

A close-up photograph of two hands, palms facing each other, with intricate henna designs. The left hand features a large floral motif on the back and a geometric pattern on the palm. The right hand has a similar geometric pattern on the palm and a beaded bracelet on the wrist. The background is a vibrant, patterned fabric with yellow, red, and black designs. A semi-transparent blue overlay covers the bottom half of the image.

WCARO 2021

ANNUAL REPORT

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FOREWORD

OULIMATA SARR, REGIONAL DIRECTOR UNWOMEN REGIONAL OFFICE FOR WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA



OULIMATA SARR
Regional Director
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2021 marked the end of the latest UN Women Strategic Plan, and during the year UN Women's West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO) and Country Offices/Non-Resident Agencies continued to strengthen a comprehensive set of global norms, policies, and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women; help end all forms of violence against women and girls; foster women's economic empowerment; encourage and support women to lead; facilitate gender mainstreaming; and support women's participation in peacebuilding and resilience efforts.

Throughout the year, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact West and Central Africa, and women in the region were particularly vulnerable to the crisis. Women's micro-, small- and medium-sized businesses faced even greater limitations on financial reserves, liquidity and sustainable credit facilities to face the pandemic-related economic downturn. In addition, already challenging security situations were made more fragile and there was a marked increase in violence against women and girls.

Nonetheless, UN Women successfully provided multi-faceted assistance, including in areas experiencing violent conflict.

We have learned much from evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the previous strategic plan, including new and continuing opportunities for UN Women, such as greater engagement with United Nations Country Offices, particularly in countries where UN Women is not physically present; the promotion of gender-inclusive evaluations; and a larger emphasis on regional engagements and partnerships.

UN Women's WCARO looks forward to continuing and expanding our work in the region through the new strategic plan (2022-2025) with a greater focus on disaster risk reduction, particularly vis-à-vis climate change and conflict.

UN WOMEN WCARO KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2021



23 million women

reached through
COVID-19 prevention campaigns



Over **1.14 million people**

are more aware about ending
violence against women



315,000

women received
humanitarian assistance



100,000 women

more aware of their
land rights



18,000 women

trained on income-generating
activities



16,000 women

strengthened their resilience
to climate change



4,500 GBV

survivors received
support



3,500 women

supported or trained
in mediation skills,
conflict prevention mechanisms
and peacebuilding



1,624 potential

women candidates trained



Visit to the ADIDO Multifunctional Platform (Center for the Promotion of Agri-Food Processing around the cassava, palm nut and fruit and vegetable value chains) in Benin, July 2021. © UN Women/Yulia Panevina



ACRONYMS

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AfDB	African Development Bank
CAR	Central African Republic
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CO	Country Office
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ESARO	UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office
EVAW	Ending Violence Against Women
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GIHA	Gender in Humanitarian Action
GRP	Gender-responsive procurement
GTG	Gender Thematic Groups
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MOWIP	Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations
NRA	Non-Resident Agency
NSO	National Statistics Office
OSC	One-Stop Centre
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
RO	Regional Office
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
WCARO	UN Women West and Central Africa Regional Office
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WHO	World Health Organization
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

CONTEXT

Due to high poverty rates, illiteracy and patriarchy, women in the West and Central Africa region are often excluded from issues and decisions that affect their lives. These issues have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as social unrest and political instability. COVID-19-related restrictions led to further economic and jobs losses (disproportionately affecting women and girls), as well as increased risk and incidences of domestic violence and violence against children. While, vaccinations against COVID-19 began to be distributed, less than 20 percent of the population in the region are fully vaccinated, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Meanwhile, the region also saw the return of an Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

In addition, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) officially began on 1 January 2021, and it theoretically has many opportunities for women who trade in Africa. However, women continue to have limited access to productive assets and market opportunities.

Moreover, the overall political situation remains a source of concern, and the sub-region continues to face socio-economic challenges and women's rights violations. Long-standing conflicts in the region continue to disproportionately impact women and girls, including deadly extremist attacks and community conflicts in the

Liptako-Gourma region (comprising contiguous areas of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger) and recurrent violence from groups such as Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin (encompassing Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria). Early in the year, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region warned about regional stability as the Central African Republic Civil War intensified.

At the end of 2021, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported the number of displaced persons in West and Central Africa had reached nearly nine million with 7.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 1.5 million refugees and asylum-seekers, including 800,000 new IDPs during 2021.

Despite these persistent challenges, UN Women has successfully provided multi-faceted assistance, including in areas experiencing violent conflict. (UN Women's West and Central Africa Regional Office has 10 Country Offices: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone).

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of building resilience of the region's most vulnerable to better prepare them for multiple challenges and ensure that no one is left behind.



Gathering of women entrepreneurs in the suburbs of N'Djamena, Chad, October 2021. © UN Women/Yulia Panevina

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

In 2021, the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAW) Programme placed prevention at the center of its response by influencing policy change, ensuring services provision, empowering women economically and strengthening the engagement of traditional leaders. In addition, UN Women developed a draft EVAW regional prevention strategy. When finalized in 2022, this strategy will set standards, reinforce partnerships and contribute to informing policy, advocacy, and program development to fight all kind of violence against women and girls.

KEY REGIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS



1.14 million
people had their
awareness raised about EVAW



15,500 women and girls
benefitted from second chance
education programmes



7,500 GBV
sensitization tools
were produced



4,500 GBV
survivors received
support



650 CSOs
traditional leaders
and women's rights
groups strengthened
their capacities

LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT

UN Women WCARO produced two studies on gender discriminatory laws in CAR and Niger, which informed advocacy strategies to promote and support legal reform. In addition, with UN Women support and advocacy, CAR ratified the ILO Convention 190 on the Elimination of all types of Violence and Harassment in the Workplace; the Congolese national police adopted an action plan to fight against sexual violence; the Liberian Government endorsed an anti-SGBV roadmap that seeks to address the increased cases of SGBV during and after the COVID-19 pandemic; and in Niger, a new law on GBV was drafted.

