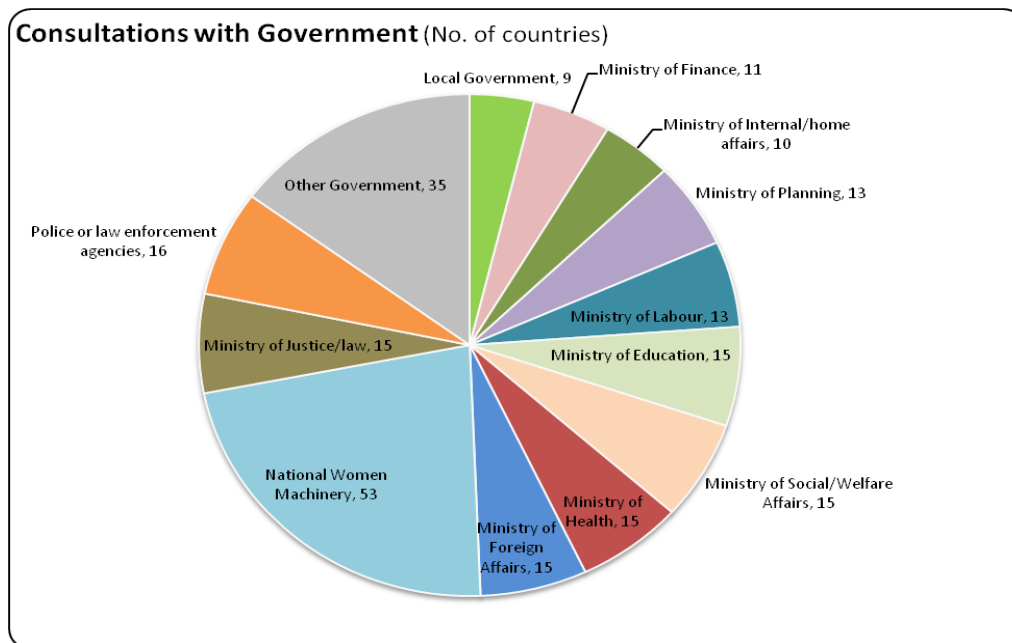


Partner Consultations on UN Women’s First Strategic Plan (2011-2013) April, 2011

I. Background

To inform and guide the preparation of UN Women’s first Strategic Plan, over 120 partner consultations were held from January to early April of this year, covering 71 countries in five regions, as well as global-level networks during the 55th Session on the Commission of the Status of Women. Over 3,700 partners (organizations and individuals) from Government (30.7%), civil society and academia (47%) and the UN system (22%) were consulted on their expectations of UN Women’s first Strategic Plan.¹ Partners were selected based on their wide experience in the area of gender equality and women’s rights. In an effort to ensure the inclusion of the voices of traditionally marginalized groups, UN Women reached out to networks and organizations which included among others, representatives of rural, indigenous, trafficked, and elderly women, women refugees, widows and ethnic minorities, in addition to organisations working with men, youth, and religious communities and leaders.

In conducting the majority of national and local consultations, UN Women used the opportunity to further foster dialogue between governments, civil society and the UN System. As a priority constituent of UN Women, in 85.5% of all country-level consultations National Women’s Machineries were active participants, often leading the discussions. Reflective of UN Women’s strong mandate to support gender mainstreaming, and building on the ground work laid by former UNIFEM, throughout the majority of consultations Government partners were represented by a broad range of national and local-level authorities and bodies.



¹ The summary of consultations also incorporates findings and feedback UN Women received from partners when conducting a Field Capacity Assessment carried out from Nov. 2010 to Jan. 2011, including the results of a global survey carried out for the purposes of informing the Assessment.

The interest and support for UN Women has been extraordinary and has been visible in many countries and venues. As an example, in Viet Nam, nearly 150 national, donor and UN partners convened for a 1.5 hour discussion on UN Women's Strategic Plan. Major international NGOs – like Oxfam/Novib – took the initiative to survey international NGOs worldwide on their priorities for UN Women's areas of priority. Many other organizations – from coalitions of women's organizations who are part of GEAR to a coalition of Pakistani women's NGOs – have sent joint papers highlighting the priorities and working methods that they hope that UN Women will incorporate. UN Women expresses its strong appreciation for the initiative and interest that many partners have taken to assist with clarifying where UN Women can make a difference within the UN and with its many partners.

