia, where it is contained within the general strategy for gender equality. Legislative reforms have been ongoing with the aim to align national legislation to the requirements and standards of Istanbul Convention and CEDAW, but there are still inconsistencies that should be further synchronized with these international instruments.

## 2.2 PREVALENCE OF VAW

According to the survey on the Well Being and Safety of Women (OSCE, 2019), violence against women is highly prevalent in the Western Balkans (Turkey was not included in the survey), as 70% of women disclosed experiencing some form of violence or abuse (including physical, sexual, psychological violence, sexual harassment and stalking) perpetrated by a partner or non-partner since the age of 15 years (Figure 2). Considering the total population of women in the region of Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, this amounts to 16 million women.<sup>10</sup>

Figure 3: Prevalence of violence against women



Source: OSCE, 2019: 34

<sup>9</sup> Serbia has an action plan for the implementation of chapter 19.

<sup>10</sup> OSCE (2019) *Wellbeing and safety of women: OSCE led survey on violence against women, Main report*, OSCE, Vienna, p: 32, <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/413237?download=true>

The impact of violence on women's health and wellbeing is striking. From the most serious incident of violence,<sup>11</sup> women suffered some form of physical injury (47% of women surveyed in Albania, 50% in BiH, 42% in Montenegro, 39% in North Macedonia, 51% in Serbia and 41% in Kosovo). Psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, panic attacks, sleeping problems, relating to other people, lack of concentration and self-confidence were also high (50.4% in Albania, 48.2% in BiH, 49.6% in Serbia, 37.6% in Montenegro, 44.7% in North Macedonia and 48.2% in Kosovo).

Data for Turkey is not comparable with Western Balkan countries covered by the OSCE-led survey, but it independently indicates a difficult situation for women as well. The prevalence of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence during a woman's lifetime is 38% among ever partnered women between 15-59 years old.<sup>12</sup> Child marriage is still common, with 15% of young women (20-24) years having married or been in a union before the age of 18.<sup>13</sup> Studies on VAW in Turkey indicate lower education levels, alcohol abuse and childhood abuse are key factors leading to early marriage.<sup>14</sup>

Women from disadvantaged groups are at greater risk of experiencing violence due to discrimination, poverty, low education level, and early and forced marriage. Women from minority groups, with disabilities, or women with refugee or displacement status are also at higher risk of gender-based violence. At the same time, women from these groups face additional barriers to accessing support services. Sometimes barriers are linked to lower availability of services, the economic dependence of women, physical barriers, and lack of information. In some cases, barriers exist due to the fear of institutional discrimination and inadequate treatment by service providers and authorities.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.3 SOCIAL NORMS AND ATTITUDES BACKING VAW

Violence against women in the Western Balkans (WB) is present in both public and private spheres. Attacks on women politicians, journalists or women performing public roles are rising in some countries.<sup>16</sup> Intimate partner violence is prevalent as well as non-partner violence, indicating strong patriarchal values in both public and private spheres. This patriarchy, which uses violence to maintain the subordinated position of women, is backed by persistent discriminatory norms and attitudes. The lower disclosure rate of experience of violence in WB, compared to the EU average (see Figure 2 above), is related to the predominant attitude that domestic violence is a private matter and should be kept within the family.

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<sup>11</sup> In the survey "the most serious incident is defined as the incident that had the biggest impact on the surveyed women, either physically or psychologically." Ibid: p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> UN Women, Global Data on Violence against Women, <http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/asia/turkey#1>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, citing UNICEF global databases (2018), based on Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and other nationally representative surveys.

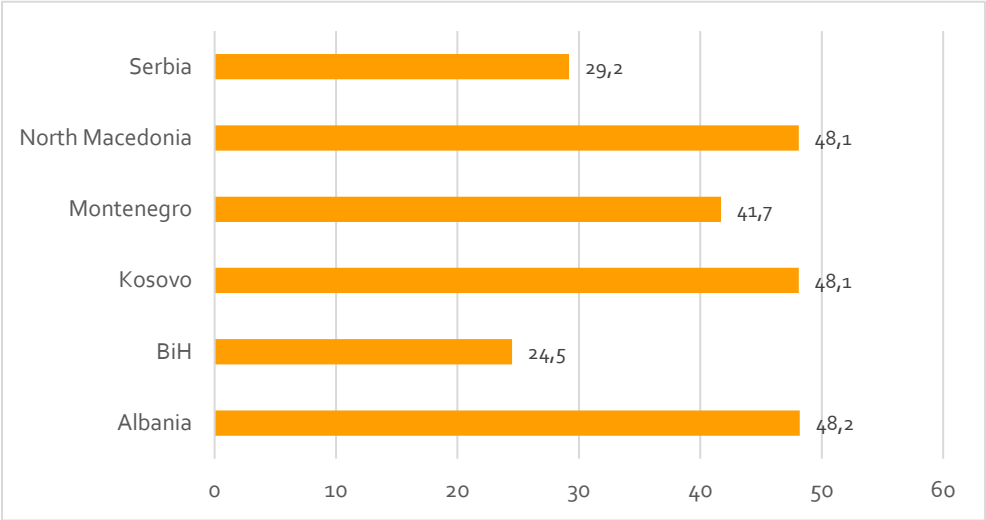
<sup>14</sup> Yüksel- Kaptanoğlu, Ýlknur et al. (2015) *Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey*, Heccetepe University, Ankara [http://www.hips.hacettepe.edu.tr/eng/english\\_main\\_report.pdf](http://www.hips.hacettepe.edu.tr/eng/english_main_report.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> OSCE (2019) *Wellbeing and safety of women: OSCE led survey on violence against women, Experiences of disadvantaged women*, available at <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/430007?download=true>

<sup>16</sup> For example, see the shadow report to the CEDAW committee by SOS Network Vojvodina, available at <https://rm.coe.int/vsosl-independent-greivio-report-2018/1680907e9b>

Almost half of women in Albania and North Macedonia (48% each), 42% in Montenegro, 29% in Serbia and 25% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, agree with that attitude.<sup>17</sup> Below Figure 3 represents the percentage of women in IPA beneficiaries who agree with “domestic violence is a private matter and should be handled in the family.”

Figure 4: Percentage of women who agree domestic violence is a private matter



Source: OSCE-led survey on wellbeing and safety of women in South East and Eastern Europe

The importance of work with boys and men in changing norms and attitudes is recognized by most of the gender equality and EAW policies in the region, although programmes and services are rare.<sup>18</sup>

## 2.4 ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS OF VAW

Despite the high prevalence of violence and its adverse impact on women’s lives, reports to authorities are very low and women rarely look for support from institutions or organizations. Even following the most serious incidents of physical and/or sexual violence, sexual harassment or stalking, police were not informed in most cases. Among women who experienced these forms of violence, only 8.2% of women in Albania, 11.1% in BiH, 13.3% in Serbia, 7.3% in Montenegro, 15.1% in North Macedonia and 4% in Kosovo reported the most serious incident to police. The reasons for not reporting are often the prevailing attitudes that VAW is private and should be handled in the family, alongside shame, embarrassment, lack of trust in the support system, and fear of retribution by the perpetrator.

There are various reasons for limited access of women victims and survivors of violence to essential services: lack of specialized services, geographical location, insufficient funding and reliance on voluntary

<sup>17</sup> OSCE (2019) *Wellbeing and safety of women: OSCE led survey on violence against women, Main report*, available at <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/413237?download=true>

<sup>18</sup> Petricevic, 2012, quoted in Browne, E. (2017) *Gender norms in the Western Balkans*, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/597860fced915d312c000007/058-Gender-in-the-Balkans.pdf>

work of civil society organizations, lack of standards (which may undermine women's trust in institutions), and lack of information about services and rights to protection.<sup>19</sup> Gaps in services include inadequate legal protection for victims and survivors, and a limited number of, and funding for, shelters in the region.<sup>20</sup> Free legal aid is also precarious, usually provided by civil society, although there are legal provisions in most countries for free aid for victims and survivors of domestic violence.<sup>21</sup>

Women exposed to multiple discrimination, such as minorities, Roma, women with disabilities, older women, rural women, and migrant women, face even stronger obstacles in access to services. Since services are scarce in rural and remote areas, women from these groups lack information about the availability of services and lack physical access to services, in particular for women with disabilities. Often inappropriate 'soft skills' of personnel providing services leads to stigma and prejudice, dissuading women from marginalized groups from seeking support from institutions or organizations.<sup>22</sup>

The Istanbul Convention (in article 9, among others) emphasizes the important contribution of NGOs and CSOs in preventing and combating VAW. There is a dynamic scene of women's and feminist civil society organizations engaged in diverse ways in the area of gender-based violence against women in the region of the Western Balkans and Turkey. Organizations are actively involved in lobbying and advocating for better policies and system responses to VAWG, the promotion of zero tolerance to VAWG, as well as the provision of services for women who experienced violence. This CSOs' engagement has a key importance for the overall empowerment of women to participate in democracy building processes.

However, CSOs face many challenges in their work. They are under-funded and under-staffed, relying mostly on voluntary or semi-voluntary work. They depend on donors' funds as they are rarely financed by central or local governments. International donors recently are funding projects that increase public institutions' capacity on VAW response and provision of protection services, trending away from supporting civil society-provided services. Funding often focuses on domestic violence, while other forms of VAW are neglected.<sup>23</sup>

Networking among women's organizations is particularly weak, although networking is an important means to amplify impact, especially for organizations representing or supporting women from

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<sup>19</sup> UNFPA (2015), *Combatting violence against women and girls in Eastern Europe and central Asia*, [https://eeca.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/21770%20Brief\\_web.pdf](https://eeca.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/21770%20Brief_web.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Petricevic, 2012, quoted in Browne.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> UN Women (2019) *Essential Services: Analysis of the access to support services (health, police and justice and social services) for women belonging to marginalized groups who have experienced violence*, <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/11/essential-services-analysis-of-the-access-to-support-services>

<sup>23</sup> European Parliament (2019) *Women's Rights in Western Balkans*, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/608852/IPOL\\_STU\(2019\)608852\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/608852/IPOL_STU(2019)608852_EN.pdf)



marginalized groups, such as women with disabilities, minorities, Roma, migrant, rural or other women suffering multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.<sup>24</sup>

Regional collaboration between CSOs engaged in the response to violence against women is not sufficiently developed, mainly due to funding instability, insufficient regional cooperation generally, and a lack of regional instruments.

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<sup>24</sup> UN Women (2019) *Advancing the Istanbul Convention implementation: The role of women's NGOs and networks in the Western Balkans & Turkey*, <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/11/advancing-the-istanbul-convention-implementation>

# PART TWO: FINDINGS

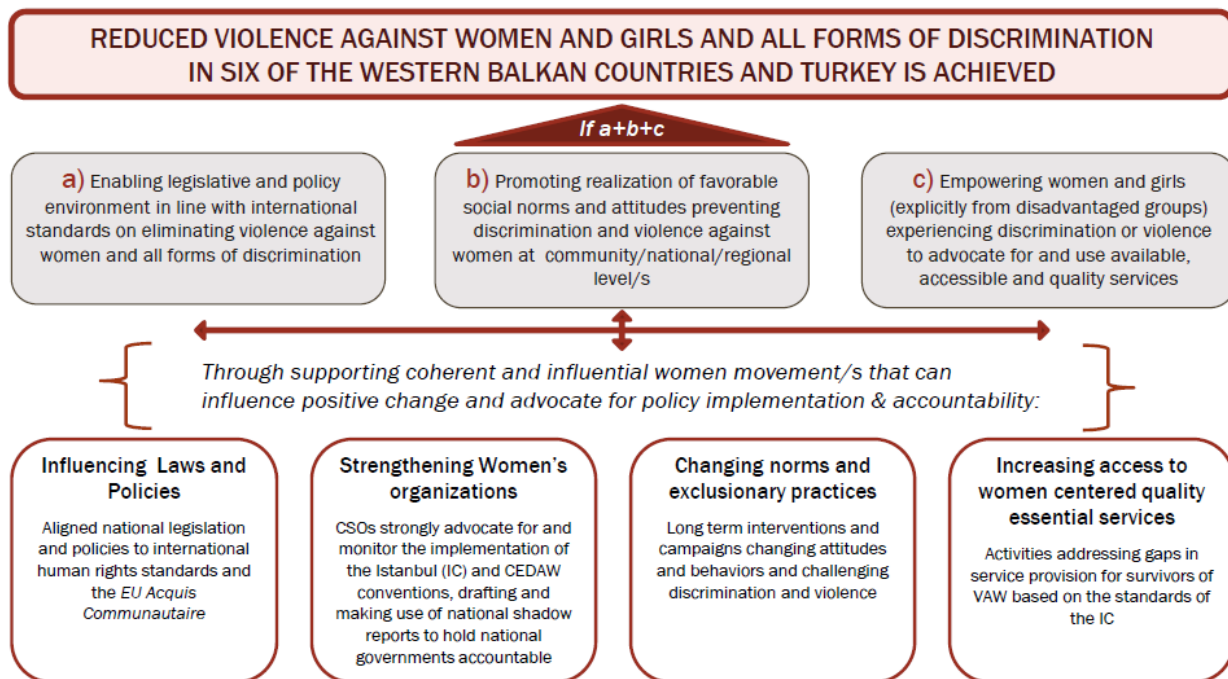
## 3 Theory of Change

As per the Inception report, the theory-based approach used the ToC to assess the plausibility and feasibility of the programme. To facilitate the analysis of plausibility and feasibility, the evaluation team prepared a graphic of the Programme's ToC, reproduced in Figure 4 below.

Plausibility examined the logic of the outcome pathway: Does it make sense? Are the outcomes in the right sequence? Are the preconditions each necessary and collectively sufficient to reach the long-term outcomes and ultimate impact? Are there gaps in the logic?

Feasibility examined whether the initiative can realistically achieve its long-term outcomes and impact: Do the organizations, UN Women and governments have adequate resources? Do they need additional partners? Is the scope and timeline realistic?

Figure 5: Theory of Change Graphic



Source : JGG design, based on Programme Document description

## 3.1 PLAUSIBILITY

*Finding 1: The evaluation found that the Programme's Theory of Change is plausible as an ambitious high-level and long-term EAWG framework for the Western Balkans and Turkey. It recognizes civil society's role in democratic, rights-based reforms, particularly women's organizations' participation, in reducing violence and discrimination against women. However, in the short implementation period of the Programme, the Theory of Change requires context-specific strategies to address national circumstances.*

### 3.1.1 Civil society role in the ToC

It is clearly visible from the ProDoc and from the interviews with UN Women ECA RO and field offices that the Regional Programme is based on the UN Women flagship initiative on EAWG (Prevention and Access to Essential Services) but is adjusted for the Western Balkans and Turkey to reflect the regional need for strengthening civil society as the third sector of a democratic society. The ToC expects civil society to hold governments accountable for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention and for the reduction of VAWG and gender-based discrimination in the region. In this regard, by choosing to focus less at working directly with the government institutions, the ToC departs slightly from the UN Women flagship EAWG ToC. The EC and UN Women, through this Programme, acknowledge the need to support civil society, especially women's organizations.

This central premise of support to CSOs, and especially to organizations or networks representing or working with women from minority and marginalized groups, is further reflected in the application of the four implementation strategies. Interviewees' responses and activities implemented by the Programme confirm the importance to use a combination of implementation strategies to advance towards the three specific objectives, and more importantly for the current analysis, to strengthen women's organizations and networks (corresponding to IS 2) as a priority.

The country context affected how IS 2 interacted and converged with other strategies. For example, strengthening women's organizations providing services to survivors of VAW was the priority in Montenegro as a consequence of recent legislative amendments in line with the Istanbul Convention that require licensing of civil society service providers receiving public funding. In Turkey, where the political situation has widened the gap between government and civil society, implementation strategy 2 was used to advance monitoring of government compliance with the Istanbul Convention, especially among women's organizations working at the local (municipal) level.

The ToC appropriately acknowledges the importance of civil society participation in EAWG reforms and, at the same time, is logical in its strategy to strengthen women's organizations while progressing towards the specific objectives.

### 3.1.2 Causal Chain Logic of the ToC

Once the diagram of the programme's ToC was presented, the interviewed CSO implementing partners understood the logic of ToC (in two locations, CSOs knew the results framework and implementation strategies prior to the group reflection). CSO implementing partners agreed with the logical link between

the implementation strategies and the three specific objectives. They understood as well that the achievement of results in the three thematic components would lead to the cumulative effect of reducing VAWG.

Time was considered a missing element in the ToC. Although the components are linked and build on each other, the achievement of the programme goal is a long-term objective that takes more time than the Programme period to advance laws and policies and changing norms, and even more so in terms of achieving behavioral changes.

Another factor to consider in the ToC logic is the national, sub-national, or local contexts where initiatives are being implemented. The ToC and the expected results provide a regional programme framework that has specificities in national and local implementation of EVAWG initiatives. For example, in the case of Turkey, the political context has restricted certain activities, such as direct legal and policy advocacy. The CSO implementing partners suggested that examining the ToC considering the national and local contexts would help identify opportunities for implementation across all elements. For example, municipal by-laws and policies could be the focus of SO 1 (and IS 1) initiatives in Phase II.

Likewise, in the absence of contextual analysis linked to the ToC, two other challenges were identified. First, a high level EVAWG ToC meant that some stakeholders were not always able to make a link between micro level results of their projects and the higher-level programme objectives. Second, interview findings point to a large percentage of respondents expressing a desire to have the regionality of the Programme visible in the ToC or in the narrative assumptions. In other words, stakeholders were trying to link national level objectives and context with the Programme ToC.

## 3.2 FEASIBILITY

*Finding 2: The Theory of Change is not feasible within the timetable of this Programme; however, it is feasible in the long run if support is continuous and consistent.*

The interview responses (54) to ToC questions all stated that the ToC as a whole, was not feasible in the time period (group discussions count as one interview response). Three aspects of the ToC were highlighted in the responses related to feasibility. First, all interviewees observed that the goal of reducing violence and discrimination against women and girls could not be achieved in a short period. Second, SO 2, about changing attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate gender stereotypes and discrimination, is based on patriarchal culture. CSOs found this component less feasible to achieve in the Programme period. Stakeholders highlighted another feasibility "challenge" related to SO 1: they noted the difficulty of confirming CSO contributions to law reform in the Programme period. However, CSO implementing partners suggested that these normative changes may be possible by the end of the second phase of the Programme.