TRAINING

More than 650 CSOs in the region, traditional leaders and women's rights groups had their capacities strengthened to network, partner and jointly advocate for ending SGBV, as well as to develop and implement programmes on SGBV. Over 570 magistrates, lawyers, judges, prosecutors, police officers, gendarmes, military personnel, and representatives from government authorities (including Ministries of Health and Foreign Affairs) were trained on GBV, protection and GBV in the humanitarian context;

the improvement of services for the prevention and care of victims of violence; and analysis of legislative texts related to the elimination of GBV. For instance, in CAR, four gender desks were created by the police as a result of UN Women support.

ENDING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

More than 1,300 community leaders have increased capacity and knowledge on how to prevent harmful traditional practices, particularly female genital mutilation (FGM) in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Mali. Close to 300 traditional practitioners in Liberia are also benefitting from an alternative economic livelihood programme that aims to provide traditional practitioners with new skills and sources of income to replace money earned through FGM.

AWARENESS RAISING

Over 1.14 million people in West and Central Africa had their awareness raised about EVAW, SGBV issues and referral pathways. In addition, 7,500 GBV sensitization tools were produced and disseminated.

ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Over the course of 2021, more than 4,500 GBV survivors received legal aid services and economic and psychosocial support. UN Women also provided funding to the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFELL) to fight COVID-19-related domestic violence through the provision of legal representation, supported 200 “gender lawyers” in Nigeria, and supported the Sexual Offences Model court to provide access to justice for survivors in Sierra Leone.

Throughout 2021, UN Women developed and assisted (through equipment donation, establishing operating procedures and offering financial support) gender rights early warning mechanisms, call centres and other tools in the region, such as the SAV-APP in Liberia to report SGBV cases and refer survivors to service providers. In 2021, 902 GBV cases in Liberia were reported through the app.

SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE

More than 37,750 people directly (and over one million indirectly) benefitted from the Spotlight Initiative in Liberia, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. By engaging women in learning coordination meetings, community dialogues, stakeholders’ conferences and trainings, UN Women enhanced skills and knowledge on the prevention and

response to various forms of SGBV. UN Women also trained and deployed local women and men to track, monitor and report GBV cases in their communities. In addition, at least 15,500 young women and girls (at risk of or in child early and forced marriage) benefitted from second chance education programmes, and thousands of men and boys became agents of change in ending all forms of violence against women and girls.

UN Women also strengthened coordination and information dissemination around reporting and documenting of SGBV cases, and offered trainings on legal and institutional frameworks around GBV prevention and response, which have reduced the number of case backlogs and improved justice for survivors.

ONE-STOP CENTRES

One-Stop Centres offer integrated assistance to women and girls experiencing violence by providing access to medical, psychosocial and legal support at a single location. Through One-Stop Centres in Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, over 3,500 female and male survivors of GBV received medical, legal and psychosocial support and police services under one roof and free of charge. In addition, over 700 GBV cases were reported to the police. In Nigeria, four cases were referred to the Office of the Public Defender.

HUMAN INTEREST STORY

Djénéba’s six-year-old daughter told her that she had been sexually assaulted by her uncle. Djénéba wanted to protect her child and see her brother-in-law brought to justice, but she also faced pressure from her family to not speak out. “The family wanted to manage the situation internally, but I decided to contact the One-Stop Centre,” says Djénéba.

As a result, Djénéba and her daughter reported the case to police and were able to get the immediate care they required. The alleged perpetrator was arrested and the case is progressing through the courts in Mali. Djénéba and her daughter have been supported throughout the legal process by a lawyer who specializes in gender-based violence. “Today, my daughter is doing better physically and she is being monitored psychologically,” says a grateful Djénéba.



Bamako, Mali, 6 July 2021 - Fatoumata Coulibaly, a young mother with her two children take refuge in APDF One-Stop center in Bamako. © UN Women/Aurélia Rusek

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Throughout 2021, UN Women invested in and supported women's economic empowerment through research, knowledge management (policy briefs and guidance tools), virtual dialogues and capacity-building events.

As a result, nearly 18,000 women (including women and girls from conflict-affected areas) received training on income-generating activities and vocational training through the Second Chance Education and Vocational Learning (SCE) programme. In addition, small and medium-sized women-owned enterprises were supported technically and financially. UN Women also strengthened innovative partnerships for women's digital and financial inclusion projects in the region, including a collaboration with Orange Centrafrique, in which 100 women in CAR were trained in digital entrepreneurship (through online sales) and 487 women farmers, market women, and petty traders used Orange Money for mobile money transactions.

GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROCUREMENT

UN Women also promoted gender-responsive procurement in both public and private sectors in Mali, Nigeria and Senegal, by training 341 women business owners on procurement methods, preparation of tenders and management of public procurement contracts and 70 government officials on gender-responsive procurement.

BUY FROM WOMEN

The Buy from Women digital platform connects women farmers and cooperatives to information, finance and markets. In 2021, UN Women expanded the Buy From Women programme into Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. The Buy From Women pilot in Senegal successfully trained and enrolled 341 women through training sessions and monitoring of beneficiaries. In Mali, 1,495 women have access to technological innovations through the Buy From Women platform.



AgriFeD (Agriculture, Femmes et Développement) Program in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Training session on cassava growing, fortification, transformation, and business skills for women entrepreneurs, market sellers and SGBV survivors at the University of Kinshasa AgriFeD training center.
© UN Women/Adriana Borra

KEY REGIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS



100,000 women

more aware of their land rights



18,000 women

trained on income-generating activities



16,000 women

strengthened their resilience to climate change



620 hectares

given to women for climate-smart agriculture

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH CLIMATE-RESILIENT AGRICULTURE VALUE CHAINS

UN Women's flagship program 'Women's Empowerment through Climate-Resilient Agriculture Value Chains' (currently in CAR, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal) combines programmatic action and policy advocacy and reform to address the structural barriers limiting women's participation in agriculture value chains, with a focus on improving women's access to land, finance, markets, skills and technology for climate resilience.