At the basis of all consultations at the global, regional, national and local level was the Vision and 100 Day Action Plan of UN Women's Executive Director, which was launched during the first regular session of the Executive Board in January 2011. Consultations addressed the thematic priorities of partners at the global, regional and national level; the expectations of how UN Women will support partners in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, including its role in leading the coordination of the UN system's work in this area; and expectations of mechanisms in support of programming, CSO and Government partnerships, and the range of specialized groups of partners for inclusion so as to ensure a comprehensive response to the inequalities which restrict the full realization of women's rights at all levels. The feedback from the consultations will not only inform the development of UN Women's Strategic Plan, but also the regional and country-level strategies of UN Women. Detailed country- and region-specific reports were developed for each consultation and will be used by the relevant policy advisors, sub-regional and country presences in the coming six months in developing future programmes.

In addition to the country- and regional-level consultations, UN Women conducted a global online survey of UN, Government and civil society partners, to which over 1,000 responses were received. It focused on key areas of support that derive from the UN Women founding Resolution ([A/64/289](#)), and the Secretary-General's Comprehensive proposal for the composite entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women ([A/64/588](#)).

- Support national efforts by providing policy advice and institutional support to member states in implementation of international norms and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Supporting the development and implementation of **evidence-based laws, plans, policies and budgets** in line with international and national commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;
- Supporting **gender equality advocates, both within government and non-governmental organizations, to have a stronger voice in decision-making processes;**
- Supporting the **development and strengthening of knowledge and expertise on gender equality and the status of women and girls**, including through South-South learning and exchange;
- **Working within the UN Resident Coordinator system to coordinate the work of UN Country Teams, improve coherence and promote accountability** for providing effective

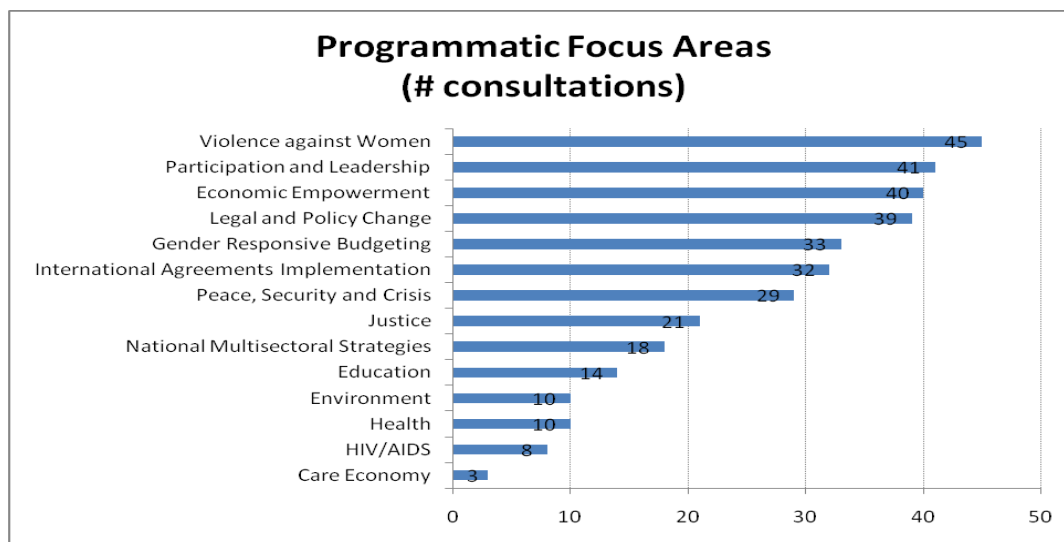
support to countries in their efforts to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Survey responses validated the above functions across all regions, with largely equal emphasis among all four areas.² Within these categories, partners identified three particularly crucial functions: capacity development of national governments and civil society; support to gender mainstreaming; and advocacy to ensure an open space for dialogue.