Despite the time required to change behaviours, some CSO implementing partners, who have been working in EVAW initiatives for many years, could explain how attitudes have changed over time and how this Programme has contributed recently.

Compared to CSO implementing partners in the Western Balkans, CSOs in Turkey perceived the ToC as less feasible, due to political, social and other factors such as the size of the country, the limited funds available for civil society, and specific types of VAWG including "honour crimes". External stakeholders in Turkey also made similar observations, which they attribute to the post-coup attempt situation and changes in the model of government resulting from constitutional reforms. Despite the challenges perceived in the application of the ToC in Turkey, the pre-accession logic clearly binds the IPA beneficiaries together in the region.

## 4 Relevance

### 4.1 CONSISTENCY WITH NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

#### 4.1.1 Beneficiaries' needs

*Finding 3: Beneficiaries and key stakeholders are clearly identified in the Programme document and their needs are well reflected in programme design based on UN Women assessment studies, as well as on a review of available assessments and studies conducted by EU and stakeholders within the region. Although CSOs were not consulted specifically for the purpose of programme development during the design phase, their needs, as well as needs of women they are representing, were taken into account, either through smaller scale consultations or through knowledge of their needs obtained during previous cooperation with UN Women Country Offices.*

The Programme document places a significant focus on women's organizations working on gender equality and women's empowerment, including organizations representing women from minority and disadvantaged groups. Women's organizations are identified as both implementing partners and as recipients of capacity development, technical assistance and knowledge sharing, with a plan to assign 30 percent of funds allocated to CSOs to the benefit of the most disadvantaged groups, such as women from ethnic minorities, refugee and migrant women, women with disabilities and rural women.<sup>25</sup> Beneficiaries are also civil servants from health, justice and security sectors, who would benefit from capacity building in the implementation of international standards within their scope of work. **The justification section within the programme document indicates thorough preparation and a good understanding of the situation in the region.**

The planned results respond to the gaps identified in the 2014 and 2016 needs assessments undertaken by UN Women in the region as well as other key documents used to identify needs, gaps and to design the Programme. Although women's organizations were not consulted during the design phase of this Programme in a systematic way and on a larger scale (direct consultations were conducted only in some countries with selected organizations, usually service providers working with women from vulnerable

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<sup>25</sup> Programme Document, p. 27.

groups), their needs were well reflected as indicated during the interviews with implementing organizations and their beneficiaries. The design phase benefitted from previous cooperation between organizations and UN Women Country Offices, during which UN Women developed significant knowledge on the needs of organizations and their beneficiaries, including women from marginalized groups facing discrimination. The organizations were also consulted during the 2014 assessment.

Relevance is noticeable in the design of the Programme as it was formulated in line with CSOs' needs, such as capacity building, networking of organizations, and regional exchange of knowledge. It was also formulated in line with the needs of CSOs' direct or final beneficiaries, such as better legal protection, more accessible and better quality services (particularly for marginalized women), and reduced social norms and attitudes that reproduce gender inequality, VAW and discrimination against women from marginalized groups. During the evaluation field work, **representatives of organizations confirmed the relevance of the calls for proposals** and found that they well reflected their needs. However, some also expressed their desire to have more flexibility in designing the projects and to have fewer specific calls for proposals so they can shape the project design more in line with specific needs and contexts.

The evaluators found that the calls for proposals and the resulting CSO projects were consistent with the VAWG context in the region as evidenced by initiatives that target women's networks (especially those representing minority and marginalized women's organizations), women at risk or exposed to VAWG, and also professionals working in the prevention and protection of VAWG.

The Programme's four implementation strategies are relevant and correspond to the identified needs of beneficiaries and other stakeholders. The strategies also respond to the perceived gaps and challenges identified in the systems for prevention and protection of VAWG victims and survivors but also gaps and challenges in the normative and value-environments. It may be that some strategies were insufficient to fully achieve certain results, which can indicate the need to implement some additional, complementary strategies, but the four main strategies were relevant for the needs and priorities. This aspect is assessed in the effectiveness chapter, as well as in the separate analysis of the implementation strategies.

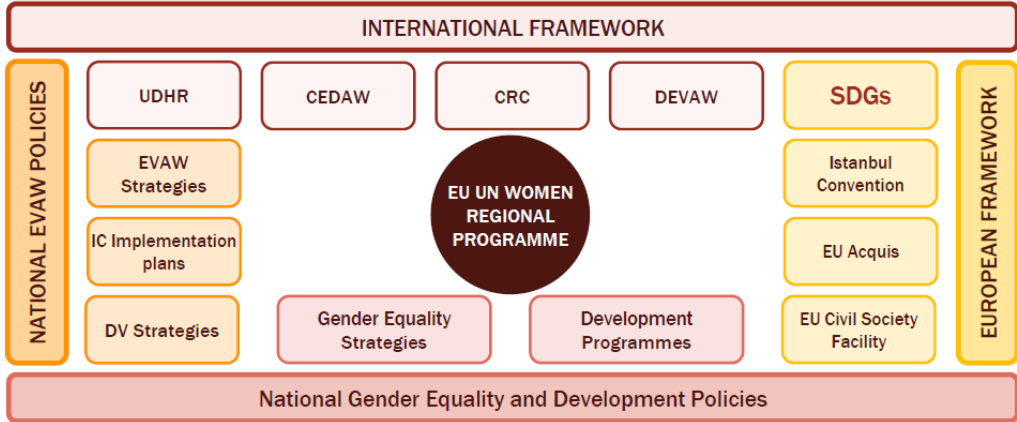
#### **4.1.2 Regional and National Priorities on EVAWG**

*Finding 4: The Programme is fully consistent with key policy frameworks and processes: EU accession and alignment with EU acquis, Istanbul Convention, Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, national strategies and action plans for gender equality or for EVAWG, as well as with EU's expectation related to active inclusion of civil society in reforms which is entailed in the EU's Civil Society Facility, the funding source for this Programme.*

**The intervention is fully consistent with and integral to the pre-accession reform processes** that strive to meet the standards set out in the acquis communautaire of the EU, particularly Chapter 19 on social policy and employment, Chapter 23 on judiciary and fundamental rights and Chapter 24 on justice, freedom and security. The Programme targets the areas that the European Commission identifies as weak spots or gaps in the reforms related to EVAWG, as presented in the EU progress reports for the candidate or aspiring countries. The reports note, for example, that VAW remains a matter of serious

concern in Turkey<sup>26</sup> and Montenegro.<sup>27</sup> In the 2019 EU progress report for Serbia, concerns are raised about gender inequality, including the delay in the adoption of a new Law on Gender Equality and a strategy to combat gender-based violence against women, as well as the role of the media in perpetuating gender stereotypes and minimizing the prevalence of VAW.<sup>28</sup> In its 2019 report for North Macedonia, the EC concludes that, although the legal framework is in line with the *acquis* for the most part, it needs to be revised following the country's ratification of the Istanbul Convention).<sup>29</sup>

Figure 6: Programme alignment with policies



**The Programme is guided by the Istanbul Convention** and seeks alignment with this Convention through activities implemented in all three of its specific objectives. Although the Programme was designed before IPA beneficiaries engaged in regular reporting on the implementation of the Convention, based on currently available observations of GREVIO to three countries (Albania, Montenegro, and Turkey), the Programme corresponds well with GREVIO conclusions and recommendations. GREVIO recognizes the progress in aligning national frameworks with the Istanbul Convention and acknowledges the commitment of the States Parties. However, it concluded that progress is still required in many areas: legislative reforms are needed in order to fully align national legislation with the Istanbul Convention, the availability and quality of services to support victims and survivors of violence need to be improved, and data collection systems should be reorganized and improved. These areas correspond to the first and third specific objectives of the Programme. Harmful sexist stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes are also recognized as one of the key factors contributing to the perpetuation of violence against women by the expert group. The group has noted that state parties do not sufficiently recognize the structural foundation

<sup>26</sup> European Commission (2019), *Turkey 2019 Report*, p: 7, <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-turkey-report.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> European Commission (2019), *Montenegro 2019 Report* p: 4 <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-montenegro-report.pdf>



<sup>28</sup> European Commission (2019), *Serbia 2019 Report* p: 27-28, <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-serbia-report.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> European Commission (2019), *North Macedonia 2019 Report* P: 30, <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-north-macedonia-report.pdf>


of VAWG, manifested as imbalanced social power between men and women. These harmful stereotypes and attitudes are addressed in SO 2 of the Programme.

The Programme also corresponds with SDG 5 (particularly targets 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3), 11 (target 11.7) and 16 (particularly targets 16.1, and 16.2), as explained below in Table 7.

Table 7: Consistency with SDGs

Sustainable Development Goals	Programme
 <p><b>Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</b></p>	<p><b>Target 5.1:</b> End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.</p> <p><b>Programme contribution</b> through two specific objectives and their corresponding implementation strategies.</p> <p>SO 2 and IS 3: actions focused on awareness raising, elimination of gender stereotypes, zero tolerance to violence, promotion of gender equality.</p> <p>SO 3 and IS 4: through increasing women’s awareness and empowerment to recognize and fight discrimination and by increasing access of women from vulnerable groups to services reduces their discrimination in access to services.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Target 5.2:</b> Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.</p> <p><b>Programme contribution</b> through SO 1 and IS 1: shadow reporting, advocacy and lobbying actions to change national legislation, whether directly on government, or indirectly, through recommendations suggested to international mechanisms.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Target 5.3:</b> Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.</p> <p><b>Programme contribution</b> through SO 2 and IS 3: initiatives focused on elimination of harmful stereotypes behind harmful practices, but particular contribution was through projects addressing early, forced and child marriages, implemented by Roma women’s organizations.</p>
 <p><b>Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</b></p>	<p><b>Target 11.7:</b> By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.</p> <p><b>Programme contribution</b> through its goal and SO 1 and IS 1: The aim of the Programme seeks to reduce violence and discrimination against women, thereby ensuring women are safe in the private and public spheres.</p> <p>SO1 and IS 1: The most relevant example is the initiative of the Coalition of Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities that conducted a scoping study on gender-based violence in public spaces.</p>



Sustainable Development Goals	Programme
 <p><b>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</b></p>	<p><b>Target 16.1:</b> Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.</p> <p><b>Programme contribution through its goal and SO 3 and IS 4:</b> Programme contributes to this target, but particularly, through projects related to femicide and those that support tracking of cases of violence.</p> <p><b>SO 3 and IS 4:</b> Building the capacity of service providers including CSO service providers (e.g. shelters and free legal aid), private sector lawyers representing women, and public service providers, including legal and judicial enforcement officials.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Target 16.2:</b> End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.</p> <p><b>Programme contribution</b> through SO 2 and IS 3: through challenging harmful gender stereotypes that are supporting abuse and exploitive practices, raising awareness on risks and consequences of child trafficking and child marriages.</p>

**The Programme is consistent with and supports the implementation of national strategies** and action plans related to the promotion of gender equality and elimination of VAWG. In fact, for at least one IPA beneficiary, North Macedonia, the Programme directly contributed to the preparation of a national action plan to implement the Istanbul Convention. A more detailed presentation of national plans and strategies consistent with the Programme can be found in Annex 9.

## 4.2 CONSISTENCY WITH LEGAL STANDARDS

*Finding 5: The Programme is fully aligned with international normative standards and contributes through diverse approaches and strategies to the more direct or indirect impact of civil society to the legal reforms that will further align national normative frameworks with international and regional standards.*

**The Programme is fully consistent with international legal normative standards**, such as CEDAW, and regional normative standards, as defined in the Istanbul Convention. The Istanbul Convention urges State Parties to provide comprehensive and coordinated policies encompassing all relevant measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the scope of the Convention. The Convention defines a holistic, multisectoral approach that places the rights of the victims and survivors at the centre of all measures (Article 7). Currently, all IPA beneficiaries have specific strategic plans to provide a response to VAWG except Serbia, where part of the overarching Gender Equality Strategy is dedicated to VAWG response. In these strategic plans, the definitions of violence are, for the most part, aligned with the Istanbul Convention, and objectives, instruments and resources (often insufficient) are identified. Details of the Programme’s consistency with international legal standards are found in **Annex 10**.

**The Programme is relevant to national legislative frameworks** given that, in SO 1, the Programme supports increased consistency (alignment) between national legislation and the Istanbul Convention. The objective is implemented differently in the geographic components, depending on the specific national context and current situation regarding the relations between civil society and government. In some cases, advocacy and lobbying related to the further alignment of national legislation to Istanbul Conventions was more direct, as in the case of North Macedonia and Albania, while for other IPA beneficiaries it was more indirect, through shadow reporting to international legal mechanisms (CEDAW and GREVIO) that creates pressure on governments to change laws, bylaws and protocols.

- An example of the first approach would apply to projects in North Macedonia, where CSOs worked together to prepare a gap analysis and proposals on reforms to the Criminal Code and submitted the recommendations to the Ministry of Justice, or even participated as members of the Working Group in the preparation of a new law on preventing and eliminating gender-based violence.
- An example of the second approach would be the national network of CSOs in Serbia preparing a shadow report to CEDAW and alternative report to GREVIO, proposing recommendations related to changes of legislation in line with the Istanbul Convention that were expected to be included in the conclusions and recommendations to the State Party. In the regional component, the same approach was implemented by the network of Roma women's organizations, who produced alternative reports to both CEDAW and GREVIO which suggested legal changes related to Roma women and girls.

A detailed overview of national laws and the Programme's contribution to them, considered in Effectiveness, can be found in **Annex 11**.

The Istanbul Convention is well recognized as a key regional normative framework among Programme stakeholders and serves as a bridge between the high-level ToC and the immediate changes required in attitudes and awareness, the legal and policy environment, and protection and support programs and services. The Istanbul Convention provides a normative guide to the stakeholders, especially women's CSOs and networks, involved in implementation.

*Finding 6: Human rights and gender equality principles are well integrated into the Programme design and implementation.*

**The Programme is fully aligned with human rights and gender equality principles**, which are based on the international and regional normative standards referenced above. The right to equality and non-discrimination are at the core of the Programme, the rightsholders and duty bearers are engaged in the dialogue, and transparency is promoted in the Programme design and implementation.

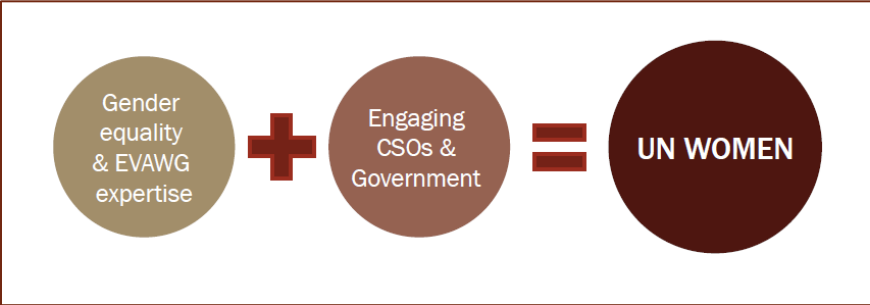
## 4.3 COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE OF UN WOMEN

*Finding 7: Implementing partners and other stakeholders recognize many comparative advantages of UN Women, including competencies and expertise in EVAWG and providing support beyond the mere funding of projects, such as technical support and strengthening the expertise, management, project preparation and implementation skills of organizations, which was particularly beneficial to grassroots organizations. Particularly highly valued was UN Women’s flexibility during implementation to respond to unexpected circumstances and willingness to enable organizations to adjust activities in order to provide more effective results.*

The landscape in which UN Women implemented the Programme includes national organizations and other international organizations or donors that participate in the area of EVAWG. **Stakeholders interviewed recognized various comparative advantages of UN Women in this landscape.**

National contexts vary in terms of the presence of different donors, but the evaluation evidence points to the consistent perception of UN Women's comparative advantages across the Region (see Figure 6). The comparative advantage of UN Women often highlighted by the implementing organizations is expertise in gender equality and particular expertise and experience in relation to EVAWG.

Figure 7: Comparative advantage of UN Women



Knowledge about the international framework, human rights and gender equality standards, innovative methods, or the ability to bring expertise on these aspects was highly appreciated by implementing organizations. Government and EU partners highlighted

the capacity of UN Women to smoothly manage, administer and implement a Programme of this kind and magnitude at a regional level, particularly in the absence of regional mechanisms that would make regional cooperation in the EVAWG easier.

Although data from interviews indicate that a small number of civil society organizations were not satisfied with the fact that the EU allocated funds to UN Women instead of allocating it directly to CSOs, donors, governments and most CSOs interviewed (particularly grassroots women's organizations) found that the capacity of UN Women to deliver such a programme is unique. For the EU, engaging UN Women has permitted smooth administration, timely reporting and organized programme procedures. UN Women leadership enabled grassroots CSOs to have direct access to funds and technical support, as they may otherwise have insufficient capacities to directly access EU funds or are only engaged as partners or associates of larger and more influential organizations, without being able to develop their own potential autonomously.

The technical support provided by UN Women throughout project implementation was positively evaluated, and it resulted in increased capacities of implementing organizations to manage similar projects in

the future. In addition, UN Women was positively perceived thanks to its ability to be flexible and strategic in responding to changes during project implementation or when unexpected circumstances occurred.

Government representatives found that UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro provided leadership to inter-institutional mechanisms and technical expertise and funds to advance the areas for which there are insufficient national resources. Civil society considered that UN Women helped them to access government officials. This engagement with government officials ensured the Programme promoted normative standards and best practices in EAWG within national mechanisms. UN Women also stimulated and facilitated government support to civil society through participation in project activities or by accepting project results related to proposals for normative changes or improvement of services.

UNFPA, UNDP, and UNICEF are also recognized for their specific EAWG expertise in countries where these three agencies have a longer presence and engagement on EAWG with government entities. Based on their experience, they can share lessons learned with UN Women.