IMPROVING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO CLIMATE-SMART INFORMATION

Over 100,000 women raised their awareness of their land rights and more than 16,000 strengthened their resilience to climate change through training and demonstration activities on climate-resilient agriculture, production techniques and regulations. For example, in Nigeria, 1,200 female smallholder farmers were given two tracts of land to improve rice production through smart agronomic practices.

INCREASE WOMEN'S ACCESS TO FINANCE

In 2021, UN Women expanded efforts at increasing innovation, women's financial inclusion, resilience to disasters and access to insurance. More than 100 women-owned businesses received information on financing mechanisms and public and private market opportunities.



*Women in a vegetable garden in Niamey, Niger - 15 July 2021
© UN Women / Aurélia Rusek*



In CAR 1,250 women

had improved access to financial services through the opening of a local microfinance agency.



In NIGER 100 women

were supported through the village loan and saving association approach, which helped strengthen income-generating activities.



In MALI 1,830 women

entrepreneurs were able to access financing from the Fund for the Empowerment of Women and Children (FAFE), National Bank for Agricultural Development (BNDA) and others.



In SENEGAL 1,588 female

farmers benefited from a BNP Paribas credit line.

ENGENDER CLIMATE-SMART POLICIES AND INCREASE WOMEN'S LAND TENURE SECURITY

In CAR, 1,250 rural women secured access to productive resources and engaged in sustainable agriculture through a local land tenure charter that gave over 500 hectares to women's organizations. UN Women increased access to land and land security for 12,000 rural women in Mali through the acquisition of nearly 350 hectares of agricultural land. In Niger, UN Women strengthened the organizational capacities of 11,725 women members of 469 farmers' organizations to promote the involvement and active participation of rural women in facilities' management and local decision-making processes.

INCREASE WOMEN'S ACCESS TO HIGHER-ADDED VALUE MARKETS

UN Women strengthened women's capacities in production, commercialization and marketing; improved their access to agricultural production inputs and equipment; and rehabilitated markets in the region. For example, in Mali, 4,505 female farmers made over \$900,000 in profits thanks to strengthened capacities in commercial techniques and support in establishing relationships with buyers, and 2,400 women organized into 25 cooperatives to improve their potential access to targeted markets. In addition, 30 companies from Mali were selected and strengthened for the export of agri-foods and crafts to Canada.

In Nigeria, UN Women partnered with the Nigeria Agribusiness Register, which hosts the digital platform Agribiz.ng that connects sellers to national and international buyers, to empower women smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs through access to online and offline markets, links to financial institutions, capacity-building and logistical support.

HUMAN INTEREST STORY

In Cameroon, a gender-sensitive market was reconstructed in Kerawa. During the reconstruction, 30 female SGBV survivors who had lost their income were trained and employed under a cash-for-work programme. They were given mobile phones as well as SIM cards containing an Orange Money account with an amount of 89,500 francs (\$147) to start businesses. Aissa Ngamaleu, one of the beneficiaries who opened a cafeteria in which she sells doughnuts, beans and coffee said, "The cash transfer I received enabled me to buy the equipment for my business and also to acquire a sales outlet. Thanks to this activity, I am able to help my family."



Aissa Ngamaleu, one of the beneficiaries of the cash-for-work programme attending her customers in her cafeteria in Cameroon. © UN Women

LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

During 2021, UN Women strengthened women's political leadership through raising awareness, training, and providing tools. In addition, UN Women helped develop a corps of transformative female and male leaders and strengthened national and regional institutional capacities to promote gender equality, women's empowerment and women's leadership.

KEY REGIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS



1,624 potential
women candidates trained



520 government
officials

strengthened their capacity
to promote women's leadership



2.3 million
people made more
aware of the importance
of female leadership

Over 1,600 potential women candidates in CAR, Cameroon, DRC, Liberia, Nigeria and Senegal received training on campaign strategy, communication tools, coaching and legal assistance from UN Women. UN Women also trained women political leaders in Liberia in transformative leadership and supported 150 young Liberian women in the Young Women Political Leadership and Mentorship program.

Liberia also made significant progress towards the passage of one legal framework and a protocol promoting gender balance in elections and decision-making bodies, including a mandatory gender quota for political parties and a protocol on preventing and responding to violence against women in elections and politics (VAWP) signed by the National Electoral Commission and 26 political parties.

In an unprecedented move in Nigeria, members of the Constitution Review Committee adopted several constitutional bills with provisions for gender reforms to promote increased women's political leadership and equality. While all these bills were ultimately rejected by the National Assembly, women advocates recognized that

they "have never reached this strategic stage of advocacy and within the parliament." UN Women also supported the registration of over three million women voters through Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission's online registration.

UN Women strengthened the capacities of Government officials, civil society organizations and women's networks to promote women and girls' leadership and political participation, including 125 Government officials in CAR; 120 male members of political parties in Mali; 64 female legislators, politicians and leaders of CSOs in Nigeria; and 32 parliamentarians in Côte d'Ivoire. Also in Côte d'Ivoire, a Women's Parliamentary Caucus was launched.

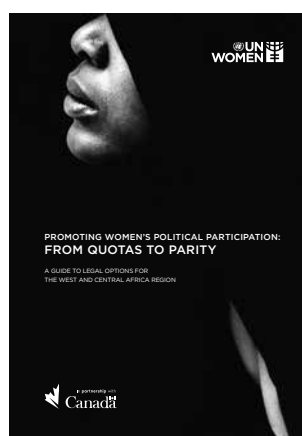
In CAR, women's representation in the national parliament and executive leadership increased after elections. The share of women members elected to the National Assembly increased from eight percent to almost 13 percent. There are also more women represented in the National Assembly bureau (26 percent), and more women were appointed to cabinet positions as well (seven women out of 32 ministers, an increase from 18 percent to 22 percent).