II. Programmatic Focus Areas

The results of the survey and the outcomes of the in-depth live consultations affirmed the main thematic areas articulated in the Executive Director's Vision and 100 Day Action Plan, namely: women's economic empowerment; peace and security; national planning and budgets; ending violence against women; and women's leadership and participation. The table below captures the number of the 68 UN Women convened consultations that expressed interest in specific areas of programme focus. Support for women's economic empowerment, women's role in decision-making, and the elimination of violence against women and girls was expressed in the majority of consultations and the expectations and recommendations voiced by partners in each of the five regions were largely similar. In addition, participants expressed interest in UN Women having a role in addressing the gender dimensions of access to justice, HIV/AIDS, education, the environment and health (including sexual and reproductive health and in particular maternal health). There was also very strong and explicit demand for UN Women to support efforts to strengthen legal and policy frameworks that promote gender equality and to assist Member States' efforts to implement international agreements, especially the CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions on protecting and promoting women's rights and security in conflict and post-conflict/peace-building. Participants also requested that UN Women support national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. As partners in Tajikistan stated, the "*emphasis of UN Women's work should be on equality of rights of women and men, and improvement of women's capacity to claim those rights to ensure real changes in their lives.*"

²UN Women Global Partner Survey, which was administered from 23rd December 2010 to 18th January 2011 and targeted Governments and CSOs and UNCTs. Responses were received from all five regions.



In countries where the importance of promoting women’s voices and ensuring their security in the context of conflict, post-conflict and crisis situations was emphasized, partners stressed the need to place equal emphasis on protection of women and girls and support for women’s leadership within these processes, and in this regard, the need to include refugee women, women IDPs, and woman and girl victims of violence. Partners stressed the need for UN Women to ensure that crisis response efforts are gender-sensitive and that women’s organizations are engaged in the implementation and monitoring of those efforts.

Addressing violence against women, including sexual violence in the context of conflict and crisis situations, was also highlighted. In all consultations, participants consistently identified the importance of ensuring that all government and non-governmental actors at all levels have the capacities, established protocols and support to deliver services to assist woman and girl survivors of violence. There was broad consensus that actively engaging men, youth and religious leaders in combating violence against women would be crucial to achieving success. Many participants also identified the need for women’s secure access to justice and services to combat violence and discrimination as an issue that should be prioritized in UN Women’s Strategic Plan.

Partners interpreted “women’s participation and leadership” in multiple ways: political participation as advocates, voters, members of political parties and in holding decision-makers to account; and as political leaders, elected and appointed at all levels of society. Many stressed the linkages between women’s political participation and advocacy related to tackling cultural stereotypes.

In a number of consultations, partners identified a strong relationship between progress in areas such as women’s leadership, combating violence against women, and the realization of international and national gender equality commitments and the promotion of women’s access to and control over economic resources and opportunities. Partners expressed high expectations for UN Women’s work to promote women’s economic empowerment. Of particular importance was the context in which women currently participate in the formal and informal labour market; for instance, women’s participation in the informal economy is often linked to the social services, social protection schemes and the care economy. Particular groups of women, such as migrant