While the EC Civil Society Facility generally provides direct support to CSOs, the Programme stakeholders recognize that UN Women has been able to manage CSOs' engagement effectively across the region. Working to achieve the results framework through direct financial and technical support to CSOs has been an appropriate strategy.

As demonstrated in the section on sustainability below, the existence of regional mechanisms and frameworks is key to more effective responses to VAW throughout the region. As there is currently no regional intergovernmental mechanism or government-civil society platform, the UN Women Programme is particularly responsive to the need for open regional dialogue on EAW.

## 5 Effectiveness

The findings related to results in sections 5.1 to 5.3 are based on verifiable results using the census method applied during data collection. Results are assessed against the result statement rather than the Programme's indicators because the indicators do not always relate to the change expected in the result.

As mentioned in section 1.3 above, actual results compared to expected results could be determined definitively in initiatives: i) when beneficiaries of CSOs and government officials confirmed or demonstrated the relevant result to the evaluators (in relation to **25 initiatives**); ii) when CSO implementing partners were the intended target of a result statement (e.g., result 1.1) and provided information on changes (e.g., capacity strengthening) to the evaluators; and iii) when objective evaluation processes were summarized in publications or reports. The sections below are supported by the analysis of implementation strategies in **Annex 12** and the IPA Beneficiary Summary Reports in **Annex 13**.

## 5.1 ENABLING ENVIRONMENT SO 1

*Finding 8: In SO 1 the Programme strengthened women's organizations' capacity to monitor and produce shadow reports and to advocate for EVAWG nationally and regionally through networks, including networks incorporating organizations representing minority and marginalized women. Shadow reporting, gap analysis or direct advocacy may have influenced, to varying degrees, at least 15 laws and policies in the region.*

**The Programme has contributed to an enabling legislative and policy environment in national IPA beneficiaries** primarily through strengthened monitoring and shadow reporting by CSOs and influence in laws and policies. In **Annex 11**, the Programme's influence on laws is detailed, including case law precedent, gap analysis and proposals for new laws. However, it is important to highlight that the Programme contributed to a regional enabling environment on EVAW by organizing regional forums around the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. The results achieved, discussed below, were advanced through the application of implementation strategies 1 and 2.

**SO 1:** To create an enabling legislative and policy environment on eliminating violence against women and all forms of discrimination.

### 5.1.1 Women's voice and agency strengthened

*Finding 8.1: Women's voice and agency were strengthened through the application of IS 2 within IS 1, and, consequently, result 1.1. These strategies strengthened monitoring and shadow reporting for all IPA beneficiaries, and strengthened legal and policy advocacy by CSOs directly to government institutions for some.*

**Result 1.1:** Women's voice and agency strengthened to advocate for the development and implementation of laws and policies in line with CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention.

The evaluation confirmed that women's voice and agency to advocate for the development to laws and policies in line with CEDAW and, primarily, the Istanbul Convention was strengthened.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that the indicator for result 1.1 is quantitative, while the result statement is qualitative. In other words, the indicator doesn't precisely measure the degree to which women's voice and agency was strengthened. In the second annual report, the Programme confirmed it **directly supported 20 CSOs and CSO networks** who monitored and reported on CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention. 180 organizations are members of the supported CSO networks.

The evaluation found that **IS 2 contributed to the strengthening or establishment of regional and national networks, platforms of women’s organizations and networks of organizations representing marginalized groups of women, including Roma, women with disabilities, survivors of armed conflict, and refugees.** For example, in Albania, a Programme initiative supported the formation of a network of 48 women’s organizations to monitor VAW.<sup>31</sup> The Civil Society Strengthening Platform (CSSP) coordinated by Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) strengthened member organizations’ participation, research and capacities. Further, three networks of Roma and pro-Roma women’s rights were established in three IPA beneficiaries and collaborated to produce shadow reports and to share knowledge.

**The interaction or integration of IS 1 and IS 2 further contributed to increased capacity among women’s organizations to monitor and report on national governments’ compliance with international human rights standards, particularly the Istanbul Convention.** This capacity building aspect within SO 1 is especially important to advance the enabling legislative and policy environment in countries where women’s rights CSOs and government agencies do not have direct and constructive dialogue on law and policy reforms.

Monitoring and reporting on compliance will facilitate more law reform advocacy and the subsequent tracking of government progress and accountability. Tracking the use of these shadow reports and their consideration by CEDAW, GREVIO or government agencies will be important to fully understand their contribution to the “enabling legal environment” noted in the specific objective.

### 5.1.2 Law and policy reform

*Finding 8.2: Legal and policy advocacy or direct lobbying with government, produced law reform in countries where the women’s CSOs had prior lobbying experience and the government authorities were open to dialogue with civil society and adoption of their proposals.*

**Result 1.2:** Laws and policies are reviewed and reformed to conform with international human rights standards including CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention.

Through evaluation data, **the evaluators confirmed direct influence on legislative reforms for six IPA beneficiaries,** except in Turkey where direct legislative advocacy did not occur.<sup>32</sup> In interviews with

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<sup>31</sup> The project uses the term gender-based violence.

<sup>32</sup> Following the data collection period, the Programme launched a research paper on Permanent Alimony in Turkey. In December 2019 a panel was held with 50 participants in Istanbul, where data on the alimony report was shared and a discussion was held on the place of women in the economy. Additionally, two capacity-building workshops were held with two provincial Bar Associations. The Programme reported that the research paper was shared with Parliamentary Committees and relevant Ministers.

government stakeholders, officials of four IPA beneficiaries confirmed the usefulness of legislative reform proposals from CSOs involved in the Programme. Through analysis of interview responses and documents, the evaluation identified direct advocacy on laws and policies:

- In Albania, CSOs provided recommendations on the Constitution, the Criminal Code, the Law on Measures Against domestic violence, the Law on Protection from Discrimination, the Law on Social Housing, and the Law on Free Legal Aid provided by the State.
- In BiH (Republic of Srpska), the Programme contributed to amendments of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence (to include all forms of domestic violence against women); provided draft amendments for a similar law in the Federation of BiH.
- In Kosovo, the government adopted 90% of the amendments and recommendations to the Criminal Code made by the civil society and other stakeholders (members of gender equality roundtable).
- In Montenegro, the focus within IS 1 was to influence the licensing or accreditation process of CSO service providers. The Programme contributed to the Protocol on action in cases of violence against women.
- In North Macedonia, a gap analysis of the Criminal Code in comparison with the Istanbul Convention was presented to the Ministry of Justice and introduced pre-emptively to parliamentary committees by two CSOs working jointly, one women's organization and one policy research group. Subsequently, precise amendments were proposed to a legislative reform working group of the Ministry of Justice. Furthermore, the government requested technical assistance from an implementing CSO to draft an action plan for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention.
- In Serbia, the SOS Network of Vojvodina analyzed the implementation of the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Criminal Code and presented proposed amendments to the Committee for Human / Minority Rights and Gender Equality to the National Parliament. The proposed amendments include recommendations for amending the definition of the rape and an improved system for urgent measures.

The evaluators observed that CSOs' contributions to law reform occurred when CSOs, or CSOs networks, reported previous experience in analyzing legislative gaps and in advocating for law reform, and when governments officials were willing to receive and debate CSOs' proposals. The evaluation found that UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro have played an important role in facilitating civil society-government engagement in relation to law reform and other initiatives.

### **5.1.3 Regional dialogue and knowledge sharing mechanism**

*Finding 8.3: The Regional Forum did establish a mechanism for regional knowledge sharing and informal dialogue on the Istanbul Convention and EVAWG practices in the region. All stakeholders involved in the Programme value the forum as a space for exchange of knowledge and practices. However, a formal inter-institutional mechanism that will sustain EVAWG efforts beyond the life of the Programme would be beneficial.*

**Result 1.3:** A regional dialogue and knowledge sharing mechanism on the implementation and monitoring of the Istanbul Convention and CEDAW among Governments, CSOs and other concerned stakeholders is established and functional.

The evaluators observed that indicators 1.3.a and 1.3.b related to result 1.3<sup>33</sup> reflect a slightly higher level or more ambitious change than what is described in the result statement.

A review of Regional Forum reports did not reveal agreements between governments, women's organizations, and other concerned stakeholders for policy development and jointly monitoring implementation of Istanbul Convention and CEDAW recommendations. However, the forum reports do contain statements made by government officials regarding their commitments to EVAWG. Two statements (one pronounced at each forum) by two different government officials voice support for women's organizations working in EVAWG. However, the evaluators could not find in documentation or on the ECA RO website, regional statements by women's CSOs (interpreted as joint statements by CSOs across the region), following the Regional Forum. National CSOs and regional networks do make regular pronouncements on the implementation of CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention, as is evident in their quarterly progress reports (section 6 on Communications and Visibility) and on their social media sites.

Interview data confirmed overwhelmingly that the Regional Forum is the reference point of the Programme's *regionality* for CSO implementing partners, government officials and members of the External Evaluation Reference Group (EERG). The forum is valued as a knowledge sharing mechanism in the region rather than a dialogue or coordination mechanism. Most informants suggested that workshop formats are more effective than plenary panel sessions.

## 5.2 SOCIAL NORMS AND ATTITUDES

*Finding 9: While stakeholders recognize that SO 2 requires more intense efforts over a long period of time to change social norms and attitudes; there are initial positive results at the micro or local level with regard to increased understanding of gender stereotypes and VAW among youth*

**SO 2:** To promote favourable social norms and attitudes to prevent gender discrimination and violence against women.

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<sup>33</sup> Indicator 1.3 a: Number of regional cooperation mechanisms and formal and informal agreements between Governments, women's organizations, and other concerned stakeholders for policy development and jointly monitoring implementation of Istanbul Convention and CEDAW recommendations. Indicator 1.3 b: Number of regional statements by women's CSOs in traditional and social media platforms on the implementation of CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention in Turkey and the six countries of the Western Balkans covered by the Action.



and men who were engaged in awareness raising initiatives in this or other components of the Programme.

The Programme made some progress towards this specific objective through Gender Lab initiatives that applied strategic communication methodology and by supporting targeted awareness raising. Indicator 2.a related to SO 2 (Percentage of people among targeted communities in the countries involved in the Action who think it is never justifiable for a man to beat his wife, disaggregated by gender and age) was measured in the baseline survey and change in attitudes will be revealed when the endline assessment will be conducted in Phase II. This indicator is important to measure societal change but may not provide insight into the Programme’s contribution to change in attitudes.

*“The training was on the prevention of early marriages which is a phenomena in our community - the training included 5 sessions - I participated and also there were women from the community in Mitrovica - for the first time the women saw it was wrong.”*

Beneficiary (door to door campaign volunteer) of CSO implementing partner, Kosovo

*“Because Roma people think differently, I didn’t know that you don’t have to have intercourse with your husband; that it is sexual assault if a woman is forced to.”*

Roma girl (youth),  
North Macedonia

Evaluation data confirmed that individuals directly involved as beneficiaries of CSO implementing partners’ activities increased their knowledge of the Istanbul Convention and their awareness of gender stereotypes and harmful practices. Statements of beneficiaries of CSO activities pronounced during interviews highlight their new understanding.

**5.2.1 Knowledge to implement innovative approaches**

*Finding 9.1: At least 5 CSOs in the region implemented strategic communication initiatives to address harmful gender stereotypes after attending COMBI training. In their own assessment of their capacities, half of the implementing partners felt they were strengthened, while others did not.*

The indicator 2.1.a linked with this result statement (the number of new advocacy initiatives addressing harmful gender stereotypes implemented by partners in the Action) does not capture changes in CSOs' knowledge or skills, nor media or government willingness to implement innovative approaches, but rather the number of activities implemented.

**Result 2.1:** Women's CSOs, media and government bodies have the knowledge to develop and implement innovative approaches to address harmful gender stereotypes.

The Programme concentrated efforts on building capacity of CSO implementing partners in this result area. That is, the implementing partners trained on the strategic communication methodology focusing on behavioural change (COMBI methodology) were the target beneficiaries of result 2.1. The evaluation interviewed eight CSO representatives who attended COMBI training, five of whom tested the COMBI approach in the latter half of 2019.

In terms of increased knowledge to develop and implement innovative approaches, the evaluation understands that all CSOs participating in the COMBI training received new knowledge about the COMBI approach; however, 50% of eight<sup>34</sup> CSO representatives interviewed who attended the training workshop felt their skills increased as a result of the workshop. The critiques of the training focused on the limited content on gender equality or VAWG during the training. Overall, the evaluation data confirms that the introduction of the COMBI approach is innovative for its application of results-based planning to ensure change measurement and as a new approach for VAWG communication initiatives. It presents an alternative to traditional information, education and communication campaigns.

The Programme did not directly build capacity of media and government to apply strategic communication approaches; instead, media representatives were engaged through implementing CSOs in two Gender Lab initiatives. Two initiatives implemented by CSOs involved media representatives as target groups. However, only the first one mentioned below (Fenomena) expressly applied the COMBI methodology after participating in the training. While the CSOs do not appear to have conducted pre- and post-reviews of journalists reporting on VAWG, the CSOs provided their own assessment of changes they observed after workshops were held with media representatives.<sup>35</sup>

- In Serbia, Fenomena reported that media representatives increased and improved analytical article publication after training (46% were analytical).
- In Turkey, the Women's Studies Association observed that media members' awareness of the language they use and knowledge about the alternative styles of news production increased after

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<sup>34</sup> Not all CSOs attending COMBI training participated in the Call for Proposal to apply the approach in initiatives.

<sup>35</sup> Ideally, future work directed towards journalists should include pre and post review of their publications to observe change in human rights-based reporting (e.g. victims are not identified directly or indirectly, respect for due process in criminal cases, stereotypes of minority or marginalized groups are not perpetuated, and so on).

training on rights-based journalism. In addition, the CSO observed that local media started reporting constructively about VAW and refugee women.

## 5.2.2 Better understanding of gender equality among the community and individuals

*Finding 9.2: Beneficiaries interviewed confirmed the effectiveness of community-based awareness raising on discrimination, stereotypes and harmful practices among projects coded in SO 1, 2 and 3 that led to heightened awareness, shifts in attitudes and behavioural change in some cases. Peer to peer approaches were particularly effective.*

The indicator 2.2.a (Proportion of people who have been exposed to messages challenging harmful gender stereotypes among targeted communities) is not reported directly by the Programme, however, this indicator does not measure change in understanding or acceptance of gender equality as defined in the result statement. The evaluators compiled 216,777 people reached directly by the Programme in year 1, year 2 and the first half of year 3, according to activities reported under result 2.2. It

**Result 2.2:** Women, girls, men and boys at the community and individual levels have a better understanding and acceptance of gender equality.

is important to note that actual reach of the Programme is much greater than this number, given that CSO implementing partners and UN Women disseminated information on websites and through social media (mostly on Facebook) to reach a large number of individuals.<sup>36</sup> Again, it is important to reiterate that this reach does not confirm a change in individuals' understanding and acceptance of gender equality.

Within activities implemented in different thematic components, the evaluation did confirm a better understanding of the Istanbul Convention, gender-based discrimination, intersection of gender-based discrimination with other forms of discrimination, and harmful gender stereotypes. Evidence of this enhanced understanding was observed among i) influencers, ii) individual community members (youth, women, men), and iii) broader community, and is detailed below for each group.

### Influencers

Influencing the influencers is an important communication strategy to change the knowledge of key agents of change who have the potential to affect public discourse on VAW, gender stereotypes and more broadly on harmful practices. This strategy is identified in IS 3. Details of types of activities conducted with influencers (including service providers, parliamentarians, media, government officials and

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<sup>36</sup> In the regional component, the CSSP used this type of social media campaign to communicate on the Istanbul Convention. For example, in North Macedonia, messages from the CSSP campaign on article 8 of the Istanbul Convention were disseminated via Facebook and the member network circulating the information said 50% didn't understand the goal of the campaign while 50% expressed positive support for the Istanbul Convention. UN Women also publishes stories, interviews, and video testimony on its website to reach a broad regional population. Annual Programme reports sometimes include the reach of initiatives through Facebook; however, more data is available in quarterly progress reports submitted by CSO implementing partners. For example, an Albanian CSO implementing partner posted information on a municipal referral mechanism on the municipality's Facebook page and tracked reach and engagement (HRDC quarterly reports).

religious leaders) can be found in the analysis of the implementation strategies in **Annex 12**. Changes in the level of understanding of gender equality and related issues could be assessed by the evaluators among the beneficiaries of CSO implementing partners who were interviewed.

**Local public service providers.** Including those providing social and legal services, local public service providers are primarily engaged by implementing CSOs through training workshops, except for Montenegro and Turkey. Many initiatives across the Programme include activities to change service providers' awareness and perceptions. Examples of enhanced understanding among local service providers include:

- In Albania and Kosovo, local service providers in municipal referral mechanisms confirmed improved understanding of gender stereotypes and how they operate within their institutions.
- In BiH, a CSO worked with local service providers to increase their awareness of gender stereotypes and VAW. Among those providers who participated in activities, "78% expressed their readiness to change their way of thinking about gender-based violence, irrespective of their work experience and profession,"<sup>37</sup> according to the CSO assessment.
- In North Macedonia, local public service providers demonstrated understanding of multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage experienced by Roma women. In another municipality in North Macedonia, members of the multi-agency coordination team confirmed better technical knowledge but also attitudinal change towards women's organizations and civil society.
- In Serbia, a CSO raised awareness among police about stereotypes and prejudices against women with disabilities which resulted in new police guidelines on dealing with victims and survivors of VAW who have disabilities.

## Individual level

**Children and youth.** These influencers were reached through a number of initiatives (e.g., in Albania, BiH, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) where CSOs worked with children and youth at schools, and occasionally with teachers and parents in separate sessions, to raise awareness about gender stereotypes and violence against women, and, in some instances, multiple forms of discrimination.

- In BiH, awareness raising with school children included self assessment questionnaires. The implementing CSO reported, "of 89 participants who participated in the evaluation, 82.02% responded "exceptionally" to the statement "*I have gained some new knowledge and experience on workshops*"; 62.92% responded that workshops exceptionally contributed to change their attitudes

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<sup>37</sup> Annual Progress Report, Year 2, p. 33.

or 61.8% responded that workshops have improved exceptionally their communication with others.<sup>38</sup>

- In North Macedonia, youth participants of a Roma network proved to be knowledgeable in gender-based discrimination, intersectional forms of discrimination and gender stereotypes.