To support the prevention of and response to incidents of VAWP, UN Women provided legal assistance to women candidates who were victims of violence during the campaign in CAR. Eight women candidates won their cases before the Constitutional Court and were declared elected. Psycho-social support was also provided to 94 women candidates who experienced trauma from incidents of violence in the elections. Moreover, UN Women continued to support the operations of a 1325 hotline to report and monitor violence in the electoral process and sensitized 116 women candidates to identify and denounce cases of violence during the election.



AWARENESS RAISING

Over 2.3 million people were reached through UN Women-supported awareness campaigns throughout the region on the right of women to participate in decision-making and the importance of women's empowerment and leadership. UN Women also published a report entitled 'Promoting Women's Political Participation: From Quotas to Parity' to increase the understanding of countries' legal obligations to achieve gender equality in politics. In addition, a [repository of temporary special measures](#) (TSMs) in the region was compiled and made available online in English and French.



HUMAN INTEREST STORY

UN Women, in partnership with Liberia's Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, held mock parliament sessions in five counties to promote and strengthen collaboration and advocacy for increased women's political participation, and offer women and youth the chance to see the benefits of having more women in decision making positions. "As the Ministry responsible for women's empowerment, we are delighted to spotlight the importance of empowering women to participate in politics and leadership positions," said the Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection Williametta Saydee-Tarr.



Mock parliament session to increase Women Political Participation (WPP) in Liberia. © UN Women/Liberia

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN NATIONAL RESPONSES AND DATA COLLECTION

KEY REGIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS



4 new

Rapid Gender Assessments on COVID-19 in Benin, DRC, Niger and Senegal



110 members

of parliament trained on GRB in Niger



17 out of 25 transition

ministries in Mali can integrate gender into their budgets

WOMEN COUNT

During 2021, UN Women continued the implementation of the 'Making Every Woman and Girl Count: Supporting the Monitoring and Implementation of the SDGs through Better Production and use of Gender Statistics' (or Women Count) programme to support countries in implementing the 2030 Global Agenda. It aims to radically change the production, availability, accessibility and use of quality data on key aspects of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE).

In Cameroon and Senegal, national statistics offices (NSOs) received trainings on several gender-related themes such as unpaid work, gender-based violence, access to formal employment, access to education, women's economic contribution and women's leadership. UN Women also reviewed technical documents for the implementation of Time Use Surveys to support generation of the indicator on unpaid care and domestic work. The results will be released in early 2022 and will be used to strengthen national WEE strategies and policies. In Senegal, 154 agents (84 women and 70 men) were trained in data collection, monitoring and evaluation and in the calculation of a Women's Empowerment Index.

In collaboration with Sierra Leone's Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and Statistics Sierra Leone, UN Women presented its Women Count project to a donor round table to initiate dialogues on possible funding for a Women Count project in the country.

TRAINING ON GENDER STATISTICS

Under the umbrella of the African Program on Gender Statistics managed by UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), WCARO and UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) in collaboration with the African Development Bank and UNECA conducted a series of continental training on gender statistics dedicated to producers and users of gender statistics. Over 300 persons have been trained in 2021 on among others, Time Use Survey methodology, the Minimum Set of Gender Indicators for Africa and on the Counted and Visible Toolkit developed by Women Count HQ to enhance data disaggregation.

COVID-19 RAPID GENDER ASSESSMENTS

WCARO supported four new Rapid Gender Assessments on COVID-19 in Benin, DRC, Niger and a second round in Senegal. In each country, the assessment was coordinated by a national steering committee. Although temporary, this coordination mechanism has laid the groundwork for a more sustainable collaboration that could lead to the implementation of a national Women Count or to gender-sensitive statistics activities. In Senegal, UN Women also supported the Government in the revision of the National Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment (SNAEF) to improve its response to COVID-19. With UN Women's support, the revised SNAEF integrates issues such as gender-responsive social protection and reforms/programmes to recognize, reduce and redistribute women's unpaid care work.

COUNTRY GENDER PROFILES

In collaboration with the African Development Bank (AfDB), UN Women developed Country Gender Equality Profiles in Benin, Cameroon, DRC, Ghana, Liberia, Mali and Nigeria. The Cameroon and Liberia Country Gender Equality Profiles have been already released and represent a strong asset to assess the existing situation regarding women's empowerment and gender equality.

GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

Throughout 2021, UN Women supported Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB). In Nigeria, UN Women supported changes in the budget law to integrate gender provisions, which led to effective mainstreaming of GRB in Nigeria's 2022 Budget Call Circular, and UN Women provided technical and financial support for the mainstreaming of GRB into Cameroon's 2022 financial law. In Mali, 36 senior officials of the National Agricultural Development Bank (BNDA) were trained on integrating gender-responsive budgeting into their plans, programs and strategies.

In Niger, UN Women supported the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Finance technically and financially to draft

and validate the National Gender-Responsive Planning and Budgeting Strategy. In addition, 110 members of parliament were trained on GRB and gender-sensitive parliamentary oversight to increase budgets allocated to the promotion and protection of women's and girls' rights. A resolution was signed by the Parliament of Niger to ensure that gender is considered in the country's plans, budgets and policies.

UN Women provided additional trainings to improve skills on gender statistics, including on the Minimum Set of Gender Indicators for Africa, Time Use Survey methodology and data disaggregation with the UN Women Toolkit: Counted and Visible. These trainings were focused on both the producers and users of gender statistics.

In Mali, 35 executives from the Ministry of Security and Social Protection, as well as 35 regional directors of the National Police were trained on gender mainstreaming in the policies, programs and budget of the National Police. As a result, 17 out of 25 transition ministries have the capacity to integrate gender into their budgets. In Cameroon, a course on gender statistics has been introduced into the training curricula of the Regional Institute of Applied Statistics and Economy (ISSEA), which is the school where almost all statistics officers of the National Statistics System are trained.



Launch of the Generation Equality Forum with young Senegalese leaders in Dakar, Senegal, June 2021. © UN Women/Adriana Borra

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AND DRR

UN Women WCARO works closely with field offices and with key partners, including Governments, the UN special envoy for the Great Lakes Region, and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), to raise awareness of human rights and women's leadership, and to strengthen women's capacities for effective leadership in peacebuilding.