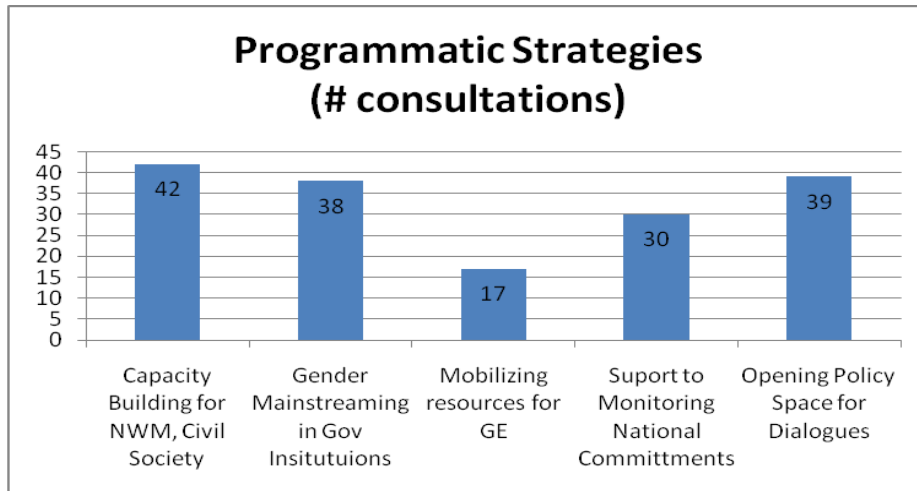
workers and business owners and leaders, would need to be considered as UN Women plans its future work in this area. It was also widely acknowledged that UN Women must engage in concerted efforts to target women who are often most excluded, especially rural women.

In the majority of consultations, participants strongly requested that UN Women provide support for the implementation of legal frameworks, including international and national commitments on gender equality, in a gender-sensitive manner. Equal emphasis was placed on the importance of implementing gender-specific laws and laws to combat violence against women and on mainstreaming gender issues into broader national strategies and programmes; in this regard, it would be particularly imperative to build the capacity of the institutions responsible for operationalizing and monitoring these commitments. To achieve these objectives, partners envisioned a strong role for UN Women as providing technical advice to Member States in the development of essential protocols and in revising legislation; capacity development; the establishment of stronger mechanisms to support monitoring and accountability, including data collection and analysis; greater access to information about best practices at the national, regional and international levels in implementing gender-sensitive laws and policies; and greater access by all women to services pursuant to relevant laws, policies and programmes. In many consultations, effective implementation of gender-sensitive legislation, policies and programmes was dependent on receiving systematic support of national partners with regard to gender-responsive budgeting and gender mainstreaming tools and strategies.

III. Programmatic Strategies

Partners at the global, regional and national levels expect UN Women to play a catalytic role in advancing gender equality, and in so doing, to ally with the women's movement to ensure that women's voices – including those of the most marginalized groups – are heard. However, most see a distinction between creating a space for change and being an agent of change. A range of partners, in governments and CSOs in particular, stressed the need for more strategic, longer-term, sustained, comprehensive, government-endorsed development interventions on gender equality. The chart below depicts the number of UN Women led consultations that expressed the need for specific roles for UN Women in terms of programming strategies, including capacity building for National Women's Machinery (NWM) and across other government institutions, to support advocacy efforts to mobilize greater resources for gender equality; support to monitoring national commitments; and continuing its role as a neutral broker, to strengthen the voice of gender equality advocates in policy decision-making.

