



## Safe and Fair Programme: Realizing Women Migrant Workers' Rights and Opportunities in the Association of South-East Asian Nations

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## Final Report

# Final Evaluation of the Safe and Fair Programme: Realizing Women Migrant Workers' Rights and Opportunities in the Association of South-East Asian Nations

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## List of Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CMO	Context – Mechanism – Outcome
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
EU	European Union
EMG	Evaluation Management Group
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
EVAW	Ending Violence against Women
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment
GOALS	Governance of Labour Migration in South and South-East Asia programme
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
KII	Key informant interview
MDW	Migrant women in domestic work
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPTF	Multi Partner Trust Fund
MTE	Mid-term Evaluation
NPAC	National Project Advisory Committee
NPC	National Programme Coordinator
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee
PAC	Project Advisory Committee
PSC	Project Steering Committee
ROAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
RPAC	Regional Project Advisory Committee
SAF	Safe and Fair
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SOGIESC	Sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sexual characteristics
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
TOC	Theory of Change
TORs	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UN Women	The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VAW	Violence against Women
WEE	Women’s economic empowerment
WHO	World Health Organisation
WMW	Woman migrant worker

# Executive Summary

## Background and Overview of the Safe and Fair Programme

Women make up nearly half of migrant workers across the ASEAN region<sup>1</sup> and provide substantial economic contributions in both countries of origin and destination<sup>2</sup>. While labour migration can be an empowering experience for women, women migrant workers (WMWs) face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and the risk of violence<sup>3</sup>, regardless of whether they migrate through regular or irregular channels. *Safe and Fair: Realizing women migrant workers' rights and opportunities in the ASEAN region (2018-2022)* is a programme implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). With a total budget of Euro 25.5 million<sup>4</sup>, the programme is part of the multi-year European Union (EU) – United Nations (UN) *Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls*, and aims to make labour migration safe and fair for WMWs across the ASEAN region. The programme is structured around three objectives relating to strengthened labour migration governance frameworks; increased provision of violence against women (VAW) services; and improved data, knowledge, and attitudes towards WMWs. It supports programming in countries of origin (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, Viet Nam) and countries of destination (Brunei Darussalam<sup>5</sup>, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand), although the Programme did not have a physical presence in Brunei or Singapore.

## Evaluation purpose, scope, criteria, and use

The evaluation has the dual purpose of promoting accountability and learning. The scope of the evaluation covered all programme activities carried out across all programming countries from the programme inception in 2018 to the end of evaluation data collection period (15 September 2023). It used the standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of *relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact* and included an additional criterion to assess the extent to which the programme mainstreamed the ILO and UN Women's cross-cutting priorities of

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<sup>1</sup> The ILO estimates that 5.2 million women make up the 11.6 million people who are migrant workers in the region according to the ILO-UN Women 2019 study (revised in 2020) on "Public attitudes towards migrant workers in Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand", page III.

<sup>2</sup> This includes remittances sent back to countries of origin. Indeed, globally, women are responsible for half of the world's estimated \$601 billion in remittances which are often spent on health, education, and family and community development. It also includes much-needed added workforce in countries of destination.

<sup>3</sup> The levels of discrimination and violence experienced can be on the basis of other identities: age, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, marital and family status, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, health status, and pregnancy as outlined in the ILO-UN Women 2019 study on "Public attitudes towards migrant workers in Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand", page 4.

<sup>4</sup> The total approved budget in USD is \$30,000,000 (rounded up), which includes \$16,648,833 allocated to ILO and \$13,036,461 allocated to UN Women. ILO and UN Women each contributed \$314,707. UNODC contributed USD 186,882.

<sup>5</sup> The Programme has not implemented any activities in Brunei Darussalam.

gender equality, equity, human rights, disability-inclusion and non-discrimination, tripartism and social dialogue, and environmental sustainability. Human rights, equity and gender equality principles were also thoroughly integrated throughout the standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria.