KEY REGIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS



3,500 women

supported or trained
in mediation skills,
conflict prevention
mechanisms and
peacebuilding



593

**justice ministers
and security forces**

trained in women's
rights and EAW



**Two
cross-border**

**DRR projects
implemented**

More than 150 members of Niger's Ministry of Justice and the Rural Code strengthened their capacities in conflict prevention and management, mediation, women's rights and EAW, and in the DRC, 443 members of security forces and police were trained on human rights and protection around EAW. UN Women also worked closely with the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces to identify barriers against women in the force using the Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) Methodology. With UN Women's support, four Community Security Platforms were established in 2021 in Nigeria's Borno and Yobe states with roles to identify and recommend priority actions on safety and security issues affecting women and girls. In the Sahel, 11,567 beneficiaries were reached through the 'Support for cross-border community dialogue initiatives with security and justice actors for peacebuilding in Niger and Mali' programme.

In 2021, as a result of UN Women's technical and financial support and the willingness of Mali's Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission and national actors, Mali's transitional justice process became the most inclusive and gender-sensitive of the various peace and reconciliation processes. The laws, policies and strategies developed take into account the specific needs and priorities of women and girls.

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S CAPACITIES

UN Women supported key regional women-led organizations, notably the Network of Peace and Security for Women in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Region (NOPSWECO) and the Network of Young Women Leaders of West Africa (REPSFECO).

In addition, over 3,500 women from the West and Central Africa region were supported or trained in mediation skills, conflict prevention mechanisms and peacebuilding. For example, 30 female volunteer mediators for peace have developed mediation, prevention, management and conflict resolution activities in communes in the Liptako-Gourma region; 93 members of local peace and reconciliation committees learned tools for better communication and awareness raising in Nigeria received training on Conflict Early Warning and Early Response; and 250 women in Niger actively participated in formal and informal mechanisms of governance, and prevention and management of conflicts related to natural resources at the local community and cross-border levels.

UN Women also facilitated the creation of a network of women community mediators/peacebuilders in Côte d'Ivoire with 528 members, who played a major role in preventing pre- and post-electoral violence in tense communities during the 2021 legislative elections.

RAISING AWARENESS

UN Women facilitated the deployment of 326 community volunteers in four cities who reached more than 95,000 to raise awareness of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (APPR-RCA). And in DRC, almost 2,000 women and girls were sensitized on their role and importance in maintaining and restoring peace, as well as the advancement of women.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

UN Women took part in the Africa Regional Platform on DRR, which led to the adoption of the Nairobi Declaration on accelerating the path to achieving the goals and targets of the Programme of Action (2015-2030) for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa, which includes gender mainstreaming and targets. UN Women has also trained students in seven countries of the Sahel who will collect data on the implementation of the Sendai Framework.

In September, in Cameroon, WCARO organized a high-level forum (with representatives from seven governments, ECOWAS, ECCAS and the G5 Sahel) on gender and humanitarian action and DRR, which resulted in recommendations for greater inclusion of women in national DRR commissions and more capacity-building for key stakeholders and women's organizations.

Moreover, 1,500 beneficiaries benefited from the 'Joint Regional Programme to Support the Implementation of Cross-Border Cooperation Activities in the Liptako-Gourma Region', which has strengthened community resilience and human security in the face of environmental and climatic shocks and security threats in the Sahel. Meanwhile, the 'Women and Natural Resource Conflict Management: An Approach Based on Women's Involvement and Resilience to the Effects of Climate Change for the Reduction of Community and Transboundary Natural Resource Conflicts' programme aims to contribute to the reduction of conflicts related to natural resources in the cross-border areas of Mali and Niger by strengthening the active participation of women in local, community, formal and informal processes and mechanisms for conflict prevention and management.

HUMAN INTEREST STORY

As part of the peacebuilding process in Côte d'Ivoire, UN Women and UNICEF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Women, Family and Children (MFFE) initiated a project in 2017 to make women and girls conflict-prevention actors through early warning and information networks. A network of more than 500 women peace mediators was established in 10 regions across the country. Fanta Diamande, a 32-year-old community leader from northern Côte d'Ivoire, has been involved in the Network of Women Peace Mediators since its beginning. Today, she is President of its Touba branch and a trainer for early warning monitors who flagged election-related risks ahead of the parliamentary elections on 6 March. "I became interested in becoming more active in my community after the political crisis of 2011. ... I could see how violence and conflict affected women much more than men," says Diamande. "My job is to listen to everyone and try to be supportive and prevent small conflicts from becoming big ones."



Fanta Diamande is a member of the Network of Women Peace Mediators in Côte d'Ivoire. © UN Women/Irad Gbazale

HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Under the Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action (GIHA) Unit, UN Women supported the development and implementation of assistance and resilience programmes for internally displaced women and female refugees, as well as women and girls made more vulnerable by the COVID-19 pandemic.

KEY REGIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS



23 million

women reached through
COVID-19 prevention campaigns



315,000 women

received humanitarian assistance



26,000 women

received financial assistance



250 organizations

supported

In 2021, UNWOMEN promoted women's leadership in humanitarian action by strengthening the capacities of members of the GIHA regional network of 150 experts, including key humanitarian UN agencies and international NGOs. UN Women also trained over 100 additional humanitarian staff from UN agencies, international organizations, local organizations, and national governments on GIHA. In addition, UN Women supported over 250 women's organizations in the region.

In Nigeria, UN Women provided gender-specific technical inputs to the development of the Humanitarian Country Team Strategy, the baseline assessment of gender equality programming in emergencies, and the development of nine sector-specific gender mainstreaming guidance notes for the 2022 Humanitarian Planning Cycle Process. UN Women also conducted an assessment of the barriers to GBV services for women within the humanitarian and COVID-19 pandemic in Yobe state, which informed the development of gender-based violence referral pathways and service mapping.

In CAR, 300,000 women and girls supported through humanitarian interventions, and in Mali, UN Women provided direct assistance (mosquito nets, soap, mats, clothing, empty water storage containers, etc.) to more than 3,790 affected people. In addition, 5,391 displaced people (5,162 women) in IDP camps benefitted from UN Women humanitarian assistance.