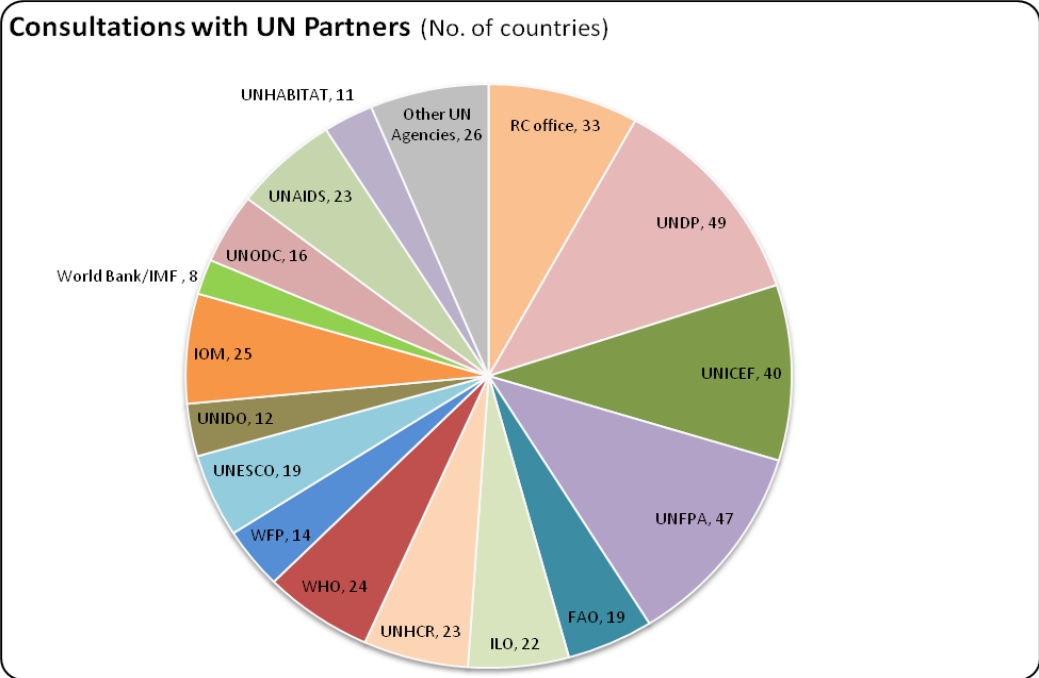
Among the strongest expectations is that UN Women will continue its role as a broker between governments, civil society and the rest of the UN system in order to amplify the voices of gender equality advocates in various forums. During a consultation with Egyptian women's organizations, partners stated that their greatest expectation for UN Women is that it would support a *“democratic community in which Egyptian women and girls are equally respected and valued as citizens and human beings, enjoying equal human rights, human development, responsibilities and opportunities in public and private domains”*.



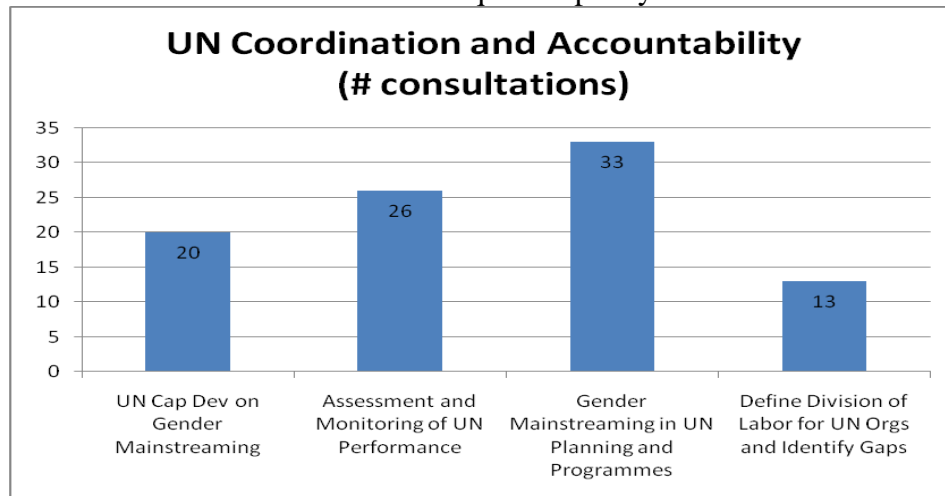
Partners placed particular emphasis on UN Women’s support, both technical and financial, to national women’s machineries at all levels, including their capacity to influence government more broadly. This should occur simultaneously with UN Women’s direct support to and engagement with line ministries to implement gender equality commitments. Partners also want to see UN Women trying more innovative and creative approaches to capacity development, ensuring that these are culturally and contextually relevant; to carefully evaluate capacity development efforts; and in some countries emphasized the need for the UN’s broader capacity development efforts to be better coordinated. In a number of consultations, partners saw a key role for UN Women to support national partners in the monitoring and implementation of government commitments to gender equality.

IV. UN Women’s role within the UN System

Consultations with the UN System were carried out at the global, regional and national levels (please see chart below for agency breakdown). In 36 per cent of country-level consultations, UN agencies were invited and actively participated. UN Women also convened specific consultations with UN Country Teams (in 42.6% of countries), and with the UN gender-related Theme/Working Groups (in 26.2% of countries).