The primary users of the evaluation will be the programme's management team; its donor (the European Union); the Fund Governing Body through the Spotlight Secretariat and the European Commission; the ILO Evaluation Office at headquarters and the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service; and the ILO, UN Women and UNODC regional and field offices. Secondary users include women migrant workers; civil society organizations that have partnered with the programme, stakeholders that have benefited from the programme (including ASEAN governments and institutions, labour recruiters, employers, labour organisations, and researchers; as well as other organisations and UN agencies working on labour migration, violence against women, and human trafficking at national and regional levels.

### **Evaluation Methods: Approach, Data Collection and Analysis**

The evaluation used a mixed methods design, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative primary and secondary data through an extensive document review, two surveys, key informant interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs). It was based on a *theory-driven case study approach* with case studies conducted in two countries of origin (Cambodia and Vietnam) and two countries of destination (Thailand and Malaysia). The case studies were designed to facilitate an analysis of the extent to which the SAF Programme supported WMWs throughout their entire labour migration journey from pre-migration to reintegration as well as to understand the factors that contributed towards the achievement or non-achievement of results. The evaluation design also incorporated feminist evaluation principles, as well as a gender equality and equity approach throughout the evaluation process. In total, the Evaluation Team conducted 101 KIIs and 25 FGDs with 285 stakeholders (220 women and 65 men) both virtually and in-person with in-person interviews taking place across case study countries. Interviews used a purposeful sampling approach and took place with stakeholders from across all stakeholder groups and across all programming countries. The two surveys were administered online to two groups of stakeholders: SAF regional team members and SAF National Programme Coordinators (NPCs) to examine operational programming including the efficiency and effectiveness of joint organizational working arrangements<sup>6</sup>.

### **Findings**

**Relevance:** The Safe and Fair Programme was well aligned with and contributed towards the advancement of international and regional gender equality and labour migration norms, standards, and priorities by bringing together, for the first time, labour migration and EVAW actors to provide strengthened support and services to WMWs throughout their labour migration experience. The SAF Programme was also aligned with the goals and objectives of the Spotlight

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<sup>6</sup> Both surveys experienced at 89 per cent response rate (8 out of 9 responses for the regional staff survey and 16 out of 18 responses for the national-level NPC survey).



Initiative and was an important addition to efforts aimed at ending violence against women. However, there was room for its approach to promoting participatory and bottom-up change as well as its engagement with CSOs to have further advanced the Spotlight Initiative's principles and priorities. The SAF Programme largely integrated a holistic approach to programming aimed at eliminating violence against WMWs by providing programming that spanned across a WMWs' migration journey. Some of these elements, such as strengthening the capacities of first responders in both countries of origin and destination, have the potential for further scale-up while others, such as support for safe remigration to destination countries and reintegration into countries of origin, require strengthening. Lastly, the SAF programme adjusted its programming approaches in response to the COVID-19 pandemic by providing increased service provision, information, and shifting activities online wherever feasible. At the same time, there was room to have further modified its programme design and results framework to more fully respond to the most pressing needs of WMWs.

**Coherence:** The SAF Programme was implemented largely in alignment and in consultation with other UN labour migration programming and initiatives in the region. Yet there also exists potential to generate programmatic synergies with other UN labour migration, EVAW, and trafficking programming in the region to create greater impact. The SAF Programme also achieved important cross-border and regional-level successes, particularly in partnership with ASEAN, while at the same time, the regional SAF Programme staff invested significant time and effort in supporting national-level initiatives, which detracted effort away from regional level programming. Through the SAF Programme, ILO and UN Women were successful at jointly planning and implementing activities while achieving thematic synergies across programme outcomes. Yet fewer synergies were achieved with UNODC due to its limited programme participation. At the same time, the programme was designed in components, with ILO leading Outcome 1 and UN Women leading Outcome 2. This separation with clear division of roles and responsibilities sometimes extended down to the national level where partners were often not shared across agencies, challenging the programme's coherence at the national level.