In Senegal, UN Women, with the Senegalese Association of Evaluation (SenEval), was able to facilitate the translation and adaptation of the 'Rapid Assessment Tool to assess GEWE in Humanitarian Action'.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UN Women provided technical and financial support to women's associations. For instance, in Nigeria, 50 faith-based women civil society organizations were involved in providing cash assistance to 15,000 most-affected vulnerable women and in conducting awareness campaigns that reached over 23 million female community members with messages on COVID-19 and GBV prevention. And in Liberia, UN Women developed a mobile application, Kobocollect, to collect, manage, track and report data on cases of SGBV against women and girls with disabilities during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to increased reporting of SGBV cases.



Hawa Issouf Samb, treasurer of the women's peace hub Case de la Paix, with another member in Gao, Mali. © UN Women/ Aurélia Rusek



African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) DRC chapter members at a Solidarity Mission to Kalemie, Tanganyika in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. © UN Women/Adriana Borra

COORDINATION MANDATE

WCARO technical support was key to mainstreaming gender into the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) and Common Country Assessments (CCAs) of a total of six Country Offices and six Non-Resident Agencies (NRAs) (CAR, Cape Verde, Congo, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone) through Peer Support Groups. Cross-regional support was also key for enhancing GEWE in Algeria, Djibouti, Haiti and South Sudan.

A 'How To Do It' toolkit was developed to support UNCT SWAP methodology and reporting processes to help Country Teams meet the minimum requirements. During 2021, five UNCTs developed comprehensive UNCT SWAP reports (Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Niger and Sierra Leone) and two UNCTs developed annual SWAP reports (Côte d'Ivoire and The Gambia).

Gender Thematic Groups (GTGs) were sensitized about GTG Standards and Procedures in the region, with additional

trainings in Burkina Faso, Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Mauritania and Togo.

UN Women supported the gender mainstreaming of climate resilient agriculture and renewable energy for the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS). And UN Women offered training on a minimum set of gender indicators for Africa and data disaggregation to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) through the Counted and Visible Toolkit.

In collaboration with UNICEF and OHCHR, UN Women established steering committees to monitor data collection and quality assurance of COVID-19 Rapid Gender Assessments done in Benin, CAR, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Senegal. Although temporary, these coordination mechanisms, composed of national partners (mainly Ministries of Gender and National Statistics Offices) and other UN agencies, have laid the groundwork for a



The launch of the 16 Days of Activism in 2021. © UN Women/Yulia Panevina

more sustainable collaboration that could lead to the implementation of a full-fledged national Women Count or to specific gender statistics-related activities.

In addition, UN Women, UNECA and the AfDB developed and implemented their continental joint virtual joint

training and webinar program on gender statistics. And thanks to joint interventions of the Secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement and the UN Women Regional Offices of Arab States, UN Women ESARO and WCARO, women's views and needs are mainstreamed in the draft of the Women in Trade Protocol of the AfCFTA.



Gender Thematic Group meeting in Dakar, Senegal. © UN Women/Alioune Ndiaye



Gender Thematic Group meeting in Côte d'Ivoire. © UN Women/Côte d'Ivoire

PARTNERSHIPS

Throughout 2021, WCARO enhanced multi-stakeholder partnerships with UN Agencies, national institutions, traditional leaders, CSOs, women's organizations and the private sector.

UN Women strengthened its collaboration with the United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO) African office and the Peer Support Group in supporting UNCTs. Together with UN Women ESARO, WCARO increased its engagement with the African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat with regards to its Women Economic Empowerment, specifically around the formulation of a protocol. ESARO and WCARO also strengthened their collaboration with the African Union through the Liaison Office in Addis Ababa in advancing the Commission on the Status of Women consultations.

With the AfDB, WCARO produced a flagship policy report on Green Jobs for Women in Africa that is expected to be used for policy dialogue and reform on the gender dimensions of the green economy. UN Women also offered a joint training program on Gender Statistics and the collaboration around the Country Gender Equality Profiles.

To support regional solutions to cross-cutting threats to peace and security, as well as regional initiatives related to human rights, governance, resilience, and gender mainstreaming, UN Women partnered with the

Lake Chad Basin Commission, the G5 Sahel Joint Force and other regional partners. For example, in partnership with the G5 Sahel Joint Force, UN Women created a women's platform for regional coordination, a parliamentary women caucus, a knowledge product on gender and violent extremism in the Sahel, and a high-level dialogue on women leadership for peace and security in the region.

UN Women strengthen the capacities of ECOWAS and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and supported the elaboration of global norms, policies and standards on ending violence against women by establishing an ERAW working group led by ECOWAS; analyzing the level of GEWE integration in ECOWAS mechanisms and policies; providing technical assistance to the drafting of the ECOWAS strategy to prevent and respond to SGBV (adopted in October 2021); and supporting the draft of the ECCAS convention for ending violence against women (to be submitted to ECCAS experts and to Ministries of Gender for validation in 2022).

In addition to regional efforts, WCARO worked with Resident Coordinator Offices in support of the Management Accountability Framework, providing technical support in mainstreaming gender into UNSDCF and CCAs in a total of 16 countries (including Cape Verde, CAR, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone).



High-level forum on inclusion, leadership & participation of women and girls in humanitarian action. Yaoundé, Cameroon, September 2021. © UN Women/Joseph Antoine Meki

COMMUNICATIONS AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

In 2021, under the leadership of WCARO, UN Women CO communications officers' capacities were strengthened on UN Women's editorial guidelines, branding, visual presentation and social media. To share information and brainstorm on communication strategies, harmonize efforts and exchange good practices, monthly coordination meetings were organized throughout the year. In addition, a WhatsApp group between regional communication officers was set up to maintain a community of practice, exchange information rapidly and effectively, and provide support around global or regional campaigns.