**Men.** A beneficiary interviewed from the father support programme in Turkey confirmed increased play and engagement with his children and improved family communication. Changes in behaviour were documented in reports of ACEV, the CSO implementing partner. In Albania, the Elbasan Women's Forum received reports or requests for additional information from men, including local elders, after they participated in community awareness raising sessions. In recommendations for the future, CSO implementing partners suggest more initiatives engaging men in the next phase of the Programme.

**Women and girls from minority and marginalized communities.** Women, especially in activities related to services in SO 3, were the target population of a number of awareness raising initiatives. The link between awareness raising and change in behaviour was not tracked in all initiatives, however, some of the following changes were noted:

- In Turkey, evidence of change among Syrian refugee women in awareness of gender equality was reported by Support to Life (STL) in Turkey. STL used a peer to peer approach to raise awareness among refugee women. Volunteer refugee women were trained in gender equality, violence against women, referral mechanisms and in small group facilitation techniques. Each woman committed to reaching 84 other women in her community through small groups of 5-7 women. The volunteers would go to schools, homes, hair salons, or other locations and facilitate discussions using a cloth banner with images and referral pathways printed on it. This initiative strengthened the capacities of the volunteer facilitators and engaged 1,276 Syrian women in awareness raising discussions. An evaluation was conducted among a sample of 130 randomly selected participants, "71.8% stated that they have gained a better awareness of women's rights and a better knowledge and competence about access to justice services specific to the SGBV."<sup>39</sup>
- In Albania, the Elbasan Women's Forum observed that after each public forum on VAWG, two to three women came forward to ask for referrals to free services.

### **Community approaches**

As mentioned above, CSOs disseminated EVAWG messages and their initiatives primarily through social media platforms. In this way, they can measure the reach and engagement of individuals but not evaluate change in awareness of VAWG or gender stereotypes. More targeted awareness raising was integrated

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<sup>38</sup> Vive Zene, Quarterly Progress Report, Q 5, p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Support to Life (2018), *Awareness-Raising Among Refugee and Migrant Women on How to Access Justice Services: Hatay Field Report of Good Practices and Lessons Learned* (UN Women), p. 18.

across all results areas and with a range of community members. The evaluators confirmed innovative approaches at the community level that addressed harmful practices:

- In Kosovo, a door to door campaign to gather information on beliefs and to influence families' understanding of early marriage in communities where rates of child marriage have been high has been recognized as an effective advocacy approach. Volunteers from the communities, including young men, learned about the legal implication of early marriage and went door to door to deliver leaflets and speak to families about early marriage. This peer to peer approach affected the youth and the families.

*“My son had a very difficult experience going door to door – he had to touch the problem himself – he said the situation was worse than he ever thought – he thought things were better but not worse – how the men behaved.”*

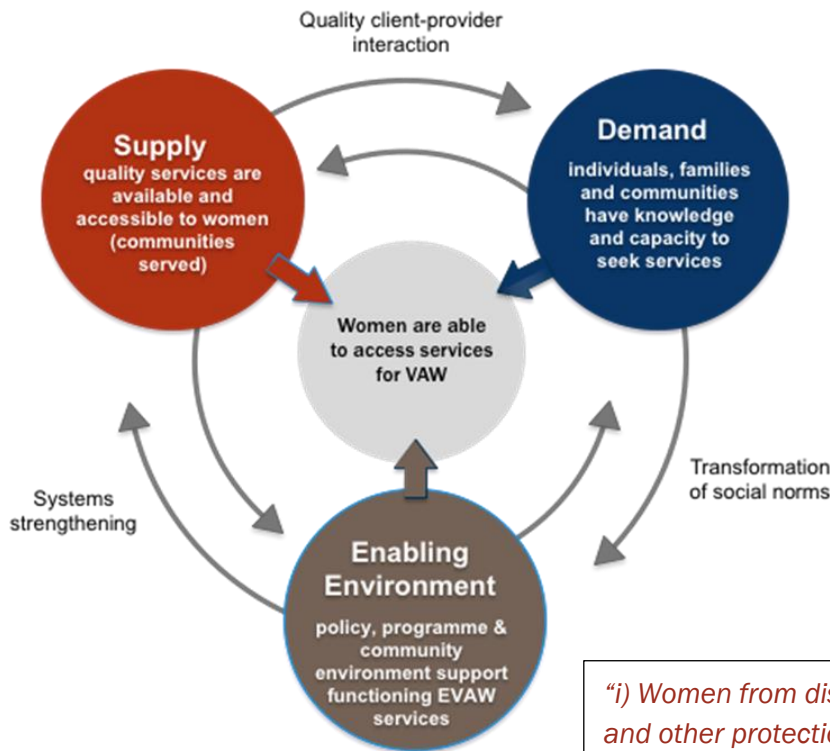
Beneficiary (door to door campaign volunteer) of CSO  
implementing partner, Kosovo
- In Montenegro, a Roma organization has focused on prevention of child and early marriages through theatre, roundtable discussions, life stories, workshops and a billboard, and was constantly present in the communities to work with individuals. Target groups included Roma women, teachers, and service providers. Early positive indications of behavioural change results were shared with the evaluation: women began reporting child marriage, whereas before the project, men or community elders would report, if at all. This type of initiative balances misunderstanding of customary laws and practices of Roma people and the rights of women and girls.
- In Turkey, a father support programme aims to change fathers' behaviours in the family by engaging men in weekly sessions that address their own experience of violence and issues of masculinity and the exercise of power (added in 2014 when the foundation received support from the UN Women Trust Fund). The programme is based on the concepts of democratic family in terms of decision-making roles, responsibilities and ecological theory with the child at the center of a system of inter-related actors. Local fatherhood networks organized and led by men completing the foundation's programme are one of the outcomes of this programme. Anecdotes of behavioural change observed by spouses were shared in progress reports of the foundation implementing the father support programme in Turkey.

## 5.3 AVAILABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND QUALITY SERVICES

*Finding 10: SO 3 is focused on women’s empowerment, but IS 4 and the results statements in this component have a dual dimension of increasing women’s demand for quality services and strengthening the supply side of those services. There are significant results in most countries in relation to strengthening the supply side or, in other words, the provision of services.*

**SO 3:** To empower women and girls (including those from disadvantaged groups) who have experienced discrimination or violence to advocate for and use available, accessible, and quality services.

Figure 8: Supply and demand of accessible services



The evaluators cannot confirm indicator 3.a related to SO 3 (Percentage of women and girls, including those from disadvantaged groups, who experienced violence in the last 12 months who seek help from services providers supported by the Action),<sup>40</sup> however,

*“i) Women from disadvantaged groups have accessed justice and other protection services, thus opposing habits and traditions of tolerating and enduring violence in their communities; ii) police authorities have changed their attitude and behaviours towards violence and victims of violence from disadvantaged groups; and iii) service providers in three local communities have increased their understanding of violence and multiple discrimination of women from disadvantaged communities.”*

Representative of Roma organization, BiH

<sup>40</sup> This indicator is challenging to measure precisely as it assumes the Programme partners know exactly who has experienced violence, and are then able to determine the percentage of women seeking help. The number of women who access services supported by the Programme would be a more feasible indicator.

the evaluation data confirms improvements in the three dimensions of the supply-demand paradigm illustrated above in Figure 7. First, there is an improved enabling environment for the delivery of quality of services, namely through legislation and policy aligned with the Istanbul Convention and local support for multi-agency coordination mechanisms. Secondly, there is improved supply through the enhanced capacity of service providers and case management tools that standardize procedures and consider the needs of minority and marginalized women. Thirdly, women have direct access to support services. It is important to emphasize that initiatives in all components of the Programme contribute to this supply-demand dynamic. In BiH, a Roma women's organization explained three indications of positive change following their Programme-supported initiative which provides a succinct summary of progress towards SO 3.

### 5.3.1 Capacity of general and specialist service providers

*Finding 10.1: Public, CSO, or private sector (private bar) service providers increased their technical knowledge and/or professional practice (skills) to be able to provide women services aligned with the Istanbul Convention, especially for survivors of domestic violence.*

The evaluators cannot confirm the precise numbers of service providers who have adopted procedures in line with the Istanbul Convention, neither those who have used the Essential Services Guidelines; however, the evaluation can confirm that implementing CSOs strengthened the capacity of three main types of service providers in a view to align their services with the Istanbul Convention:

**Result 3.1:** Providers of general and specialist support services for victims of all forms of violence have the capacity to implement the standards enshrined in CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention.

#### **Women's organizations who offer services to women survivors of VAW**

In relation to this group, the capacity building was self-guided or provided by other CSOs with past experience. An example of self-delivered capacity building was found in Montenegro where a shelter that required certain skills and infrastructure to meet licensing requirements implemented its own training plan. Alternatively, capacity building was provided to CSO service providers by a women's CSO with significant experience in service provision, advocacy and training programs for service providers and public officials (Montenegro, Kosovo).

#### **Local public service providers and law enforcement authorities**

In relation to the second group, implementing CSOs with years of experience provided training to public service providers and law enforcement officials. Rather than ad-hoc workshops, accompaniment and mentoring approaches were found to enhance the skills and knowledge of public service providers through multi-agency coordination mechanisms. See more information on the following page.

#### **Private service providers**

In relation to the third group, at least one implementing CSO (Turkey) provided training to private sector lawyers, often women lawyers working as sole practitioners, to enhance their capacity to offer legal services to women survivors of violence in criminal or family cases, through exposure to international and European conventions and jurisprudence. As a result of the training, three lawyers interviewed confirmed



they have sustained communication among the group (across all regions of Turkey) to share precedents and suggestions to lawyers engaged in difficult cases in different parts of the country. This work with private sector lawyers, as well as the Programme's support to free legal aid providers and individual communications to CEDAW (North Macedonia), enhances women's access to justice.

*Finding 10.2: The Programme supported existing or created new multi-agency response teams (coordinated referral mechanisms) in at least six municipalities in four IPA beneficiaries (Albania, BiH, Kosovo, North Macedonia) in alignment with article 15 of the Istanbul Convention. These mechanisms enhance the response to VAWG, especially domestic violence, by more efficient and effective communication and the application of gender sensitive rights-based approaches.*

Capacity building occurred primarily through multi-sectoral or multi-agency coordination mechanisms that increase the effectiveness of referral and response mechanisms to survivors of violence against women. These multi-agency teams enhanced services in municipalities in the Western Balkans (Albania, BiH, Kosovo, and North Macedonia). For example,

- In North Macedonia, a women's organization providing free legal aid services initiated and coordinated a multi-sector team of service providers, including social work, municipal government, health, prosecution, police, and judicial officials, to ensure coordinated referral and protection mechanisms operated at the municipal level in a manner consistent with the Istanbul Convention.
- In other countries, the multi-sector team included school officials and child protection units (e.g. Albania,<sup>41</sup> Montenegro).

During interviews with evaluators, public service providers who are members of these multi-agency teams, including health, social work, municipal, and local justice and law enforcement officials, demonstrated technical knowledge of the Istanbul Convention gained through training and accompaniment or mentoring from CSO implementing partners. This multi-agency referral and response mechanism provides additional opportunities for engagement between civil society organizations and local and national government agencies. For example, in North Macedonia, the multi-agency team prepared recommendations for law reform to further align legislation with the Istanbul Convention.

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<sup>41</sup> UN Women Albania (2018), Improving services for women survivors of violence in Albania, <https://albania.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2018/09/feature-story-improving-services-for-women-survivors-of-violence-in-albania>

### 5.3.2 Improved case management

*Finding 10.3: The evaluation confirmed, among service providers interviewed, that the Programme contributed to improved case management manuals, special treatment guidelines, victim protection and community outreach protocols in five countries. These case management tools, while primarily addressing domestic violence (including child abuse), have integrated special considerations to respond to the needs of Roma people (especially women and girls), other minority groups, and women with disabilities. In this and other ways, the Programme contributed to heightened understanding and attention by service providers to compounded disadvantage resulting from multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.*

**Result 3.2:** Improved case management by providers of specialist support services for victims of all forms of violence, with a specific focus on women and girls from minorities and disadvantaged groups.

Indicator 3.2a related to result 3.2 focuses on data collection and analysis (Number of providers of specialist support services related to VAW in the countries of Action that collect and use data on beneficiaries in line with international standards for improved case management). The evaluation found evidence of **improved data collection in the case of four countries** where CSO implementing partners strengthened or introduced data collection. The Programme advanced databases or data collection methodologies and procedures in Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia).

- In Kosovo, an implementing partner supported the development, testing and launching of the national unified database, enabling the monitoring and prosecution of domestic violence cases. This will enhance accountability by obliging relevant institutions to update the database with the necessary information from central and local levels.
- In Montenegro, an implementing partner made progress in the development of a standardized data collection among CSOs that provided assistance and support services to women in order to conduct evidence-based analysis to improve the delivery of services.
- In North Macedonia, an implementing partner supported the design of a software for data collection on cases of VAW among CSO service providers. In alignment with article 11 of the Istanbul Convention, data collection will be obligatory as introduced in the new legislation.
- In Serbia, an implementing partner designed a model data collection framework for cases of femicide. The model framework has been adopted by officials from the Ministries of Interior and Justice.

Once these types of information systems are fully functional, the coordination, case management and prosecution of cases should improve significantly.

The evaluation found that the Programme has improved case management in other ways. For example, local service providers, primarily addressing victims of domestic violence (including child abuse), have integrated special considerations to respond to the needs of Roma people (especially women and girls) and marginalized groups, including women with disabilities. It is important to note that the Programme

supported regional research that will further strengthen case management and services generally to women belonging to minority groups and those experiencing disadvantage, if applied.<sup>42</sup> The evaluation was unable to confirm the use of these reports by service providers or policy makers, however, the evaluation confirmed enhanced attention and case management practices, some of which explicitly consider compounded disadvantage experienced by women resulting from multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

- In Albania, the evaluation confirmed strengthened case management through the coordinated referral mechanisms in two municipalities.
- In Kosovo, an implementing organization conducted an assessment of shelter practices by proceeding to a comparison with the UN Essential Services Package and then prepared a manual on case management to ensure alignment with the package. In addition, the evaluation verified that coordinated referral mechanisms in cases of domestic violence were strengthened in the three municipalities (of a total of seven supported by the Programme).<sup>43</sup>
- In Montenegro, the Programme strengthened CSO service providers' capacity to respond to cases of VAW with emphasis on cases of domestic violence, including intimate partner violence and child abuse.
- In North Macedonia, enhanced case management in domestic violence cases was confirmed with the multi-agency team in Shtip municipality.
- In Serbia, two implementing CSOs worked with local police in different municipalities to create guidelines or plans for the protection of victims from minority or marginalized communities. The police officers interviewed in two locations confirmed that they improved procedures to contact Roma communities and people with disabilities.

The Programme also advanced knowledge on the requirements for specialized services to support victims of sexual violence through regional mapping conducted by the CSSP (coordinated by WAVE) and through some state-specific initiatives:

- In Kosovo, women lawyers prepared legal education guidelines (in an initiative under result 1.1) that reflect the Istanbul Convention standards, including those related to specialized services in cases of sexual violence. Subsequently, the association provided training to service providers based on the guide.
- In North Macedonia, an analysis and costing of specialist services for survivors of sexual violence was conducted and adopted by the responsible ministry. In addition, regional studies have

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<sup>42</sup> Reports published by the Programme include: '[A thousand ways to solve our problems](#)': An analysis of existing VAWG approaches for minoritized women and girls in the Western Balkans and Turkey (2018); [Regional Report on compliance with CEDAW and Istanbul Convention relating to discrimination of Roma women in the area of healthcare, child marriages and offering support and protection to Roma women in cases of domestic violence](#) (June 2019);

<sup>43</sup> Thirty nine of sixty one municipalities in Albania have now referral mechanisms for domestic violence cases.

analyzed gaps in accessibility and quality of services experienced by minority and marginalized women and gaps in responses to victims of sexual violence.

- In Serbia, an implementing CSO strengthened other service providers in attention to women with disabilities who are victims of violence, especially sexual violence.

It is important to note that CSO implementing partners and their beneficiaries identified sexual violence as a priority topic to address to the evaluators in the next phase of the Programme. While initiatives addressing sexual violence are being supported by other ERAW initiatives in the countries in the region, it is still recommended that this Programme enhance attention towards sexual violence. See the IPA Beneficiary Summary Reports in **Annex 13**.

The management of strategic cases (cases that can have a broader impact) improved through the support to three projects implemented in Albania, North Macedonia and Turkey where women's organizations or women lawyers increased their capacity to identify and prepare cases to be presented to domestic courts or UN human rights mechanisms. This work strengthened lawyers' capacities at the beneficiary organizations in terms of case management and legal and policy advocacy.<sup>44</sup>

### 5.3.3 Better Access to Improved Services

*Finding 10.4: The Programme, acknowledging the first step to self-advocacy (an important factor to measure women's empowerment), enhanced awareness of rights among women, supported 10 CSOs working with women to promote their understanding of gender equality rights, their right to access services, and multiple and intersectional discrimination (in the case of minority groups and refugees). In this result, there is evidence of heightened awareness and increased self-advocacy skills and confidence among women.*

**Result 3.3:** Better access to an improved service provision to women from minority and disadvantaged groups.

The evaluation could not confirm indicator 3.3.a for result 3.3 (Number of women and girls from disadvantaged groups receiving comprehensive and immediate care from services available); however, evaluators reviewed project documents and interview data to study initiatives that support the "demand" aspect of the supply-demand paradigm.

To support the analysis of this result of improved access to services for minority and disadvantaged groups, the evaluators identified 13 projects where the CSO implementing partner engages directly with women who have experienced violence (i.e., these women are a direct target group).<sup>45</sup> See **Annex 14**

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<sup>44</sup> The evaluators view these initiatives as important to case management. The Programme reports situate these initiatives in SO 1 or result area 3.1 of SO 3.