Partners primarily considered UN Women’s UN coordination role to be about: strengthening capacity for gender mainstreaming in UN agency portfolios and joint programmes; supporting improved monitoring of the status of women; and leading the UNCT in improving accountability for gender equality. In some consultations, UN agencies emphasized the need for UN Women to have strong and readily available technical capacity, particularly in applying gender expertise to specific sectors of the UN’s work, and the capacity of staff to play a coordination function at country level. The desire to see UN Women strengthen its capacities in this area was illuminated by the partner survey, where only 40 percent of government and CSO partners and 36 percent of UN partners considered UN Women to have adequate capacity.



Partners also noted the need for UN Women to support UNCTs to build an improved understanding of the situation of women into their work and to consider more thoroughly the potential contribution of all UNCT members to achieving gender equality at national and sub-national levels. As with other areas, partners saw the potential for UN Women to strengthen the

UN's capacity to evaluate the impact of its interventions on gender equality, notably within the context of the UN Development Assistance Framework, and to direct its resources more effectively based on such evaluation.

Accountability was viewed as an essential element of improved UN Country Team performance. It was noted that this requires systematic advocacy at the level of heads of agencies together with a sustained dialogue and consistent support. This was considered to be a key role of the UN Women representative and of a strengthened Gender Working/Theme Group. Some colleagues in the UN expressed the hope that the UN Women representative could be a powerful voice for Gender Working/Theme Groups in the UN Country Team. In some countries, government and CSO partners expressed the hope that UN Women will act as an interlocutor for national partners within the UNCT on gender issues and support the creation of a space for women's CSOs in shaping UNDAFs and emergency response plans.

In emergency and crisis situations, partners stressed many of the same issues on UN Coordination, but there were notable differences. They noted the role of UN Women in mainstreaming gender in the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) and immediate emergency responses as well as in monitoring the impact of interventions by establishing baselines and evaluating results. Some partners raised concerns that UN Women lacked adequate capacity in the area of humanitarian response and emergencies and suggested that this could be a priority area for UN Women's own capacity development.

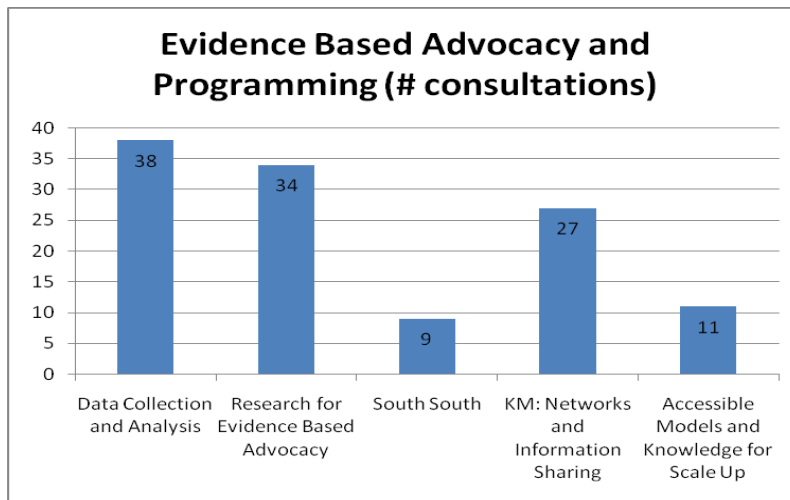
A number of partners viewed UN Women as playing a critical role to ensure that the UNCTs' response to national priorities and needs was grounded in the international standards and norms on gender equality, particularly the CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions. Further, UN Women is expected by many to ensure the UN's coordinated and comprehensive support to national engagement in intergovernmental processes, and the national application of agreements and objectives agreed to through these processes.