**Effectiveness:** As of September 2023, SAF Programme reports confirm that the programme has largely met and/or surpassed nearly all of its targets across output indicators as well as surpassed several outcome indicator targets. The programme was particularly effective at strengthening VAW referral pathways for WMWs across the labour migration journey in both countries of origin and destination. The quality and availability of services provided through these referral mechanisms remain, however, in need of strengthening. The SAF programming effectively raised awareness of the importance of safe migration practices through regular migration channels among WMWs across migrant worker communities in countries of origin, thus contributing to VAW prevention and anti-trafficking efforts. At the same time, there remain considerable incentives that are outside the control of the Safe and Fair Programme for WMWs to engage in irregular migration even if they understand the potential benefits of using regular migration channels, as well as the need for further investment in reinforcing those gains made. Further, there are concrete examples of the SAF Programme having effectively leveraged the comparative strengths of UN Women and ILO by supporting government ministries in countries of origin and destination to strengthen political frameworks and implementation plans. These served to better protect the rights of WMWs and increase VAW service provision to WMWs. There appears to be

some improvement in attitudes towards WMWs among target groups, but the scope of this change is minimal and isolated, in part due to a lack of coordination between SAF stakeholders and a lack of financial investment under the programme's third outcome area regarding changing attitudes. Lastly, the programme missed key opportunities to advance social norms work at the community level to promote women's empowerment principles and address domestic violence in migrant worker communities.

**Efficiency:** The SAF Programme was able to overcome substantial delays and operational challenges. However, in some cases, the delays affected its ability to implement programming and generate momentum towards higher level results. The SAF Programme invested considerably into its M&E system and regularly shared monitoring data with stakeholders. However, this required significant time and resources from implementing partners and NPCs, and disseminated monitoring data was most often at the activity and output level which limited its usefulness to key partners and decision-makers.

**Cross-Cutting:** The SAF Programme integrated a strong women's empowerment and survivor-centered approach throughout its initiatives, putting women at the center of programming and giving WMWs opportunities to strengthen their networks and use their voices to share their experiences and advocate for their interests. The SAF Programme made some important progress in advancing the rights of particularly vulnerable groups of WMWs including undocumented WMWs, domestic workers, LGBTIQ+ migrant workers. At the same time, the needs of other vulnerable sub-groups of migrant workers including those facing climate change crises and those with disabilities were not directly addressed within the programme design. The programme has generated significant research and knowledge products and has increased the capacity of government and CSO partners to collect and use disaggregated data to better support the prevention and response of violence against WMWs.

**Impact:** The SAF Programme has contributed towards making the labour migration journey of WMWs safer and fairer by advancing the integration of EVAW into labour migration governance frameworks, increasing levels of understanding about WMWs among select stakeholders, and improving access to services, and supporting WMWs as change agents. While the programme's focus on addressing structural and cultural barriers that hinder gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) is aligned with gender transformative programming, transformative change that addresses the root causes of violence against WMWs requires greater investment to change social norms within migrant worker communities and across a woman's labour migration journey.

**Sustainability:** Of the major outcomes achieved by the SAF Programme in enabling safer and fairer migration for WMWs across ASEAN, elements of sustainability include government buy-in and institutional strengthening as part of the systems level work in advancing policy change and supporting partners on their operationalization. Challenges to sustainability include the fragmented nature of programming and the inability to further develop many initiatives that are still in their infancy, as well as the limited investment in work on changing attitudes under Outcome 3.

## Conclusions

1. The SAF Programme has made considerable advancements in supporting the rights of WMWs while preventing and addressing multiple forms of violence that is often committed against them.
2. The SAF Programme has set a strong foundation for future EAW and labour migration programming where many of the programme's initiatives have the potential to be further rolled-out, scaled-up, or replicated to achieve more widespread impact.
3. There is significant opportunity for future labour migration and EAW programming to address the root causes of VAW through social norms change.
4. While the programme focused on supporting a wide variety of labour migration and EAW stakeholders across a WMW's labour migration journey, more programming emphasis is needed to improve the quality and availability of VAW services, engage employers, facilitate safe re-migration, and support reintegration and the sustainable development of migrant worker communities.
5. The SAF Programme made notable advancements in supporting the rights of undocumented WMWs and domestic workers. To advance the SDGs and fully align with the leave no one behind principle, future labour migration and EAW programming will need to be designed to address the unique need, priorities, and vulnerabilities of other sub-groups of particularly vulnerable WMWs, including LGBTIQ+ migrant workers, WMWs with disabilities, and WMWs from climate-affected communities.
6. Future regional joint programming requires a more cohesive design that further encourages joint work and the sharing of partners; that can be flexibly modified to respond to contextual changes and stakeholder feedback; that empowers national stakeholders to take leadership roles; that fosters regional synergies and cross-border work including that with other UN entities; and that uses MEL systems that are responsive to the needs and priorities of programming stakeholders.