<sup>45</sup> The evaluators recognize that the service providers (beneficiaries of CSO implementing partners) work with women survivors. These women are the ultimate beneficiaries of the Programme.

for the list used by the evaluators. Activities considered here involve awareness raising (of rights and services), psycho-social support services, and legal aid and representation.

**Awareness raising among women**, including minority or marginalized women, was addressed in section 5.2 above, including the peer to peer initiative with Syrian women in Turkey. Other examples where marginalized women increased their awareness of their rights or services are:

- In Albania, a consortium of three CSOs prepared a simplified guide on the specific forms of violence against women with disabilities, Roma Women and LGBTI with an extensive list of services and the institutional mechanism on protection against violence. The guide was shared in awareness raising activities with women from these groups.
- In BiH, two implementing partners joined forces to prepare materials in Romani, sign language and braille. The Programme supported also Roma mediators who facilitated women's access to services.
- In Serbia, an organization reached hundreds of women survivors of violence in rural communities, including women from minority and marginalized communities (e.g. women with disabilities), to increase their knowledge of independent government bodies responsible for addressing gender-based discrimination and harmful stereotypes (Ombudsperson).

Awareness raising initiatives also **improved self-advocacy skills of women and girls (empowerment)**. Some examples where women and girls' (although not necessarily from minority groups) self-advocacy skills were improved thanks to awareness raising initiatives include:

- In Montenegro, women service users attended an interview of beneficiaries of a CSO service provider. One service user described the opportunities that led to her empowerment (see text box).
- In BiH, survivors of violence were empowered to speak out about their experience of violence through at least two activities implemented under SO 2.
- The evaluation found evidence of improved self-advocacy by teen girls and young adults from Roma communities near Kumanovo in North Macedonia through their participation in educational camps (demonstrated in videos made at the Buvero camps).

*"I participated as a services user. What helped me was the conversation, self-defense, yoga, sewing training... I was able to help myself and I will try to be even better. Earlier, I was (self) isolated and withdrawn, and later with their help, with all the programs, I empowered myself and it's much easier for me to live."*

Service user, Montenegro

The Programme supported **direct services to women**, including psycho-social services to women and perpetrators provided by HERA in North Macedonia and SOS Niksic in Montenegro. In North Macedonia, hundreds of women and men received psycho-therapeutic services from HERA, whereas in Montenegro, a shelter service operated by a CSO implementing partner was able to provide workshops and yoga classes for women residents.

The Programme supported **free legal aid for women who have experienced violence** directly or indirectly through training of lawyers providing legal aid in BiH, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Turkey. Legal aid provided directly to women from minority and marginalized groups was provided by National Roma Centrum in North Macedonia, reaching at least 18 Roma women.

The number of women who accessed services directly supported by the Programme is estimated at 797. See **Annex 15** for a table summarizing the figures reported in Programme progress reports under different results areas (not only result 3.3).

## 5.4 UNFORESEEN RESULTS

*Finding 11: The evaluation identified few unforeseen or unexpected results. Annual work planning, competitive Calls for Proposals and other implementation methods facilitated the selection and support to initiatives that advanced the results framework of the Programme. The unforeseen results identified were overwhelmingly positive and reinforced the expected results. The most common unexpected results include CSO organizational strengthening and unexpected collaboration and relationships between established CSOs and grassroots women’s organizations. The only negative unexpected results are related to the bureaucracy and human resource challenges associated with the licensing requirements on service provision by CSOs to women.*

### 5.4.1 Positive unexpected results

The second implementation strategy, strengthening women’s organizations, was the Programme’s primary strategy to strengthen networks and ERAW advocacy. It also had the effect of strengthening organizational aspects of CSO implementing partners. For example, the following results, which were not explicit in the results statements (but consistent with the overall ToC), were achieved:

**Organizational development:** In terms of implementing partners, an organization in North Macedonia explained how it learned to integrate a gender perspective into its new multi-year strategic plan as a result of support from UN Women in project implementation.

**Project management:** In relation to project management, the first annual report states: “Within the capacities of beneficiary agencies (UN Women in all countries, and UNDP as a co-beneficiary in Montenegro), implementing partners were trained on financial

*“The most innovative thing was providing the small grants and empowering the organizations. First, we trained them on how to work as an organization internally. We also helped them understand how to write a project and then we focused on financial management.”*

CSO implementing partner, Albania

*“We are very satisfied, it was the first time we were implementing the program and it also empowered our internal organizational management.”*

Grassroot women’s organization (beneficiary), Albania

and narrative reporting and on European Commission and UN Women communications and visibility guidelines.” (p. 4). During interviews, some CSOs confirmed they had improved project management skills thanks to their involvement in the Programme. One CSO in BiH recognized improvement in its project development capacity to meet the requirements of results-based management.

**Strengthening grassroots organizations:** Small grants from larger women’s organizations (CSO implementing partners) to grassroots women’s organizations strengthened these smaller organizations. For example, in Albania, an established women’s organization provided small grants to grassroots organizations to organize and implement awareness raising campaigns.

For some Programme stakeholders, collaborative work and enhanced relationships were also unexpected results.

Examples of enhanced collaboration in initiatives include partnerships formed among women’s organizations and interaction between CSO service providers and public service providers. For instance, partnerships among women’s CSOs were formed during the implementation phase, while such partnerships were not originally planned. Also, in North Macedonia, the multi-agency coordination team identified and prepared recommendations to amend legislation to bring it into alignment with the Istanbul Convention. In North Macedonia and other countries where these multi-agency or multi-sector mechanisms functioned, both CSOs and public service providers acknowledged an increase in respect and commitment between the stakeholders.

The Programme enhanced relationships among stakeholder and groups that hadn’t met together in recent years. UN Women noted that institutions in Kosovo, Serbia and other IPA beneficiaries are meeting for the first time since the cessation of armed conflict within this Programme. In Kosovo, inter-ethnic dialogue occurred through ERAW initiatives. The Regional Forum was also a “safe space” for dialogue. While Turkey does not fit precisely in this post-conflict context, the Regional Forum also represents an opportunity for government representatives and civil society to interact. Interviewees, including EU delegates, also noted that the Programme has enhanced relationships between well-established larger CSOs and grassroots’ women’s organizations, between organizations representing minority and marginalized women from different countries, and among member organizations of regional networks such as WAVE.

*“Never in last 3-5 years, we have had a programme that included more women’s CSOs than this programme. Only through one project 23 organizations were involved.”*  
CSO implementing partner, Serbia

### 5.4.2 Negative unexpected results

The evaluation data did not identify patterns or trends across the geographic components in negative unexpected results. However, challenges observed by CSOs service providers in Montenegro relevant cases for other countries as governments implement licensing or certification regimes for services delivered with public funding by non-state providers. CSOs involved in the licensing process in Montenegro acknowledged that bureaucratic requirements absorb significant time and human resources, leaving

*“We have by-laws that force us to always report violence to CSW, even without the victim’s consent. We risk losing our clients this way (providing an example of a specific case), she will never come back again.”*  
CSO service provider, Montenegro

CSOs involved in the licensing process in Montenegro acknowledged that bureaucratic requirements absorb significant time and human resources, leaving

limited resources for direct support to victims. The issue of stress resulting from working with victims of violence has also proved to be a challenge in Montenegro. For example, CSO service providers in Montenegro encountered challenges recruiting and maintaining personnel who can manage the stress and recommended support programmes to avoid burn out. Finally, given that regulations require CSO service providers to report cases of violence to government centers for social work (CSW), women may have a disincentive to accessing services.

## 5.5 FACTORS AFFECTING RESULTS

*Finding 12: The Programme progressed towards results due to the strength of CSOs in EVAWG, the and prior collaboration between UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro, EC, experienced CSOs and government officials. Factors that restrict EVAWG process relate to political context and change in government or government commitment to lead reforms and allocate public budget to EVAWG efforts.*

### 5.5.1 Positive Factors

The implementation strategies are important aspects of the Programme design that have facilitated the achievement of results. Other positive common factors across the region that were identified in the evaluation data include the following:

**Previous experience and visibility of CSO implementing partners.** Interviewees recognize that one of the principal factors contributing to the success of the Programme is implementing partners' experience in EAW. This way, in Montenegro, the Programme optimized CSOs' experience and fostered exchanges of experience. Government officials in Albania, BiH, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia recognize the commitment, technical expertise, visibility and/or leadership of women's organizations and networks in EVAWG. The public trust in CSOs was an important factor in advancing EVAWG efforts and confirmed the appropriateness of engaging civil society.

**Legislative reform initiatives led by government entities.** As mentioned in section 5.1 above, the engagement of government officials in law and policy reform is a necessary condition. UN and government interviewees recognize reform processes have either pre-dated this Programme or have coincided with the Programme (as is the case in North Macedonia).

**Prior collaboration between government gender equality mechanisms, the EC and UN Women, and between CSOs and UN Women.** Government and UN interviewees acknowledged that established relations contributed to the achievement of results. In some instances, the Programme was able to strengthen initiatives that started within previous programmes (e.g., the coordinated referral mechanisms in Kosovo, or the father support programme in Turkey).

The evaluators perceive effective use of implementation strategies and activity planning across the region as a positive factor. This will be discussed in the Efficiency section below.



### 5.5.2 Factors restricting achievement of results and objectives

Factors limiting the achievement of the results framework can be organized around two issues that are arising externally or internally to the Programme.

**External factors** are not originally within the Programme's direct purview to resolve; however, these factors need to be addressed as they arise. For example, the predominant global trend of governments being elected on populist and/or conservative agendas may reduce participation in multi-lateral initiatives, including the financing of EAWG efforts. External political and environmental factors ranging from government's opposition to women's rights to natural disasters may result in delays in reforms and EU accession negotiations.

Adequate resources is a factor sitting between external and internal spheres affecting EAW ToC. Governments may formalize laws and policies aligned with international instruments, however, civil society and external stakeholders noted that there are **limited financial and human resource allocations for gender mainstreaming and EAW initiatives**. This resource issue, linked to gender responsive budgeting, needs to be considered for the purposes of sustainability of the Programme initiatives.

Factors that are more internal to the Programme yet affecting progress include insufficient government participation in EAWG initiatives in some countries, short timelines for implementation of initiatives, limited measurement of results (this can be addressed through rigorous application of best practices for piloting or testing initiatives), and limited UN Women project staff assigned to the Programme. Some of these factors are addressed in the Efficiency section below.

## 5.6 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

*Finding 13: The four implementation strategies have been effective in advancing Programme results by providing strategic guidance to UN Women. The four elements of the strategies were consistent and mutually reinforcing. This allowed UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro to incorporate the elements into Calls for Proposals. CSOs adopted the main approaches, tactics and substantive orientation described in the strategies in the implementation of their projects.*

- IS1: Influencing laws & policies
- IS2: Strengthening women's organizations
- IS3: Challenging exclusionary norms & practices
- IS4: Increasing access to women-centered quality-essential strategies

A detailed analysis of the implementation strategies is in **Annex 12**. Only the implementation strategy considered to be the most important in advancing Programme results will be examined below.

### 5.6.1 Strengthening Women's Organizations

*Finding 13.1: The strategy for strengthening CSOs was very effective; it enabled the creation, expansion, and strengthening of networks at regional and national levels, increased their capacity to monitor and report on compliance with EU and international standards (thereby embedding IS 2 within IS 1). The*

strategy advanced intersectional approaches and strengthened networks focusing on minority and marginalized women. Furthermore, IS 2 was the *modus operandi* for UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro vis-à-vis implementing partners and also for implementing partners vis-à-vis their targeted beneficiaries.

The Regional Programme was effective in strengthening women’s organizations, especially national and regional networks. Although the precise degree to which leadership was strengthened is difficult to evaluate in the absence of specific indicators in the Programme’s results framework, there are examples of implementing partners leading advocacy initiatives and mentoring smaller organizations. Interviewees recognize that one of the principal factors contributing to the success of the Programme is the previous experience in EAW of many of the implementing partners.

The original design explicitly linked IS 2 to IS 1 (influencing laws and policies) as it is illustrated in Figure 8. Whereas the evaluation confirmed that IS 2 is both embedded in IS 1 and used as a cross-cutting *modus operandi* by Programme stakeholders, namely UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro and implementing CSOs. This actual use of IS 2 is below in figure 9.

Figure 9: Original design of IS 2

Original design of the Programme:

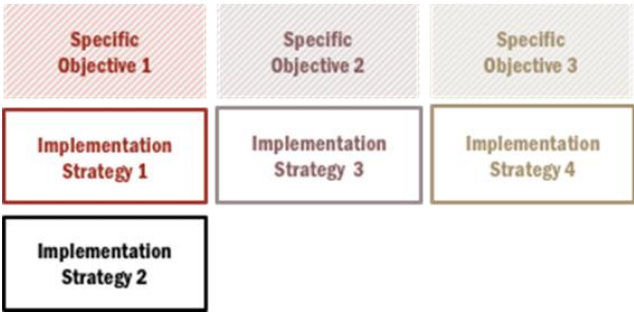


Figure 10: Actual implementation of IS 2

Actual implementation of the Programme:



A summary of the achievements made in the implementation of IS 2 in comparison to the purpose, main approach, tactics and substantive orientation described in the original design is summarized in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Contribution of IS 2

Purpose	Main Approach	Tactics and major activities	Substantive Orientation
<b>Evaluation Findings</b>			
<b>Leadership roles of implementing partners were strengthened</b> in relation to advocacy for normative change and women’s centered services.	The Regional Programme established new national networks and strengthened existing ones, primarily for monitoring and shadow reporting.	The evaluation data reveals some interaction between regional and national networks. <b>National networks coordinated by WAVE increased interaction and information sharing in both directions:</b> national to regional and regional to national. Roma national networks also increased interaction and collaborative initiatives.	Knowledge of EU standards, especially the Istanbul Convention, increased in the region as a result of IS 2.

Purpose	Main Approach	Tactics and major activities	Substantive Orientation
Implementing partners <b>transferred capacities</b> to their targeted beneficiaries engaged in initiatives that adopted other implementation strategies.	The Programme <b>strengthened national and regional networks of Roma and pro-Roma organizations</b> to monitor IC and CEDAW implementation.	Strengthening women’s networks and organizations was organized around EAW advocacy (IS 2 is embedded within IS 1), <b>strengthening monitoring and reporting</b> .  The Regional Forum enhanced knowledge sharing between CSOs, governments and regional institutions. The Programme created other dialogue opportunities within countries and between CSOs and European institutions.	The <b>intersection between gender inequality and other forms of discrimination</b> is understood and integrated in EAWG initiatives to a greater degree due to the Programme.

As noted above, IS 2 contributed to various aspects of the Programme by strengthening and empowering women’s organizations, including networks involving organizations representing or working with minority and marginalized women, thereby enhancing their ability to advocate for intersectional approaches in policies, awareness campaigns, and services. The interaction between this and other strategies is detailed in **Annex 12**.

## 6 Impact

### 6.1 PROGRESS TOWARDS PROGRAMME GOAL

*Finding 14: The evaluation cannot confirm whether the Programme reduced violence and gender-based discrimination against women by addressing the root causes of gender inequalities. This is due to the short duration of Phase I, and the following phenomenon: when more rightsholders know about their rights and how to advocate for them, reporting rates of violence tend to increase. As a result of this Programme, it appears that women are reporting violent crimes more frequently in some communities. Furthermore, other positive signs, although anecdotal, suggest a shift in attitudes about gender equality.*

Programme stakeholders interviewed (regardless of informant category) acknowledged that it was too early to assess progress towards the goal of the Programme of reducing violence and discrimination against women and girls (this relates to the ToC feasibility), as mentioned in section 3 above. It was anticipated in the evaluation design that the effect of Programme activities focusing on women would increase reporting of VAW rather than decrease actual violent conduct. According to service providers, this was a correct assumption.

There are examples of increased reporting of violence against women among service providers involved in the Programme. Increases in reporting of cases, especially of domestic violence, was mentioned by local service providers in Albania, BiH, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. Data was provided in some instances:

- In Albania, a local coordination mechanism noted the increase of reported cases from 2017 (989 reported cases) to 2018 (1102 reported cases); in 2019 at the time of the interview the percentage of reports was higher than 2018.
- In a municipality in Kosovo, a member of the local multi-sectoral team explained that in 2018, 57 reports had been received and in 2019, at the time of the interview, 92 reports of violence had been registered.
- In Serbia, a CSO recorded a 20% increase of rural women calling the SOS line since their project was launched with the Programme.

Further, stakeholders provided anecdotal information that suggest minor shifts in thinking, as if EVAWG efforts continue, more widespread positive change would result:

- A CSO representative in Montenegro stated, "It's just one small step and it's only been 12 months. It's not possible that just one activity implemented by organizations can make a change in social norms, attitudes. Everything we do for 20 years, including this project, is leading to positive change."
- In North Macedonia, local service providers felt their enhanced coordination was acting as a deterrent to men: "They are more aware of the serious consequences. Criminal cases deter men."

## 6.2 EMPOWERMENT

*Finding 15: The evaluation confirmed indices of progress towards political empowerment among women's organizations, especially smaller and grassroots organizations, and among some women beneficiaries who have found opportunities to make strategic choices in the exercise of their rights.*

While the evaluation TOR suggests all dimensions of empowerment to be examined, the Programme does not address economic empowerment, nor does it precisely define how it conceptualizes or measures empowerment. Just Governance Group has previously studied empowerment<sup>46</sup> and considers two essential elements to assess whether empowerment occurred:

- Resource and opportunity structure: refers to information or institutions available that allow women to make a choice to bring about the outcome they desire.
- Agency: refers to the ability of women to be significant actors in the process of change and make strategic choices to positively affect outcomes. This can also be described as advocacy or self-advocacy.

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<sup>46</sup> Just Governance Group (2011), *Measuring Empowerment in International Development Projects*, <http://justgovernancegroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/1-1.pdf>

The evaluation data discussed above reveals at least two types of empowerment: i) political empowerment of women’s organizations and ii) empowerment of individual women who have experienced discrimination or violence, especially women from minority and marginalized groups.

