

1. Purpose and Strategic Context

Despite strong normative frameworks, coordination mandates, and a growing portfolio of operational engagements, the Regional Office’s contributions to advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment are often fragmented across thematic areas, delivery modalities, and systems. This fragmentation constrains the ability to consistently influence policy coherence, drive institutional accountability, and demonstrate system-level impact at scale.

Project-based and siloed approaches have limited the translation of normative and coordination leadership into sustained policy and institutional change, particularly in complex and interconnected contexts such as governance reform, peace and security, humanitarian action, economic transformation, climate resilience, and the elimination of violence against women and girls (EVAWG). In parallel, the absence of a unified operational framework has reduced the visibility of cross-cutting contributions, weakened shared accountability for results, and constrained the strategic use of evidence and data for decision-making.

To deliver effectively on the ambitions of the UN Women ESARO Strategic Note (2026–2029), a coherent, integrated, and outcome-oriented approach is required, one that deliberately aligns normative influence, coordination leadership, and operational delivery, strengthens system-level engagement, and enables the Regional Office to function as a policy integrator and accountability driver across the region. This Corporate Strategy Note sets out how Integrated Policy Support (IPS) serves as the core delivery modality for operationalizing the Strategic Note. It provides a structured and system-oriented framework for aligning the Regional Office’s normative, coordination, and operational mandates to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment across East and Southern Africa, while moving decisively beyond fragmented and project-based interventions toward a programmatic, strategic, and systems-driven model of engagement.

2. Strategic Objective

The objective of Integrated Policy Support is to operationalize the RO Strategic Note through multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary, and outcome-driven engagement that strengthens:

- Policy coherence and alignment with international and regional norms;
- Institutional accountability, financing, and data systems for GEWE;
- Systemic and sustainable change for women and girls.

This is achieved by ensuring that normative influence, coordination leadership, and operational delivery are deliberately aligned and mutually reinforcing, and that cross-cutting contributions are made visible through PRISM to inform strategic decision-making.

3. Integrated Policy Support Model

3.1 Pathway to Change

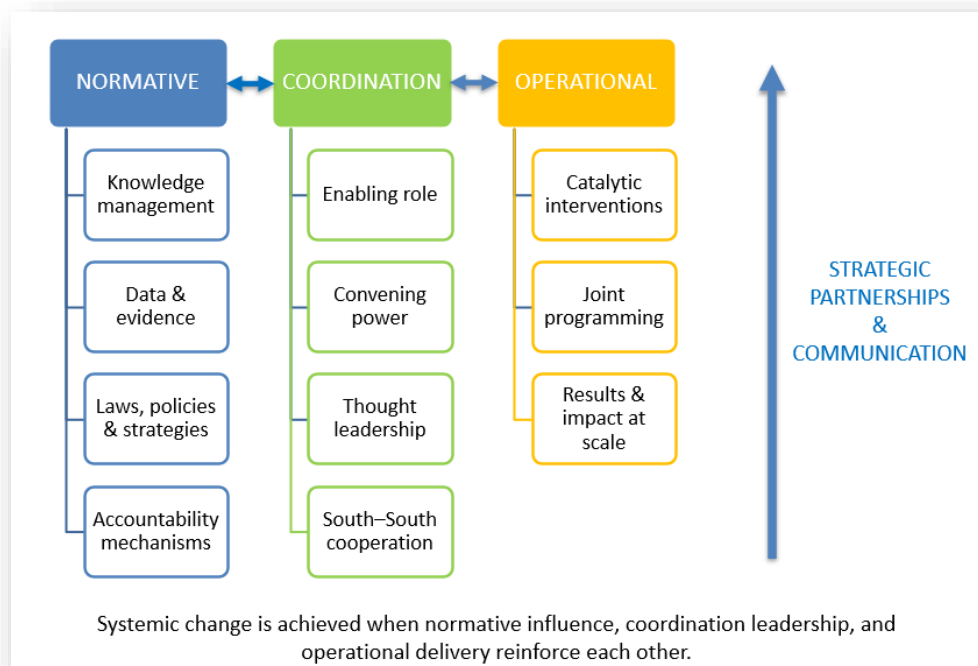
Integrated Policy Support operationalizes the Strategic Note through a clear and deliberate pathway that entails:

1. *Integrated Mandates* – Normative, coordination, and operational mandates working as one system.
2. *Integrated Policy Support* – Deployment of multi-sectoral expertise and interconnected thematic approaches.
3. *Policy and Institutional Transformation* – Gender equality embedded in laws, policies, systems, and institutional practices.
4. *Evidence-Based Influence* – Data-driven advocacy, credibility, and strategic positioning.
5. *Systemic Change* – Sustainable structural transformation and SDG-level impact.