V. The Role of Knowledge and the Use of Media

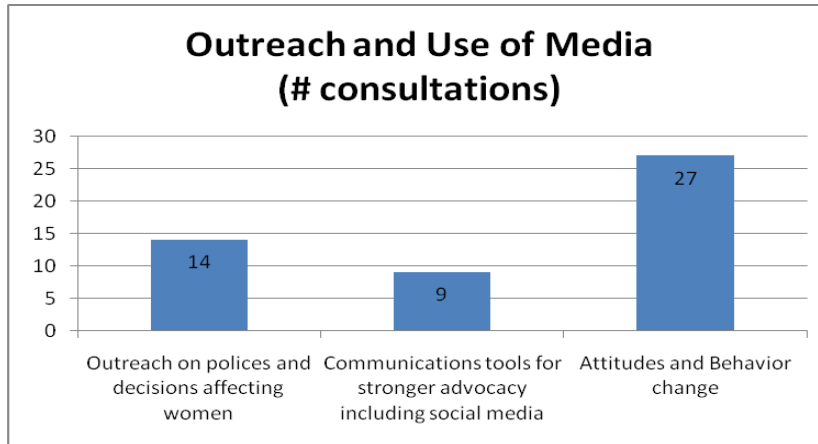
In both the online survey and within live partner consultations, enthusiasm for the expansion and implementation of the knowledge function and support for evidenced-based advocacy and planning was considerable. Emphasis was placed on the need to support research at the country, regional and global levels that could substantially inform policy and programmes; monitor and analyze the impact of policies on women and girls; and improve methods for data collection and statistical analysis. Many articulated the importance of learning from the experiences of others, including through South-South cooperation and expanded networking opportunities. As stressed by partners in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, UN Women must be able to *“expand the debate to new issues...highlighting and promoting new actors, generating new opportunities for the exchange/coordination of similar processes at the national and international level, mobilizing regional leadership/actions regarding key issues and supporting the development of theoretical debate and reflection (on gender equality)”*.

The chart below indicates the number of UN Women led consultations that called for strengthened support to stronger data collection and analysis; research and evidence based-advocacy – including through partnerships with research and other knowledge generating institutions; knowledge

sharing including through support to South South exchange; strengthened knowledge management (KM) systems and networks; and through the provision of making accessible proven practices in the form of models that have the potential for scale up. Partners stressed the importance of improving the systematic monitoring and analysis of the situation of women and girls and the implementation of international and national gender equality commitments. They noted that the absence of proper mechanisms for monitoring and analysis adversely affected the capacity of national partners to advocate for the use of evidence-based strategies in policy development and for tracking the impact of existing policies on combating inequality and advancing women’s empowerment. The concept of more transparent, systematic and readily accessible data on the status of women was strongly linked to participants’ understanding of how to make public policies and programmes more responsive and aligned with specific contexts and needs.



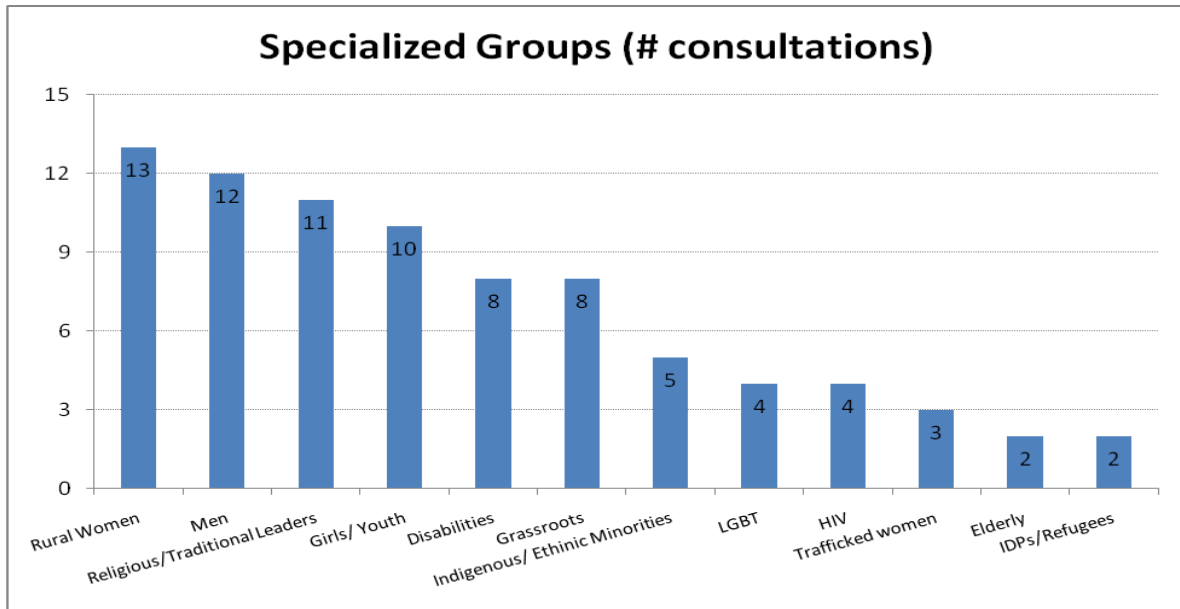
In regard to communications and the use of the media, based upon the UN Women led consultations one observes in the chart below that Governments, CSOs, participants from academia, and partners within the UN system emphasized the need for more comprehensive, long-term outreach programmes to raise awareness among national audiences of legal and other changes that would affect their lives, along with new technologies, including social media, to promote inclusive advocacy efforts. In nearly half of the consultations there was a call for greater support to communications initiatives to challenge entrenched stereotypes perpetuating gender inequalities, by changing “hearts and minds”. As one partner from Uruguay stressed “*UN Women needs the support of the population as a whole, in order to ensure long-term benefits for women’s rights and empowerment.*” The importance of the more targeted use of and sustained partnership with media in this regard was reiterated throughout consultations.