The UN Women Africa website received 140,947 visitors who looked at 299,391 pages. The top nine countries in terms of number of visitors were the USA, Kenya, Senegal, South Africa, Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Cameroon. A regional digital campaign was launched around the 16 Days of Activism and the Generation Equality Forum to share key messages around gender equality in West and Central Africa and about the Forum in Paris.

Over 380 articles and 65 publications in English were produced and disseminated. These included 'Women in climate resilient agriculture in West and Central Africa: Key results of UN Women's flagship programme', 'Nine Advocacy Messages To Make The African Continental Free Trade Area Work For Women', 'UN Women Advocacy Note for Childcare provision in WCA' and 'UN WOMEN Green Jobs Report'.

Twenty-six (26) articles and five publications in French were produced, including 'Rapid assessment of the situation of women migrating from, to and through Niger', 'Gender impacts on migration in Niger' and 'Preschool education'.

New branding material was created for WCARO, including Generation Equality pop up banners, backdrop banners, t-shirts, pens, notebooks, posters, brochures in French



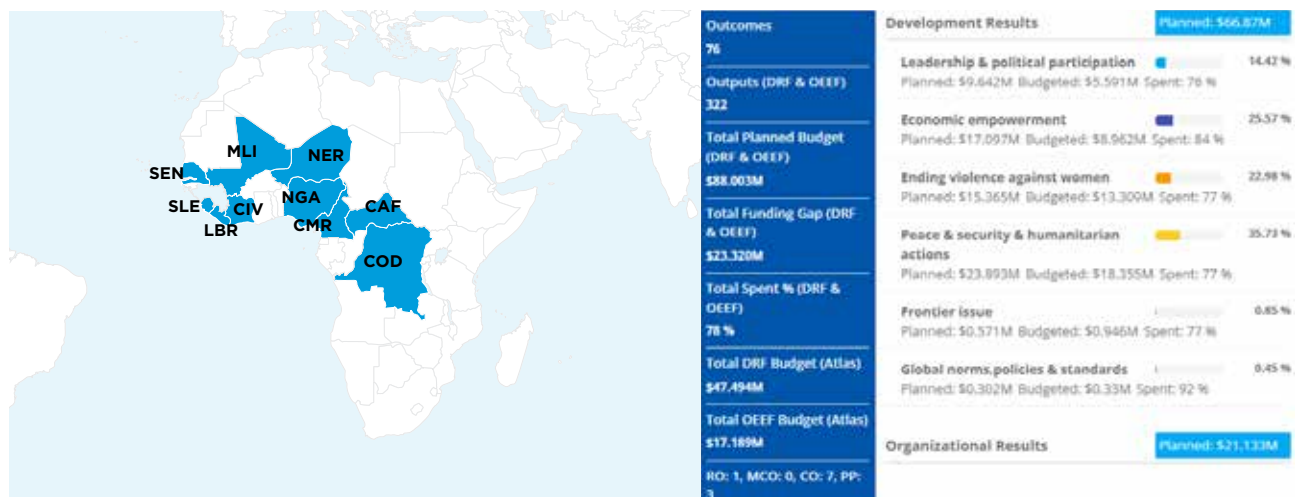
Engaging UN Women's strategic multipliers for the 16 Days of Activism. Dakar, Senegal, November 2021. © UN Women/Yulia Panevina

and English, and short QR code presentation brochures for each program (e.g., Women's Economic Empowerment, Women Peace and Security, Ending Violence Against Women and Women's Political Participation). In 2021, high-standard WCARO advocacy materials were developed and disseminated to enhance our visibility and share our messages with our audiences. These included reports, media material, briefs, videos, photos and interviews of key players/ personalities working towards women empowerment. Regional digital campaigns around key UN Women issues were unfolded and quarterly external and internal newsletters were shared to regularly inform all our online stakeholders. UN Women knowledge products were disseminated, providing spaces for conversations around gender equality, ending violence against women and girls and women empowerment.

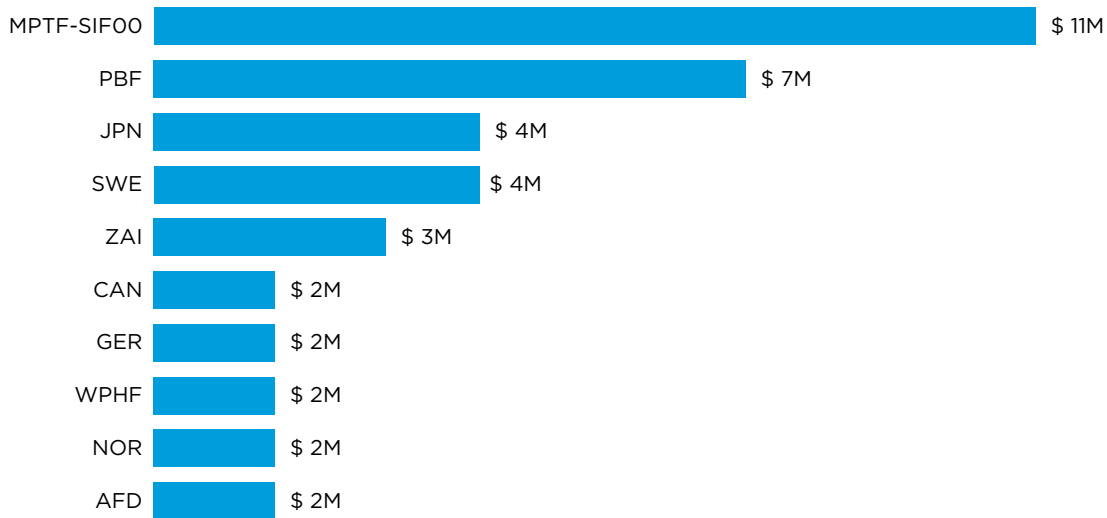
FINANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Despite the challenges and financial constraints resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, WCARO was able to mobilize over \$28 million (with a delivery rate of 78 percent). During 2021, the RO provided significant support in daily Operations Management at Country Offices and Programme Presence Offices. The RO focused on reinforcing capacities through a comprehensive training plan with more than 10 training sessions on topics such as procurement, the Partner and Grants Agreement Management System (PGMAS), partners audit, reporting and Atlas mapping.