### Political empowerment of women’s organizations (political advocacy)

Table 9: Political empowerment of women's organizations

Element of empowerment	Programme contribution
<b>Resource and opportunity structure</b>	The Programme has created resources and opportunities for women’s organizations to strengthen their EAW advocacy through training, knowledge-sharing (networks, regional forum), engagement with government officials in national, subnational or local mechanisms. Established CSOs have provided opportunities to grassroots women’s organizations through sub-grants or technical support in monitoring and shadow reporting.
<b>Agency</b>	Women’s organizations increased their ability to advocate for EAW in regional, national and local reform processes. CSO implementing partners and grassroots organizations have positioned their organizations as points of reference on EAW in their communities, nationally and regionally.

### Empowerment of individual women who have experienced discrimination or violence (self-advocacy)

Table 10: Empowerment of individual women

Element of empowerment	Programme contribution
<b>Resource and opportunity structure</b>	The Programme has created opportunities for women who have experienced discrimination or violence, especially women from minority and marginalized groups, by providing safe space for sharing and reflecting on their experiences, as well as access to international human rights mechanisms, access to quality support services and legal aid/advice.
<b>Agency</b>	Individual beneficiaries explained their ability to advocate for their rights at school, in support groups, and when consulting with general and specialized services providers.

## 6.3 POWER DYNAMICS

*Finding 16: The evaluation confirmed changes in the relationships and power dynamics among women’s organizations and between women’s organizations and authorities as a result of the Programme.*

Partnering larger established women's organizations with grassroots organizations or organizations representing minority and marginalized women and youth, including refugee women, increased the visibility and political agency of the smaller organizations or those representing disadvantaged women.

Engagement between networks representing marginalized women and EU institutions also increased as a result of the Programme.

CSO-government relations improved in most countries (except Turkey) enhancing the dialogue in either SO 1 or 3, or both. See section 5.5.1 above regarding enhanced relationships and collaboration.

## 7 Sustainability

### 7.1 POTENTIAL FOR MAINTENANCE OF RESULTS

*Finding 17: The sustainability prospects of Programme results vary greatly across the Programme objective areas and across the Region. Higher sustainability prospects coincide with results incorporated institutionally through laws and policies supported by more permanent mechanisms based on cooperation between government, CSOs, and other stakeholders; when governments clearly recognize EWAVG as a priority; and when the intervention is compatible with EU accession. Due to the absence of regional mechanisms, there are no instruments to sustain current or potential regional results.*

The Just Governance Group's approach to sustainability is based on the OECD definition of sustainability<sup>47</sup> and is developed as a multidimensional analysis that examines the probability of continuation of results achieved based on three key sets of factors: i) legal and policy framework, ii) institutional and iii) social (see Figure 10 below). This approach is applied to move the evaluation of past initiatives towards a forward-looking analysis of conditions for sustainability.

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<sup>47</sup>Sustainability is defined as "The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed. The probability of continued long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time." Available at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/dcdndep/31950216.pdf>.

Figure 11: Dimensions of Sustainability

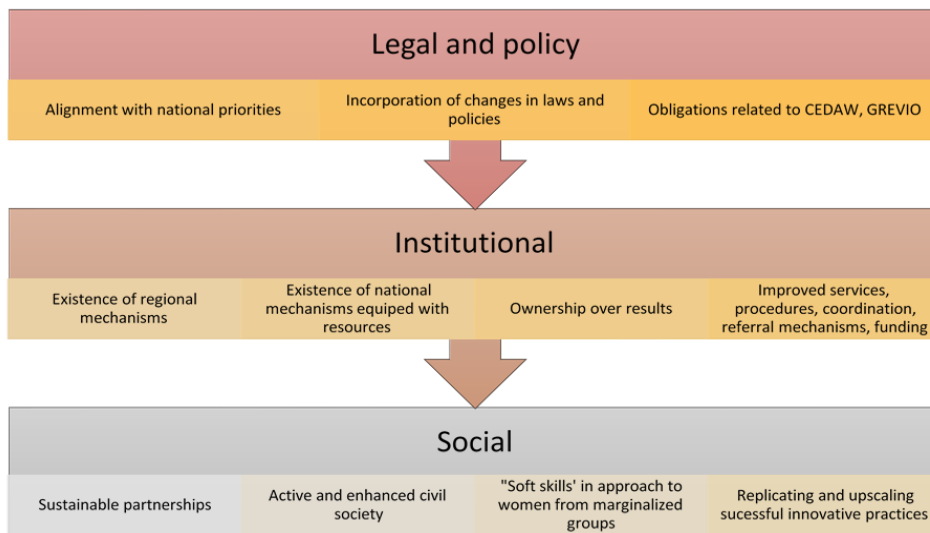
### 7.1.1 Legal and policy dimension of sustainability

Political sustainability refers to the existence of a normative and policy framework that would continue to support the results achieved. As noted in the section on relevance, the Programme is aligned with EU accession. This provides a basic precondition for the sustainability of its results, as they contribute to the

alignment of national policies and legislative frameworks in the area of social policy (negotiation chapter 19), judiciary and fundamental rights (chapter 23) and freedom, security and justice (chapter 24).

However, the prioritization of gender equality and EAW reforms within the framework of reforms for EU accession could facilitate opportunities for short, mid and long-term sustainability.

This depends on specific national priorities as countries are in different stages of the EU accession process and their priorities are shaped significantly by the phase and focus of current negotiation chapters.



The contribution to the EU process has been done primarily through the alignment of legislation, service provision standards, and prevention and protection services aligned with the Istanbul Convention. It also includes the strengthening of civil society's active participation in reform processes, keeping gender equality as a priority in the policy reform agenda. Therefore, there is a **relatively high probability that results incorporated in the legislative and institutional reforms related to the EU accession will be sustained** over time as this is a clear priority of government and civil society.

Obligations related to CEDAW are another important factor contributing to the high probability of results sustainability. Countries covered by the programme participate actively in this international human rights mechanism, and CEDAW Committee recommendations, to which the Programme results are aligned, provide tools for sustainable results. The programme delivered many results related to changes in legislation and policies to be aligned with the Istanbul Convention or CEDAW. As mentioned previously, some results are fully achieved in the sense that interventions of CSOs are incorporated in changes of laws and bylaws.<sup>48</sup> In other cases, implementing organizations provided assessments with recommendations for legal amendments.<sup>49</sup> However, these proposed changes are not yet incorporated in national laws and therefore, the sustainability of these Programme results strongly depends on the government's recognition of the importance of proposed changes and prioritization in legal reforms.

As the analysis of effectiveness indicated, reforms of laws and policies are achieved more effectively in countries where there is a tradition of direct advocacy and lobbying of government by civil society, but also where, at the present period, relations between government and civil society enable the dialogue, and government is receptive to civil society proposals. These conditions are identified in four IPA beneficiaries, while in the others, direct communication with the government was not as fruitful, and influence on legal and policy changes took an indirect form through international human rights instruments.

Another factor that can inhibit the sustainability of results is related to the political context specific to this region. Frequent changes of government or political conflicts that result in changes in government priorities and allocation of resources are factors that reduce the likelihood of benefits being maintained.

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<sup>48</sup> For example, members of the Safe Network proposed amendments to the Law on Protection Against Domestic Violence in the Republika Srpska (Bih) which was adopted in September 2019 incorporating proposed changes; criteria of licensing of services was changed in a bylaw in Montenegro (less highly educated professional staff needed to run the service); new intersectoral Protocol on action in cases of violence against women providing an adequate multidisciplinary response in the treatment of victims in Montenegro.

<sup>49</sup> For example, CLCI produced a review of Criminal Code with regards to requirements of GREVIO and IC, two CSOs prepared a gap analysis and submitted proposal on reforms of Criminal Code to Ministry of Justice of North Macedonia; CLCI requested provision of free legal aid to women victims of violence at both civil and criminal legislation; CLCI, ADRF, GADC and HRDC provided comments and participated in the public hearings for legal amendments of the law on measures against domestic violence; ADRF proposed case law that combines protection from domestic violence and discrimination against LGBTI women in Albania; Kosovo Women's Network and NORMA delivered gap analysis with recommendations to strengthen sentencing against perpetrators, NRAEWOK delivered a needs assessment for more effective implementation of the civil laws in prevention of early marriages.



### **7.1.2 Institutional dimension of sustainability**

To evaluate institutional sustainability, the evaluation questions the existence of appropriate institutional structures or mechanisms that can sustain Programme results. In case such institutions and mechanisms exist, the evaluation assesses the stability and adaptability of such mechanisms and their capacity to sustain results. The answer to this question depends on the available human and financial resources, management practices, relations with other relevant stakeholders and values acquired that guide the performance of the institution. Keeping in mind the multilayer nature of the Programme, such institutional mechanisms are needed at the regional, national and sub-national levels.

Presently, there are no regional gender equality mechanisms that could enable the regional level sustainability of results. Processes of regional cooperation are advancing through different regional initiatives, frameworks and cooperation mechanisms (i.e., Regional Cooperation Council), but there are no such mechanisms that are specifically mandated with gender equality. The Regional Forum established through the Programme is a very good platform for the exchange of information and experience, but beyond that, it has no capacities to play the role of the mechanism that can take over the results and provide their sustainability at the regional level.

Based on the evaluation evidence, it could be noted that there are important early signs of ownership of Programme results by national government stakeholders, especially when initiatives were designed in collaboration with government actors. However, there are also signs that ownership of the results is fragile, as its sustainability is dependent on financial resources required to maintain or upscale the results achieved to date. Many gender equality mechanisms in the region do not have sufficient human or financial resources.

Local multisectoral coordination mechanisms appear as the most valuable mechanisms at the local or other subnational level. They appear in different forms; in less comprehensive forms, they are mainly established as multisectoral referral mechanisms, whereas in more complex forms, they are established as multisectoral coordination teams that provide holistic multi-sectoral protection.

### **7.1.3 Social dimension of sustainability**

Social sustainability refers to the participation of key stakeholders, such as partners and beneficiaries, and the probability that they will continue to support the initiatives and the results achieved within the Programme. In this aspect, there are opportunities and capacities for the civil society to maintain or even increase a proactive role in regard to the achieved changes, and opportunity for other stakeholders (donors, private sector, etc.) to contribute, take over or in another way participate in the maintenance or further expansion of results.

The active role of civil society in maintaining results depends on governments' willingness to finance their activities in the form of service provision as well as their willingness to engage with CSOs who monitor and advocate for legislative and policy reform. During data collection missions, stakeholders not belonging to civil society suggested that CSOs should be more self-reliant by providing commercial services in order to fund social activities whether in the form of service provision or in the form of advocacy and lobbying. These suggested measures are not in line with EU standards, especially regarding the Istanbul Convention. If this reflects the growing attitude among government stakeholders in some countries, it can

be a threat to the sustainability of civil society and consequently their role in EVAW as watchdogs, advocates and service providers.

**Successful partnerships established or improved due to the Programme also increase prospects for sustainability.** Evaluation evidence indicates some progress in the development of partnerships at national and regional levels. Sustainability prospects are higher when partnerships have a longer history and were strengthened through the Programme, as in the case of CSOs organized in networks or platforms for jointly monitoring and reporting to international human right mechanisms or cooperating in the provision of services with established referral mechanisms. In some countries, there are clear signs of partnerships between CSOs and government, particularly in the provision of certain services, such as hotlines for victims of violence. There are also indications of improved partnerships among local institutions in the system for protection mutually and with CSOs. Some partnerships were strengthened in regional scope, particularly in the case of Roma women’s networks, the WAVE network and a few other cases.

## 7.2 SUSTAINABILITY OF CSO PARTICIPATION

### 7.2.1 CSO Participation in Regional Spaces

*Finding 18: There is no institutionalized CSO participation at the regional level. Although the Regional Forum established through the Programme was very positively evaluated, it does not have an impact beyond ‘soft’ exchange of experience and information.*

There is no regional interinstitutional government CSO dialogue mechanism that incorporates the Western Balkans and Turkey beyond the Programme’s well-received Regional Forum. The Forum is currently the only mechanism able to facilitate regional cooperation between national gender equality mechanisms, CSOs and European institutions. However, the Regional Forum is not designed to sustain results or regional decision-making after the end of the Programme.

There is a regional cooperation gender equality mechanism contemplated in the Sarajevo Declaration on Cooperation between Gender Mainstreaming Institutional Mechanisms in the Western Balkan and Mediterranean countries, but this mechanism does not have the capacity to sustain the benefits of this Programme. A regional mechanism that can advance and sustain results must be equipped with a mandate that goes beyond ‘soft’ cooperation in the form of exchange of experience and information. It should provide more solid methods of replication, upscaling, mixed decision-making bodies (combination of representatives of government, civil society and other stakeholders)

*“Through regional forums we had the opportunity to see what the situation in other countries is. This was important benefit of the Programme. This should be more organized in the future. The exchange is very superficial on regional level. We hear who is doing what, but nothing after that.”*

CSO representative, Serbia

that have the mandate to develop regional frameworks and not just to deliver recommendations to multiple countries.

Although the importance of the exchange of experience was very positively evaluated by interviewees, there was also the strong feeling that this type of regional forum is not enough. According to this and other similar opinions, this is exactly why it is important that UN Women continue to facilitate these cooperation processes with the view of establishing a formal regional cooperation mechanism. Regional networks of women's organizations may be able to sustain benefits on EAW advocacy if they have sustainable funding and member participation.

## 7.2.2 CSO Participation in National Mechanisms

*Finding 19: The institutionalization of CSOs' participation in interinstitutional mechanisms at national, sub-national and local levels varies across the region. There are examples where CSOs' involvement in national legislative and policy reforms is more permanent, while in other cases there is currently no significant participation of CSOs in key VAWG and GE legal and policy reform mechanisms. Similarly, there are good examples of institutionalization of services provided by CSOs, or participation in local multisectoral response to EAWG, but this is not a systematic trend across the region and time (often limited to project cycles).*

CSO participation in national and subnational mechanisms is relatively more encouraging, although not optimal. There are limited examples of effective national interinstitutional mechanisms capable to sustain the results achieved to date<sup>50</sup> that engage governments, CSOs and other stakeholders. The combination of both financial and capable human resources for those mechanisms are sometimes lacking according to interviewees. There are examples of CSOs participating in temporary bodies, such as working groups formed for drafting strategies or for consultations in relation to some changes of laws<sup>51</sup>, but this has no significant impact on the sustainability of results. Participation of CSOs in parliamentary hearings is mentioned several times, but this is thematic focused, occasional and not a fully relevant mechanism that would enable sustainability of the Programme's results. In some cases, results may have more potential of being sustained through sub-national or local mechanisms, such as multi-agency coordination mechanisms, which appear to be more effective in achieving results.

For at least three IPA beneficiaries in the region, there is institutionalized participation of CSOs in Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanisms. One aspect of the UPR focuses on monitoring and reporting on gender equality, including VAWG. The stability of UPR mechanisms relies on regular support from UN human rights entities and governmental mechanisms established with civil society participation. Currently, there are no signs that CEDAW and GREVIO monitoring mechanisms at national levels that

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<sup>50</sup> One example of this mechanism consists of the incorporation of representatives of CSOs in the operational team of the national mechanism for gender equality in Montenegro. Five CSOs have been participating in the operational team and, as reported by respondents from government, their contribution to the work of the team is essential.

<sup>51</sup> Such working groups are formed in North Macedonia.

include civil society have the same potential to become more permanent mechanisms. Although, there is at least one IPA beneficiary (Serbia) where, due to the Programme's support, CEDAW monitoring instruments are being incorporated in UPR mechanisms. In Serbia, a network of organizations supported through the Programme (SOS Network Vojvodina), prepared shadow reports to CEDAW and GREVIO. As project follow up, the network developed CEDAW monitoring frameworks with indicators for monitoring governmental implementation of CEDAW recommendations. A part of that monitoring framework is transferred to the National Council for Monitoring the Implementation of Human Rights Instruments recommendations, a governmental body that includes CSO representation. The dynamic engagement of civil society in reporting on CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention will certainly depend on available support by the UN or other international agencies.

There are examples of successful integration of CSOs in local mechanisms. For some IPA beneficiaries, they are part of regular municipal gender equality mechanisms; in others, they are integrated into the local multisectoral teams for response to VAWG and sometimes they are part of both which indicates their stronger incorporation into the local mechanisms.

Public-private partnerships are not common. They are more exceptions<sup>52</sup> than a general practice of engagement with the private sector.

## 7.3 REPLICATION OF SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES

*Finding 20: The replication or upscaling of results was not implemented during the Programme's implementation. There are very good examples of new practices, services, and methods that were piloted and implemented which should be assessed and replicated across the region with necessary contextual adjustments.*

The replication and upscaling of different initiatives, practices, and reforms can significantly contribute to the sustainability of results. The Programme has supported piloting and experimentation of EVAWG initiatives in the region. Limited dissemination of successful practices has occurred through web publications or newsletters. Pilot initiatives that included some form of testing, trials of new practices, services or elements of services which proved beneficial could be replicated in other communities or upscaled to the national or regional levels.

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<sup>52</sup> In some campaigning initiatives implemented by the Programme, private companies partnered with implementing CSOs. In Kosovo for instance, the Programme engaged, through a CSO implementing partner, a private sector company with required information technology expertise to ensure the development of a statistical database on VAWG. The government may assume the cost of this statistical database in the future. There was engagement of private sector lawyers (mostly sole practitioners) in the training of lawyers to represent victims of VAW during the court proceedings. In Turkey, another UN agency noted its engagement with private sector institutions, including newspapers, private universities and small and medium enterprises, to engage in EVAWG initiatives.

The assessment conducted during this evaluation found some of the initiatives were very effective and beneficial for the prevention, elimination or better protection of women and girls from gender-based violence. Their replication or upscaling in the following period might significantly increase the overall impact of the Programme and contributed to the effectiveness and quality of the response to EAWG. Examples of successful initiatives include the following:

*Femicide survey.* The femicide survey implemented by Gender Knowledge Hub and FemPlatz was implemented only in Serbia with the aim to screen the system for protection of women from VAW based on cases with fatal outcomes. Exploring femicide cases revealed gaps in the system for protection and provided clear and precise recommendations of what should be improved in the different elements of the system for protection in order to prevent future cases of femicide and provide better protection of women victims of violence. The in-depth analysis was based on criminal court cases, but interviews with perpetrators were a very important component of the research as they provided insights to their perception, behaviour and choices that should be targeted or countered by the proper response of the system protection. Based on the research findings, recommendations were developed for different institutions, including the system for VAW victims' protection, on how to further improve their practices and procedures to prove more effective prevention and protection. Based on survey findings, the implementing partners advocated for the establishment of a system for monitoring femicide that will use actual cases to enable continuous monitoring of the system's failure to respond appropriately, as currently this does not exist.