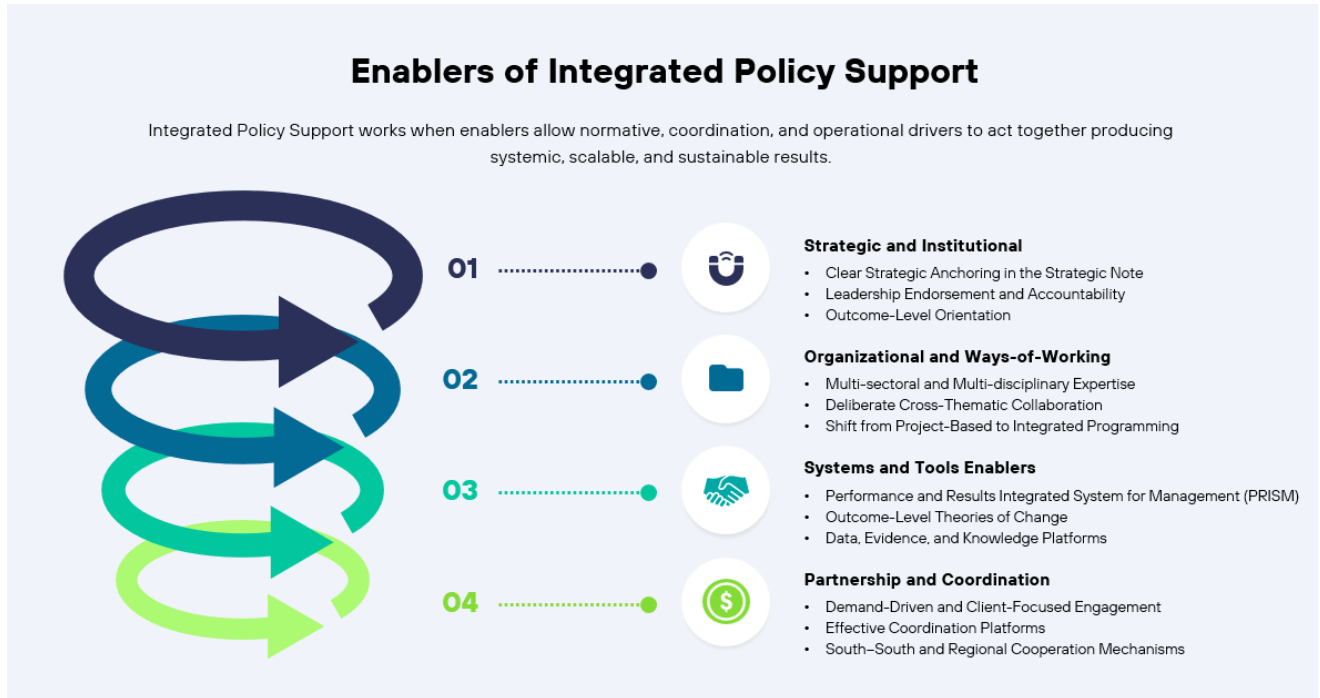
This pathway enables the RO to address root causes, leverage feedback loops, and identify strategic entry points for transformative change rather than focusing on isolated interventions.

4. Drivers and enablers for systemic change

Systemic change is driven by the **deliberate and mutually reinforcing use of UN Women’s normative, coordination, and operational mandates** to influence policies, institutions, behaviors, and resource flows at scale. The following drivers explain *how* each mandate contributes to sustained structural transformation rather than isolated project-level results.



- ❖ **Normative drivers** ensure that gender equality becomes structurally embedded in how systems function, not dependent on individual projects or actors.
- ❖ **Coordination drivers** transform isolated efforts into collective, system-wide action capable of producing scale and sustainability.
- ❖ **Operational drivers** ensure that systemic change is not only designed and coordinated, but also implemented, scaled, and sustained.



Integrated Policy Support is enabled by clear strategic anchoring, leadership accountability, cross-functional ways of working, integrated systems and tools, demand-driven partnerships, and a systems-thinking approach that aligns normative, coordination, and operational mandates around shared outcomes.