VI. Advisory Mechanisms and Partnerships

With the creation of UN Women, partners expressed expectation of greater and more systematic support towards processes and mechanisms which promote accountability in upholding commitments by Governments, the UN System, and UN Women itself towards advancing gender equality. In the majority of consultations, CSOs expressed a desire for more systematic communication and exchange of information between UN Women and women on the ground. As an expert from a women’s network in Asia stated, “CSOs would like to see a ‘new paradigm’ of partnership and communication” between UN Women and the non-governmental organizations which it supports at the national, regional and global levels. This includes but is not limited to advisory groups being established. Recommendations on having “thematic” advisory groups were also raised in a number of regions, and also at the global level. In the majority of consultations, the role of these advisory groups was largely described with regard to the provision of technical advice and guidance to UN Women in the development and implementation of global, regional and national programmes on gender equality.

Global, regional and country-level consultations illuminated not only the need for UN Women to do more to address the needs of the most excluded women, but also to expand partnerships so as to ensure that interventions are reaching all members of society. As the table below shows, within regions and countries, certain target beneficiaries and partners were identified. As consultations with grassroots women highlighted, however, in targeting some of the most traditionally excluded groups, measures must be taken to ensure that these women are not the only beneficiaries of UN Women-supported programmes, but that they are active partners. As a representative of a grassroots organization in Kenya stated, “We are not targets of change, but drawing from lived experience, we bring solutions to the table”.



While the importance of including rural women was articulated as a priority everywhere, other excluded groups that were identified varied from region to region. Common themes emerged, however, with regard to how UN Women should address the needs of vulnerable groups of women in its programmatic work:

- When shaping programmes at all levels, the needs and priorities of these groups of women must be taken into consideration;
- To this end, in all programmes and strategies, including the UN system’s development and humanitarian assistance frameworks, specific goals and indicators should be stipulated to show how UN Women will support the needs of these excluded women;
- UN Women must ensure that these women have a voice in the decision-making processes that shape their lives and that traditionally excluded women are represented in any advisory groups established under UN Women;
- Support must be provided to high-level dialogues between decision-makers and excluded women;
- UN Women must draw upon the expertise and knowledge of these groups;
- Support the improved capacity, networking and coordination among organizations working with excluded groups would be essential;
- UN Women must support these groups’ to access to resources;
- UN Women should work to make the challenges and strengths of excluded women visible to society at all levels.

Throughout all consultations, the importance of engaging men, youth, religious leaders and non-traditional partners in combating gender-based discrimination was widely emphasized.