The benefits of the survey were multifold. Professionals from the system for protection found the findings and recommendations very useful guidance on how to improve their response. The methodology could be described in some form of manual with practical advice and lessons learned, instruments for data collection and analytical tools and replicated to other countries in the region. The regional comparisons would be enabled after all surveys are conducted, providing stronger impetus for further improvement of the system and exchange of experience between countries with examples of common gaps and good practices that could be disseminated. Also, possible regional femicide monitoring observatory could be established.

*Multi-sector or multi-agency coordinated response mechanisms among local essential service providers.* Multisector coordination in response to violence in local communities is not a novelty by itself. Different forms of multisector cooperation have been developing for years in the region, taking different forms and with variable effectiveness. However, the initiatives implemented through the Programme have contributed to the improvement of multisector coordination in local communities where projects were implemented. There are different examples of how the cooperation is generally strengthened by providing more effective referral mechanisms and multisectoral response and services, coordinating activities of the police, judiciary, social protection and health care.<sup>53</sup> In addition to this, there were initiatives implemented that introduced specific elements of multisector cooperation in order to increase access of women

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<sup>53</sup> The examples of these initiatives include projects implemented by EHO, Foundation Lara Bijeljina, HDRC, Women Forum Elbasan, NGO Activ, and SafeHouse.

from different marginalized groups to protection services. These innovative elements could be disseminated and incorporated through multisector approaches in other local communities across the region. The examples include tailor-made services for women with disabilities such as the possibility to report online or the online use of a sign interpreter by service providers when working with deaf women (as it was the case for projects implemented by the Serbian CSO Iz Kruga), the presence of 'persons of trust' in local communities who can serve as information centers and as first referral points for women living in villages struggling to obtain information and services, and very often prevented of these access by family and neighbours (as it was the case for a project implemented by the CSO Sandglass). There are also examples of new forms of multisectoral coordination in innovative services provided within centers for support to victims of sexual violence in Vojvodina, Serbia.

*Grassroots approaches to raise awareness and influence behaviours.* There are different approaches to raise awareness of rights and gender equality among women, men and local communities, including door-to-door campaigns on early marriage implemented in Kosovo and the peer to peer campaign on how to access justice services among refugee and migrant women in Turkey. Positive results and a good perception by stakeholders suggest that the initiatives working with men and especially fathers should be replicated and upscaled. The father support initiative in Turkey - which focused on increasing awareness of gender equality and VAW among husbands and fathers, changing practices to dedicate more time in activities with children, communicating more with wives, sharing household responsibilities - can be replicated in other countries.

These initiatives are usually small scale and could have a much greater impact if upscaled and replicated in a larger number of communities. Some other initiatives, especially Gender Lab strategic communication pilots for attitudinal and behavioral change, require further performance measurement to determine results and lessons learned.

*Networking methods in monitoring women's human rights, EAWG and reporting to international mechanisms.* The networking methods applied in monitoring women's human rights, EAWG and reporting to international mechanisms could also be replicated as good practices. The tools produced by some of the implementing organizations, such as the toolkits for reporting to CEDAW, GREVIO and UPR (produced by SOS Network Vojvodina and the Monitoring Network Against Gender Based Violence) could be assessed, translated and disseminated across the region in order to provide guidance for effective networking in shadow reporting.

## 8 Efficiency

### 8.1 ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

*Finding 21: The Programme has allocated resources to create a foundation for further EVAWG reforms in alignment with the Istanbul Convention and quality essential services in the region. Ensuring Programme supported reforms are linked to public funding allocations will ensure sustainability of EVAWG initiatives.*

#### 8.1.1 Allocation of Financial Resources

The Programme budget included contributions from the EC and UN Women as follows:

Table 11: Budget allocations by EC and UN Women

	€	%
<b>EC</b>	€ 5,000,000.00	88.01%
<b>UN Women</b>	€ 681,220.39	11.99%
<b>Total</b>	€ 5,681,220.39	100.00%

UN Women's 12% financial contribution was assigned to the regional core budget line, as can be seen in the budget organized by geographic component:

Table 12: Budget allocation by geographic and management components

Geographic component	Project ID	Amount (EUR)	Percentage of Total
<b>Albania</b>	00105149	450,699.09	7.93%
<b>BiH</b>	00105052	550,006.14	9.68%
<b>Kosovo</b>	00105171	552,143.65	9.72%
<b>North Macedonia</b>	00105177	485,103.80	8.54%
<b>Montenegro</b>	00105396	379,300.00	6.68%
<b>Serbia</b>	00105169	485,021.80	8.54%
<b>Turkey</b>	00105144	600,064.56	10.56%
<b>Regional</b>	00104700	1,497,660.96	26.36%
<b>Regional (CORE)</b>	00104700	681,220.39	11.99%
<b>EC</b>		<b>5,000,000.00</b>	<b>88.01%</b>
<b>UN Women</b>		<b>681,220.39</b>	<b>11.99%</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>5,681,220.39</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

*In-kind contribution.* Interview data suggests that some technical staff (e.g., Technical project analyst in Turkey) and other UN personnel (e.g. country director, thematic experts, administrators) provided direct or indirect support to the Programme with no contribution from the Programme budget. This implies that,

in addition to the financial contribution of €681,220,39, UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro also provided non-monetized in-kind contributions to the program through its technical expertise which are not included in the budget.

The evaluators prepared a budget according to regional and thematic components for analysis of efficiency and effectiveness. Please see the budget in **Annex 16**. A summary of the budget by thematic component and management is in Table 13 below.

Table 13: Budget allocations by thematic component

Budget	Total by SO	% of total
SO1	1,483,531.04	26.1%
SO2	850,786.11	15.0%
SO3	1,330,589.62	23.4%
Management costs	2,016,313.62	35.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,681,220.39</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Allocations by geographic component.* The regional component was assigned the highest amount of funds, justified by the regionality of the Programme and logistical costs required for regional activities. **Results achieved by regional networks and organizations are consistent with the funding allocation.** Results were advanced in relation to monitoring and shadow reporting in SO 1, regional participatory action research (which can inform activities in Phase II), intersectionality research and training, regional forums and regional CSO-European institution meetings. Stakeholders in countries in the region acknowledged that **significant results were achieved with limited funds**, especially since CSOs are committed to maximizing their work with the resources provided.

*Allocations by thematic component.* Given the EC requires an input-based budget rather than a results-based budget, the analysis of cost effectiveness by results area is challenging and may not be precise. During the inception phase, the evaluation team prepared the budget by thematic and management components (**Annex 16**). For example, the table above demonstrates that more funds were allocated to SO 1 and SO 3 than SO 2; however, UN Women directly implemented activities in thematic components, including SO 2 (e.g. the COMBI training) and provided technical assistance to Programme partners related to different SO areas. These activities are captured in management costs rather than specific objective amounts. These latter figures capture only the PCAs with CSOs. The evaluation also found that while a PCA may be assigned to one result area, the activities correspond to various results across the Programme ToC. Programme personnel noted that higher budget allocation does not infer higher prioritization because many of the projects are interconnected. Furthermore, communication and visibility work is a management activity and cost, although it is important to EAW advocacy. Still, **the higher budget allocations to CSOs under SO 1 and SO 3 are consistent with the results findings.** UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro acknowledged that the adjustment to the original 60,000 budget limit and the limit on the number of PCAs with the same CSO was necessary to advance towards results.



While some Programme initiatives are consistent with gender equality and EVAWG strategies and other publicly financed initiatives (free legal aid, licensed support services), it will be important for UN Women and the EC to advocate for sustained budget allocations as part of public sector financing and gender responsive budgeting.

### **8.1.2 Allocation of Human Resources**

As mentioned in the Relevance section, UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro are recognized for their technical expertise. The expertise of technical project analysts and other personnel supports the achievement of results and represents significant value for money.

As mentioned in 8.1.1 above, the evaluation found that personnel whose salaries are not paid by this Programme still contribute to technical aspects (dialogue with government, review of proposals, deliverables, etc.) and management (administrative and logistical support and financial administration). This situation is explained by the fact that one project analyst per IPA beneficiary and one regional manager cannot reasonably implement activities directly; support CSOs with PCAs; dialogue with governmental, EC and external stakeholders; and attend to all management tasks without support from office directors and personnel assigned to other initiatives. The actual human resource costs are efficient and effective but are not fully captured in the budget.

## **8.2 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

*Finding 22: Leadership and management of the Programme has been effective to maximize results. Results-based measurement and reporting could enhance results and contribute to communications on Programme achievements.*

### **8.2.1 Governance and Strategic Management**

*Governance and strategic management regionally.* The Project Steering Committee (PSC) provided a useful reporting mechanism on Programme progress for both EU representatives and UN Women. PSC members from the EC, other European entities, and UN Women, agreed that the PSC is also an important mechanism for strategic discussion as well as reporting on Programme results.

*Governance and strategic management nationally.* The Technical Working Group (TWG) is convened approximately once or twice per year in most countries, except Montenegro.<sup>54</sup> With the exception of Turkey, government officials attended the TWG. Attendance by EU delegation officials appears to be sporadic. Several EU national delegations acknowledged they could be more engaged but lack clarity on their role vis-à-vis the regional programme. The TWG is perceived by Programme stakeholders as

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<sup>54</sup> Data were contradictory: interviewees claimed there was no TWG; while files provided to the evaluators provided minutes of meetings called "thematic discussion and specialized service support" between UNDP in Montenegro, officials of the government gender equality agency, and CSOs as minutes of a TWG.

effective when it involves CSO, government, UN and EU representatives in discussions of planning and progress toward the regional results framework.

### 8.2.2 Communications and Visibility

One of the key management obligations of UN Women, as an IPA beneficiary, is to implement a communications and visibility plan (annex 6 to the Programme Document) in accordance with the guidelines on the topic for EU-financed external actions.<sup>55</sup> UN Women has implemented and reported on their communications and visibility activities, which have included the Programme website, quarterly e-newsletters, communication materials to mark international or regional events, regional publications, advocacy videos, among other efforts. Interviews conducted during the evaluation reinforced comments addressed by the EC on the annual progress report: the EC would like to better understand the communication between EU delegations and the Programme personnel, as well as CSO implementing partners' visibility in relation to PCA initiatives. EU delegations acknowledged they need guidance on how to engage with the Programme from Brussels.

### 8.2.3 Results-based Monitoring and Reporting

*UN Women Programme monitoring mechanisms.* Programme design includes a comprehensive Performance Measurement Framework (PMF) with indicators and targets for the Programme. The evaluation confirmed close oversight and monitoring of initiatives by programme personnel; however, different levels of results-based monitoring and evaluation tools were applied to measure changes in capacity. The absence of qualitative assessment methodologies appears to be the result of quantitative indicators that measure number of initiatives or number of individuals reached rather than a change in knowledge, skill or attitudes. The evaluators found that not all CSO partners conducted internal evaluation to measure change in skills or knowledge. One CSO responsible for a regional training event did not apply an evaluation instrument because its "agreement didn't specify pre and post-assessment." While the practice may not be consistent across all initiatives, Programme management provided at least eight examples of initiatives where pre and post-assessment was being used. The evaluators did not always find this assessment information in quarterly progress reports or deliverables. Information on pre and post assessment was found in four project reports or deliverables. In one instance (Support to Life), the application of strong evaluation methods is evident in the publication on the peer to peer initiative (referenced in section 5 above).

*Results-based reporting.* Programme progress reports submitted to the EC include information related to the indicators set out in the PMF; however, the evaluators found that two indicators (1.a and 1.1.a) are reported on directly (with a clear statement containing the data responding to the indicator), while most responses to indicators are partial. In other words, to determine the precise progress against the indicator, the reader needs to review the information under the result and make a calculation. See **Annex 17** for the evaluators' review of the indicators. The evaluators observed above in sections 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 that indicators may not capture the change intended in the result statement. Additionally, some indicators

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<sup>55</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/visibility\\_requirements-near\\_english.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/visibility_requirements-near_english.pdf)

are challenging to measure, such as Indicator 2.2.a, “proportion of people who have been exposed to messages challenging harmful gender stereotypes among targeted communities.” The Programme provides information on the number of people reached but not the proportion of the total population reached. The evaluators reiterate that the indicator itself does not measure the change in the result statement (“better understanding and acceptance of gender equality”).

*EC Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM).* In 2018 the EC applied its own ROM review and the report was provided early in 2019. A review of the ROM recommendations (see **Annex 18** for a summary of the recommendations) reveals a number of similar findings with this evaluation. In terms of results-based measurement, the monitor suggests reporting on a measure not included in the PMF: percentage of individuals from minority and disadvantaged groups reached in the Programme activities compared to the total population. Precise data from CSO implementing partners would be required to respond to that indicator. Other recommendations that coincide with evaluation data include enhanced engagement of grassroots organizations and longer-term grants with more time for implementation, including practical workshops at the Regional Forum.

**8.2.4 Timeliness of Implementation**

*Finding 23: The Programme overcame challenges related to limited capacity among CSOs to respond to Calls for Proposals. Minor delays occurred due to the time required to conduct capacity assessments and onboarding of new implementing partners.*

The evaluators reviewed annual work plans against annual progress reports and found some activities were delayed due to challenges encountered with the lengthy and in-depth capacity assessment process following the competitive Calls for Proposals process. Evaluation interviews confirmed the lengthy process for the entire “grant” process from preparation of the Call documents, the review and selection of the proposal, evaluation of the selected CSO and then to the full capacity assessment of the CSO. The evaluation data also links this comprehensive selection and assessment process to limited human resources assigned to complete it.

Due to the reasons mentioned above, the implementation of activities by CSOs was delayed, affecting their reporting at the end of the year. Still, Table 14 below, demonstrates that there were almost 50% fewer delays in year 2 compared to year 1.

Table 14: Activities not achieved as planned in Year 1 and 2

Geographic Component	Year 2	Year 1
Serbia	3	4
Albania	3	5
BiH	1	6
North Macedonia	0	7
Turkey	2	7
Kosovo	2	4
Montenegro	4	5
Regional	4	0

<b>Total:</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>34</b>
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## 8.2.5 Challenges during implementation

*Management challenges that may affect efficiency.* Capacity assessment and on-boarding of CSOs that delayed implementation in year 1 were managed more efficiently in year 2, according to annual reports. Other challenges were identified in the evaluation interviews and documentary data. Three stakeholder categories addressed implementation challenges: UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro, CSO implementing partners and EC representatives (in headquarters and IPA beneficiaries' delegations). The challenges were perceived differently by the three groups, although some similarities exist between UN Women and CSO implementing partners. These challenges may be addressed in Phase II.

Table 15: Challenges perceived by three stakeholder groups

<b>UN Women (UNDP in Montenegro)</b>	<b>CSO implementing partners</b>	<b>EC representatives</b>
EC contract conditions and procedures constrain Programme. They learn to manage.	Scheduling challenges with beneficiaries (e.g. individual women, public service providers or government officials) combined with project timelines.	Communication flow between the Programme and EU delegations.
Limited human resources to manage Programme	Limited human resources (internal and in UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro).	Visibility of sub-grants.
Ambitious projects designed by CSOs.	Ambitious project design or inaccurate assumptions in proposals.	Limited reporting on challenges and how they will be addressed in the following period.
Limited financial resources (related to contract conditions and human resources).	Limited financial resources.	

*EVAW challenges that affect timely implementation.* Other challenges, primarily identified by CSO implementing partners, relate to the feasibility of implementing the ToC in the available time, local norms or attitudes inconsistent with EVAW standards or best practices that require alternative approaches or significant persuasion (e.g. of local authorities), and new approaches requiring additional effort (e.g. COMBI method, database development, data collection in research) not originally anticipated. The experience and motivation of CSOs and UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro facilitated the resolution of challenges and the progress towards results, as is evident in section 5.

## PART 3: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 9 Conclusions

The conclusions are organized according to the findings section of the report, namely by ToC and according to the five evaluation criteria. However, findings used to construct the conclusions are not only extracted from the corresponding evaluation criteria. As an example, evaluators integrated sustainability and efficiency findings into conclusions on relevance and effectiveness, and effectiveness findings with sustainability conclusions. The findings supporting each conclusion are in parenthesis following the conclusion.

#### 9.1 THEORY OF CHANGE

1. Data from the reflection on the ToC and from other evaluation questions highlight the importance of ensuring a strong shared perception of the Theory of Change, especially the regional framework and its national application. Overall, a more coherent knowledge of ToC assumptions, including necessary conditions to achieve certain outcomes, would strengthen and enhance participation and ownership, thus increasing the probability of sustainability of EVAWG initiatives (findings 1 and 2).

#### 9.2 RELEVANCE

2. The Programme, by ensuring coherency between the needs of women who experience discrimination and violence and national/regional priorities and strategies, has helped maintain VAWG on the policy/political agenda even in environments not entirely conducive to gender equality mainstreaming and EVAWG (findings 3 and 4).
3. The Programme is supporting the EU accession process of IPA beneficiaries by aligning activities with the implementation of the Istanbul Convention and meeting the needs of women, especially women from minority and marginalized groups. This provides the opportunity for CSOs, government stakeholders and UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro to collaborate in the implementation and tracking of EVAWG initiatives. Such collaboration, through a national level interinstitutional mechanism, will enhance ownership and sustainability of the reforms (findings 3, 4, 5, 17).