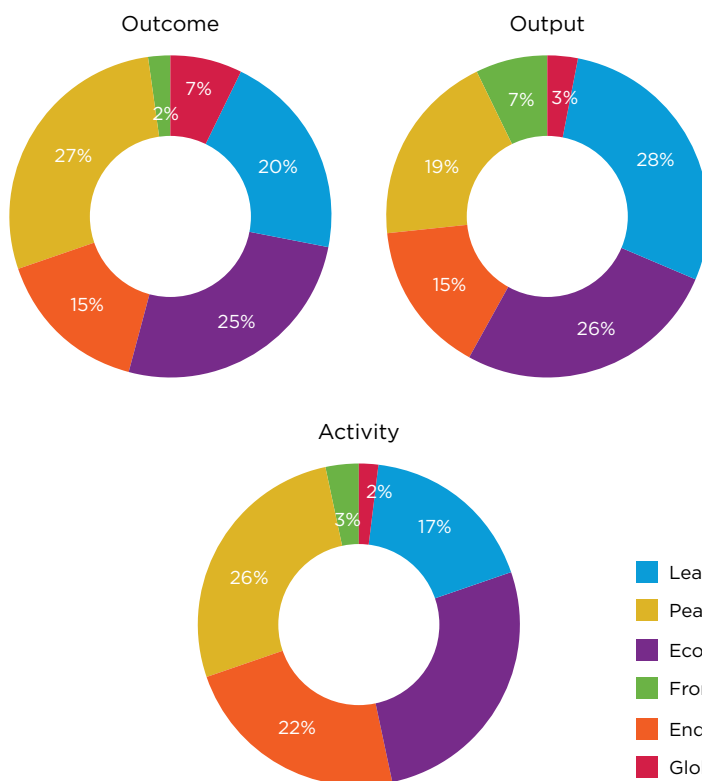
Breakdown of Regional Budget by Development Results



Top 10 Donors



Development Results, Activities, Budget, and Outputs



Total DRF Outcome: 77

Total DRF Outputs: 219

Total DRF Activities: 1261

Total Resource Requirements (DRF): \$ 66,869,510

Total Budget (DRF): \$ 43,580,527

Total % spent (DRF): 79%

- Leadership & political participation
- Peace & security & humanitarian actions
- Economic empowerment
- Frontier issue
- Ending violence against women
- Global norms, policies & standards

KEY CHALLENGES

- Amid pandemic-related priorities, there were delays in project implementation and a lack of gender equality positioning, as well as setbacks in terms of women's participation, women's empowerment and the fight against violence in the COVID-19 context.
- In part due to funds and attention being redirected to address the pandemic, there were insufficient resources for some UN Women activities.
- In some countries, particularly where security is an issue, there is limited government capacity to deliver basic social services and social protection.
- A lack of gender data continues to plague gender equality strategies, policies and programs in the region. Closing these gender data gaps is essential for achieving gender-related SDG commitments.
- There was a persistent lack of awareness, understanding and technical capacity on gender statistics among not only national counterparts but also among many UN Women Country Offices (COs) and other UN agencies in the region. This is even more pronounced where UN Women is not present.
- COs are not technically equipped sufficiently to anticipate national needs for gender statistics, to answer information requests, and to position themselves as potential technical partners in future national statistical operations, most notably for household surveys and censuses.
- A limited capacity in gender-responsive evaluation in the region undermines the possibility to detect the gender impacts of national policies and development interventions.
- Telecommuting due to the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed some peace and security initiatives.
- Violence against women in legislative elections limited efforts to increase women participation.



AgriFeD (Agriculture, Femmes et Développement) Program in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Training session on cassava growing, fortification, transformation, and business skills for women entrepreneurs, market sellers and SGBV survivors at the University of Kinshasa AgriFeD training center. © UN Women/Adriana Borra

LESSONS LEARNED

- There is a great opportunity for gender mainstreaming through engendering CCA and UNSDCF processes by engaging with Country Offices, particularly with the UNCTs and RCOs of countries where UN Women is not physically present.
- UN Women's involvement in joint programmes such as the Spotlight initiative is an advanced opportunity. However, these programmes need to be prioritized to ensure that strategic positioning on the key aspects of their mandates are not diluted.
- There was limited mainstreaming of gender-responsive evaluation plans in public policies and development planning, which resulted in the inability to showcase the effects of national interventions on women's empowerment and gender equality. To counter this, the WCARO Evaluation Unit provided inputs to policy development to promote the inclusion of gender-responsive evaluation and provided technical support to UNDAF+ evaluation processes and will continue to make similar efforts in 2022.
- Cross-regional discussions were key to sharing best practices and bringing GEWE into high-level management discussions (ECCAS, ECOWAS, RCOs, UNCTS, Regional GTGs). Thus, UN Women will place an even greater emphasis on regional engagements and partnerships.
- UN Women can also benefit from strengthened partnerships with youth-led organizations dedicated to fostering youth engagement and leadership.



FOCUS FOR NEXT YEAR

Throughout 2022, WCARO will focus on security and commitments from United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP) and from the 66th session of the Commission on the Status on Women (CSW), including “Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes.”

Next year also marks the start of UN Women’s new strategic plan (2022-2025) that will guide UN Women’s work over the next four years—with an eye toward the 2030 deadline to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As a result, UN Women in West and Central Africa will continue to mobilize urgent and sustained action to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls with

a focus on integrated approaches (through the coordination mandate) across the following thematic focus areas:

- Governance and participation in public life.
- Women’s economic empowerment.
- Ending violence against women and girls.
- Women, peace and security, humanitarian action, and disaster risk reduction.

The WCA Regional Coordination Strategy and the EVAW Prevention Strategy will be key to supporting coherence across thematic priorities. UN Women will further develop its role as a convener and mobilizer with the ability to influence the actions and financing decisions of diverse actors.





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