5. Guiding Principles

Operationalization of Integrated Policy Support is guided by the following principles:

- Demand-driven, client-focused, and solution-oriented engagement;
- Strong normative and coordination leadership anchored in operational work;
- Building on existing capacities and comparative advantages;
- Data-driven and evidence-led decision-making;
- Deliberate cross-thematic and cross-unit collaboration;
- Shared accountability for results;
- Focus on systemic and sustainable change;
- Explicit application of an intersectionality lens;
- Effective use of integrated systems to make invisible work visible.

6. Operational Delivery Modalities

5.1 Outcome-Level Implementation

Integrated Policy Support is primarily operationalized at the outcome level of the Strategic Note to ensure coherence, scale, and impact. Key mechanisms include:

- Designation of Outcome, Output, and Indicator Leads, guided by clear TORs;
- Finalization of Outcome-level Theories of Change, aligned with the overall SN ToC and developed with strategic partners;
- Use of the CO/NPP Integrated Policy Support Tracker to inform planning, prioritization, and sequencing of RO support;
- Outcome platforms as the primary space for identifying systemic entry points, partnerships, and policy leverage.

5.2 Client-Focused and Context-Specific Engagement

IPS is delivered in a manner tailored to diverse country and regional contexts, including:

- High- and middle-income countries;
- Climate- and conflict-affected contexts;
- Non-Presence Programme Countries (NPPs);
- Countries in UNSDCF formulation or transition phases.

This includes rolling out coordination, NPP, and REC strategies; supporting UN Women's inclusion in UNCT configurations; and ensuring timely policy inputs into CCAs, CGEPs, and UNSDCFs through close collaboration between Strategic Planning, Coordination, and Thematic Leads.

7. Strategic Value

Through Integrated Policy Support, ESARO will:

- Reduce fragmentation and duplication;
 - Strengthen policy coherence and institutional accountability;
 - Scale impact through system-level engagement;
 - Enhance visibility, credibility, and sustainability of results;
- Consolidate its role as a regional thought leader and policy integrator.

8. Shared Accountability for Results

Shared accountability is institutionalized by:

- Integrating outcome, output, and indicator lead deliverables into PMDs;
- Linking normative influence, coordination outcomes, partnerships, and joint programming to Strategic Note results;
- Using PRISM to consolidate planning, results management, and metadata across units.

This ensures leadership decisions are evidence-informed and integration is measurable and visible.

9. Phased Implementation Roadmap

Phase 1 – Foundations (Q1–Q2)

- Finalize TORs and Outcome-level Theories of Change
- Socialize coordination, NPP, and REC strategies
- Establish internal coordination and tracking mechanisms

Phase 2 – Roll-out and Delivery (Q2–Q3)

- Deliver integrated policy support through outcome platforms
- Strengthen partnerships and joint programming
- Roll out annual client satisfaction survey

Phase 3 – Learning and Adaptation (Q4)

- Conduct outcome harvesting and strategic review
- Refine delivery modalities and planning for the following year

9. Conclusion

Integrated Policy Support is the mechanism through which the RO Strategic Note is translated into operational reality. By aligning mandates, systems, capacities, and accountability around outcomes, ESARO strengthens its ability to deliver transformative, sustained, and system-wide gender equality results across the region.

Integrated Policy Support – Indicator Matrix

Indicator	Definition	Measurement Method	Data Source
% of policy processes where ≥2 mandates contribute jointly	Proportion of policy processes supported by the RO in which at least two UN Women mandates (normative, coordination, operational) actively contributed.	$(\text{Policy processes with } \geq 2 \text{ mandates contributing} \div \text{Total policy processes supported}) \times 100$	Policy engagement logs, mission reports
% of RO technical support delivered through cross-functional teams	Proportion of RO support engagements to COs involving staff from more than one functional area or mandate.	$(\text{Cross-functional support engagements} \div \text{Total RO support engagements}) \times 100$	Support tracking records, mission documentation

# of policy/regulatory frameworks strengthened using multi-sectoral gender approaches	Number of policy or regulatory frameworks that integrate cross-sectoral gender equality provisions with documented RO contribution.	Count of qualifying frameworks during reporting period	Policy documents, government records
% of supported institutions adopting cross-sector gender coordination mechanisms	Proportion of institutions supported by the RO that establish or formalize integrated gender coordination or implementation mechanisms.	$(\text{Institutions adopting mechanisms} \div \text{Total supported institutions}) \times 100$	Institutional documentation, coordination records
% of integrated contributions captured in PRISM and reflected in strategic reporting	Proportion of integrated policy engagements recorded in PRISM and referenced in strategic planning or reporting processes.	$(\text{Integrated engagements captured in PRISM} \div \text{Total integrated engagements}) \times 100$	PRISM reports, strategic review documents