## 9.3 EFFECTIVENESS

4. The Programme was able to strengthen women's networks through IS 2 capacity building that incorporated key aspects of the ToC: i) building networks' capacities around monitoring and reporting on regional normative standards and mechanisms (Istanbul Convention and GREVIO); ii) analyzing and enhancing accessible networking practices among women's CSOs, especially CSOs working with or representing minority and marginalized women, through research and specific EAW advocacy initiatives; and iii) incorporating intersectional approaches into networks and CSOs who apply networking methods in their local contexts. These good practices in network strengthening for EAW purposes could be further improved and replicated. (findings 8, 13.1 and 20)
5. The use of shadow reports produced by CSOs for international and regional bodies (e.g. CEDAW and GREVIO) or national governments and the use and acceptance of legislative and policy proposals by national or subnational government bodies does not appear to be closely tracked and reported by the Programme. However, individual interviews and reports indicate women's CSOs and networks have influence in treaty-bodies and national government bodies. Nevertheless, Phase I allowed reporting and advocacy by women's CSOs to be strengthened and Phase II will provide an opportunity for the Programme to track the use of shadow reports and legislative proposals and the implementation of new laws and EAW policies. (findings 8.1, 8.2, and 22)
6. The regionality of this Programme is achieved principally through normative standards (acquis communautaire and Istanbul Convention), regional research, regional networks, and the Regional Forum. To maintain the regional progress achieved to date, a formal regional interinstitutional mechanism with structured dialogue between CSOs, government and EU institutions would support the sustainability of the regional vision of the ToC and the results achieved to date. (findings 4, 8.3, 18 and 19)
7. Engaging influencers, changing behaviours among individuals and changing professional practice are long term endeavours. The Gender Lab allowed for experimentation, and perhaps some innovation; however, the final results of the initiatives are not yet known. Changing the behaviours of individuals, including men and boys, and professional practices of media, service providers, and government officials will require sustained training or mentoring. In addition, the expected behavioural change, indicators and pre- and post-assessment methods need to be carefully planned to provide evidence that these approaches are indeed effective. (findings 1, 9, 9.1, 9.2, and IS analysis)
8. UN Women is recognized for its technical EAWG expertise in the region and the evaluation findings suggest that preliminary capacities and innovations within the Gender Lab could be strengthened if more support and time for testing the application of innovative awareness raising, influencing the influencer or behavioural communication methodologies was provided. (findings 7, 9, 9.1 and 9.2)

9. UN Women understood the challenge of moving away from traditional information, education and communication activities to behavioural change methods and decided to take a multi-faceted approach to change attitudes on VAWG. For example, Calls for Proposals (and subsequent initiatives) incorporated awareness raising as a cross-cutting activity. The Programme applied a variety of methods to raise awareness: printing materials and products, social media or mass campaigns, grassroots methods (peer to peer, door to door, father support, youth workshops), and methods to influence the influencers such as media and educators. Evidence of attitudinal change (and perhaps behavioural change) can be measured in the latter targeted initiatives and this evidence-based measurement should be integrated in all future initiatives in this component. (findings 9.0, 9.1 and 9.2)
10. In SO 2 and 3, initiatives to educate and empower women and community members, especially minority and marginalized communities, that adopted peer to peer and grassroots engagement had achieved positive results. These peer to peer approaches combined building the capacity of volunteers and raising awareness among targeted women and men on women's rights, available services, gender stereotypes and harmful practices. They provide the opportunity structure that facilitates women's agency. (findings 9.2, 10.4, 15)
11. The Programme has made significant advances supporting the enabling environment and the supply side of accessible and quality service provision to women who have experienced violence, especially women from minority communities and women with disabilities. Initiatives that address the demand side by responding to women's needs, including services provided by CSOs or private lawyers, have reached women across the region; however, the impact of the services on women or the degree of empowerment of individual women is not assessed directly. (findings 10, 10.1, 10.4, 15)
12. The balance between the supply and demand dimensions of services for women who have experienced violence is important to maintain. The experience in Montenegro regarding licensing and the good functioning of municipalities' multi-sector coordination mechanisms demonstrates the confidence and trust that CSOs enjoy among women in communities; however, effects of bureaucratization on women's safety and agency need to be considered. (findings 10.1 and 11)
13. The Programme has supported the review or development of case management tools, including protocols related to domestic VAWG, that incorporate an intersectional approach to service provision; however, the Programme has done limited but important work to date on specialized services for victims and survivors of sexual violence (including the regional mapping produced by WAVE). (finding 10.3)

## 9.4 IMPACT

14. The Programme envisions the empowerment of women in its ToC, especially women from minority or marginalized groups; however, there is not a clear definition to guide CSOs working to empower women, nor an assessment methodology to measure how, and to what degree, women have been empowered. The evaluation identified the capacity of a woman to advocate for herself

as an approach to women's empowerment that is consistent with the EAW ToC. The Programme appeared to have contributed to enhance self-advocacy skills through initiatives in SO 3, although these initiatives did not track improvement in self-advocacy directly or explicitly. The ability of CSO service providers to demonstrate women's empowerment may facilitate funding. (findings 10, 10.4, 14 and 15)

## 9.5 SUSTAINABILITY

15. There is a greater potential for sustainability and ownership of results in SO 1, linked with legislative and policy reforms initiatives, as a result of the alignment with the EU accession process, international and regional standards, and national priorities where inter-institutional mechanisms (between the government and the civil society) exist to support the reform process. There is also greater potential sustainability in SO 3 where IC standards are integrated into law and policies on service provision and in municipalities where multi-sector response mechanisms that include CSO service providers are functional. (findings 4, 5, 8, 10, 17 and 19)
16. Sustainability is further supported due to the Programme's alignment with national priorities. EAWG is recognized as an important policy issue which is evidenced by the national gender equality and specific EAWG policies. Although there are early signs of national ownership over results in legislative reform and service provisions, gender equality mechanisms that could sustain broader EAWG reforms and replicate successful practices from the Programme are not sufficiently equipped with human and material resources. (findings 2, 8, 10, 19, 20)
17. Civil society is strengthened and able to perpetuate EAWG law and policy advocacy, communication advocacy, and service provision. However, more stable and longer term interinstitutional gender equality, EAWG mechanisms and financial resources are required to replicate and continue reforms, awareness raising initiatives and service provision nationally and sub-nationally. Regionally, there is not a sustainable mechanism to maintain Programme results. (findings 8.1, 8.3, 9.1, 10.1, 17, 18, and 19)

## 9.6 EFFICIENCY

18. Effective management and efficient allocation and use of resources has contributed to the achievement of results grounded in EU normative standards, namely the Istanbul Convention. An assessment of the degree of implementation of the Istanbul Convention following initial legal, policy and service reforms will help identify capacity, financial and service gaps and future priority actions. (findings 5, 21)
19. The use of all implementation strategies in projects demonstrates the contribution one initiative or project may make to multiple results in the regional framework. Rigorous monitoring and internal evaluation methods are essential to ensure the Programme activities are evaluable and to report on all the results to which a PCA may contribute. Demonstrating cumulative regional results will also contribute to Programme visibility. (findings 13, 22)



20. The use of the Civil Society Facility funding mechanism, PCAs with women's CSOs, and the strengthening of women's organizations' implementation strategy are appropriate, and taken together, these factors allow the Programme to respond to regional and national political contexts, reach CSOs that represent minority and marginalized women, and increase access of women survivors of VAW to local services. Some implementing CSOs partnered with grassroots women's organizations and applied IS 2 to their work with beneficiary women's organizations. This approach to working with grassroots women's organizations is consistent with the results-oriented monitoring findings and recommendations. (findings 1, 4, 7, 11, 13.1, 15)

## 10 Lessons Learned

Lessons learned are based on the evaluators' identification and analysis of original assumptions (explicit or implicit assumptions) made by the Programme. The lessons consider whether the assumption was accurate or not and what can be learned from this assumption for future implementation.

1. The Programme assumed the EU normative framework and accession process would foster an EVAWG regionality. This assumption was accurate due to UN Women's leadership in promoting this regionality through regional women's networks, regional research, and the Regional Forum. In Phase II, regionality should be maintained through the application of regional research and the replication of good practices across the Western Balkans and Turkey.
2. The Programme assumed the willingness of governments to engage in law and policy reform initiatives with UN Women and UNDP in Montenegro and CSO implementing partners. This assumption is evident in result 1.2 (Laws and policies are reviewed and reformed to conform with international human rights standards including CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention). This assumption was accurate in certain contexts where a combination of two factors was present: i) where women's CSOs had prior experience in lobbying for law reform and ii) where national governments were committed to reforming legislation to align with the Istanbul Convention. In contexts where these two factors or conditions did not coincide (and UN Women was not able to create these conditions in a short period), alternative opportunities can be considered to advance an enabling legislative and policy environment on eliminating violence against women and all forms of discrimination. For example, EVAWG legislative and policy reform advocacy occurred at the municipal level in Phase II in relation to gender equality mechanisms and multi-agency service coordination. This alternative would be beneficial in countries where municipal government is decentralized and benefits from a degree of autonomy and where mechanisms are established for citizen participation in planning, budgeting and service provision.
3. UN Women and the EC assumed CSOs would have the capacity to implement EVAWG initiatives in a short time frame and with a small budget. This assumption was accurate especially when the previous experience of many CSOs and the project management support provided by UN Women

is considered. In future implementation, both UN Women and experienced CSOs can transfer knowledge and skills to grassroots women's organizations to increase their participation.

4. IS 2 assumed support to women's networks and networking as a general method would enhance ERAW advocacy in the region. This assumption proved to be accurate in terms of initiatives identified in the first specific objective and capacity building as a modus operandi. Networking was less evident in the other thematic components and in facilitation of the technical working groups.
5. The Programme made an accurate assumption when it chose to support initiatives based on CSOs' ongoing work. This allowed implementing partners to test innovative methods, enhance gender equality and VAWG content, expand services, and/or become licensed service providers. The replication of successful practices can be shared in Phase II.
6. The Programme assumed minority and marginalized women to mean certain groups of women identified mainly by ethnicity (Roma was a strong focus), language and migration status, but also women with disabilities. While this assumption is accurate and corresponds to EC priorities in some countries (e.g., Syrian refugees in Turkey), the implementation of Phase I demonstrates that an intersectional approach requires support for a broader range of women. In the region, survivors of armed conflict and women of other ethnicities, sexual orientation, and gender identity were involved in a small number of activities. Legislative and policy reforms, shadow reporting, strategic communication, and services should consider the needs of an even broader range of women.
7. The Programme, following a high-level ERAWG theory of change, assumed it was feasible to implement the framework in the Western Balkans and Turkey due to the shared EU accession process in the region. The assumption is partially true; however, the political context, language differences and size of Turkey have affected the Programme's ability to cultivate government and civil society relations and implement results across the three thematic components. Implementation in a specified geographic area (e.g. one province) may increase synergies between initiatives (as was evident in the Western Balkans) and provide the basis for national level ERAW advocacy.
8. The Programme made an accurate assumption about the need for a baseline study on attitudes related to gender equality and VAWG. However, in the absence of a regional mass social marketing campaign on ERAWG that can easily be identified with the Programme, the endline assessment may not illuminate the Programme's contribution to a change in attitudes and perceptions on gender equality and harmful gender stereotypes.
9. It is not clear whether the implicit assumption in SO 3 (that raising women's awareness of their rights would lead to their empowerment and to consequent increased demand for services) was accurate, since the change in women's awareness and empowerment and the link to demand for services was not assessed by the Programme. The evaluation found that the assumption about the supply side (strengthening service provision and supporting service delivery by women's CSOs) was an accurate assumption as it enhanced the quality of services. Service providers expressed the opinion that women had more confidence in services as a result. Also, some

anecdotal information suggests that women would ask about services after attending awareness raising sessions.

## 11 Recommendations

The recommendations are divided into two sections: i) the recommendations that are formulated to respond to priority conclusions that could reasonably be implemented by UN Women in Phase II; and ii) recommendations that cannot feasibly be implemented in the short term and those that require actions by other Programme stakeholders. These latter recommendations could be considered by UN Women and the EC in another programming, and by government officials, namely related to gender equality mechanisms.

### 11.1 SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Discuss the ToC more widely with Programme stakeholders and partners, especially the expected results and its application to country action plans (through activities) so they understand how they are contributing to the overall Programme framework.
  - a. Review the ToC at Technical Working Group's meetings to discuss its application in the national and local context.
  - b. Consider "micro-level" implementation of initiatives linked with component 2 and 3 in one province in Turkey in order to create synergies and generate greater impact among target beneficiaries.
2. Increase support to initiatives addressing sexual violence against women and girls.
3. Strengthen internal measurement, tracking and reporting on results achieved in direct UN Women activities and CSO implementing partners so that results, including results of initiatives that can be upscaled, and lessons learned can be captured across the region. For example:
  - a. Track and report on the use of CSO shadow reports and legislative or policy proposals by government agencies or international mechanisms.
  - b. Provide regional cumulative measures of results in progress reports to ensure the Programme results are visible and easily communicated to the EC and Programme partners.
  - c. Assess the successful initiatives from Phase I to determine their replicability and potential for upscaling.
  - d. Ensure that target beneficiaries from whom a change is expected are clearly defined in CSO project proposals.

4. Adjust the Regional Forum methodology to facilitate dialogue and reflection on successful pilot initiatives that can be replicated to advance the implementation of the Istanbul Convention across the region. Specifically:
  - a. Create smaller spaces for facilitated dialogue between CSOs, government and EU institutions. Facilitated dialogue could be thematic or country-specific (given that the forum is a safe space for this type of inter-institutional dialogue where national situations have restricted government-CSO dialogue).
  - b. Share the lessons learned and recommendations for the replicability and upscaling of successful initiatives (from one or all the three thematic components).
  - c. Expand discussions on intersectional approaches to EVAWG to ensure the broadest range of women are considered in legislative reform, strategic communication and service provision.
5. Further support the participation of CSOs in the development and monitoring of an enabling environment for EVAW through shadow reporting, reforms, and tracking for accountability the actions of national governments against the Istanbul Convention and CEDAW.
  - a. Support the development of monitoring frameworks for regular (i.e. biannual) monitoring on the implementation of CEDAW and GREVIO recommendations.
  - b. Ensure tracking of CSOs' influence in legislative and policy reform.
6. Increase Gender Lab technical assistance to CSOs and mentoring between CSOs in the region in order to enhance experimentation and measure success.
  - a. Enhance the planning, implementation and measurement of grassroots behavioural change methods such as door to door campaigns on harmful practices that engage peer volunteers, peer to peer methods to raise awareness and empower women, and peer to peer methods engaging men (such as the father support programme).
  - b. Reflect on the results of COMBI initiatives in Phase I and compile lessons learned on the application of the COMBI methodology to VAWG communication advocacy.
  - c. Engage men to a greater degree in behavioural change initiatives in component 2.
  - d. Identify key influencers to target in Phase II, as well as the best tactics to change and track influencers' own practices. Clarify critical regional EVAWG messages for replication by Programme stakeholders (e.g., through social media and websites), including influencers targeted.

7. Continue support to local multi-sector coordination mechanisms and study common or divergent practices across the region, promoting an evolution from referral to integral service provision mechanisms.
  - a. Involve women beneficiaries, particularly those from marginalized groups, in the assessment of the multi-sector coordination mechanisms.
  - b. Facilitate the exchange of by-laws, best practices and service protocols among Programme stakeholders at the regional forum.
8. Continue to support women's access to justice through human rights mechanisms, free legal aid and training of lawyers (engaged by CSOs or as sole practitioners). If possible, prepare lawyers and other personnel with the skills to facilitate and measure women's legal and social empowerment through the delivery of free legal aid.
9. Adjust and replicate innovative practices and skill development among service providers for better access of women to VAW support services, particularly those from minority or marginalized groups (e.g., persons of trust for rural women, sign language interpretation, Roma mediators, adjusted service protocols, etc.).
10. Consider increasing support to services that provide psycho-social support or treatment to male aggressors so that good practices in the region can be identified and shared for replication.
11. Continue to strengthen women's organizations' implementation strategy across the Programme by:
  - a. Sharing network strengthening good practices for EVAWG advocacy among networks of women's organizations, especially those representing or involving minority and marginalized women, so that their political agency is enhanced.
  - b. Communicating key findings from Phase I research studies.
12. Adjust call for proposal methods to engage grassroots women's organizations, especially organizations from minority or marginalized groups, and build capacity for results-based planning and measurement by:
  - a. Encouraging or requiring joint proposals between larger women's CSOs and organizations representing minority and marginalized groups, grassroots organizations, or rural organizations to widen coverage, strengthen capacities, and deepen intersectional approaches to EVAWG initiatives.
  - b. Offering a results-based planning and measurement workshop prior to the call deadline (where the regional results framework can also be presented).

- c. Replicating the sub-granting or sub-contracting arrangement used by some CSOs in Phase I to support capacity building of grassroots women's organizations.
13. Prepare an implementation strategy based on CSOs' experience gained during Phase I that incorporates an intersectional approach to the empowerment of women victims and survivors of VAW that can be replicated by CSOs, especially CSOs offering legal aid and other support services to women.
  - a. Clarify indicators or benchmarks that characterize empowerment of victims and survivors of violence against women, keeping in mind that indicators may vary among minority and marginalized groups of women.
  - b. Encourage lawyers and social workers to track the progress of women towards the empowerment indicators or benchmarks.
14. Strengthen or establish inter-institutional EVAWG mechanisms that engage government and women's organizations, especially those representing minority and marginalized women. These mechanisms can coordinate and monitor progress on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention (where feasible in the national context) and enhance ownership of Programme results.

## 11.2 LONGER TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

15. Strengthen regional cooperation among national gender equality mechanisms through regular conferences, regional research, campaigns or similar initiatives. Ensure civil society participation in this regional mechanism.
16. Prepare an impact assessment methodology in order to evaluate the impact of the Istanbul Convention's implementation in the region and plan for future EVAWG initiatives.
17. Link EVAWG with work on gender responsive budgeting (costing VAWG, EVAWG, and national action plans) to further enhance relevance with EU accession processes and to operationalize legislative and policy commitments.
18. Conceptualize a regional social marketing EVAWG campaign that is designed to address a concrete behaviour (examples drawn from public health initiatives) and that includes metrics for evaluating the campaign's effect changing attitudes and behaviours.
19. Strengthen joint UN Women and EC advocacy efforts on EVAWG among governments in the region.