## Recommendations

The following eight (8) recommendations stem from the evaluation findings and conclusions and are designed to strengthen future EAW and labour migration programming. They are presented in order of priority, although many can be implemented simultaneously.

***Recommendation #1: Further invest in programming that promotes the rights of WMWs and ends violence against them by continuing to roll-out, scale-up, and replicate the successful programming elements that have been initiated under the SAF Programme.*** The SAF Programme had a short implementation period considering that it took time to set up such a large and complex initiative, engage stakeholders and secure stakeholder buy-in around a relatively new topic that addresses the intersection of VAW and labour migration, and overcome delays

caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme has set a strong foundation for future programming in this area and has initiated many promising practices that require time and investment to further roll-out, scale-up, and replicate to achieve widespread impact.

***Recommendation #2: Increase investment in social norms work when implementing labour migration and EAW programming to further address the root causes of violence against women.*** In order to address the root causes of VAW which stem from beliefs that women are inferior to men, future labour migration and EAW programming should include a stronger focus on changing social norms both at the community level and across actors who interact with WMWs throughout their labour migration journey.

***Recommendation #3: Further promote the sustainable development of migrant worker communities including the reintegration of WMWs.*** For labour migration to contribute towards sustainable development in countries of origin, a greater focus is needed on supporting migrant worker communities as a whole and to helping WMWs effectively reintegrate into their communities upon return.

***Recommendation #4: Continue to strengthen holistic support to WMWs across their labour migration journey while investing in improvements in the quality and reach of services for WMWs.*** Holistic programming is necessary to support WMWs across their labour migration journey from pre-migration to post-integration. While the SAF Programme used a holistic approach, there are a number of areas where this programming requires strengthening. This includes ensuring that services for WMWs are of good quality, widely available, and easily accessible.

***Recommendation #5: Continue to support the rights of domestic workers while increasing programmatic focus on undocumented WMWs, LGBTIQ+ migrant workers, WMWs with disabilities, and WMWs from climate-affected communities.*** To advance the SDGs and leave no one behind, future EAW and labour migration programming must be designed to respond to the unique needs and vulnerabilities of particularly vulnerable sub-groups of WMWs. This includes but is not limited to undocumented WMWs, domestic workers, LGBTIQ+ migrant workers, WMWs with disabilities, and WMWs from climate-affected communities.

***Recommendation #6: Include mechanisms that allow for more flexibility to modify the programme design and implementation approaches throughout programme implementation in response to stakeholder feedback and changes in operating context.*** To ensure that development programming remains responsive to stakeholder feedback and to important changes across the operating context, programmes require mechanisms to adjust the programme design and implementation approaches throughout the programme's implementation.

***Recommendation #7: Ensure that future regional joint programming is designed cohesively, empowers national-level leadership, encourages regional level cross-border work, and leverages potential synergies with other UN programming.*** To fully align with UN Reform principles and promote cohesive programming, joint programming should be designed first in its

entirety and then bring in UN agencies best suited to implement the programme as opposed to designing programming based on the strengths of pre-identified agencies. It should also empower national-level leadership and generate synergies with other UN programming. The regional element of a regional programme particularly requires investment to generate regional synergies and promote cross-border work.

***Recommendation #8: Strengthen future MEL systems to be more responsive to the needs of programming stakeholders by simplifying the reporting processes for implementing partners and designing communications products that are tailored to the specific needs of different stakeholder groups.*** Since MEL is an activity that requires the engagement of and collaboration with stakeholders and programming partners, future MEL systems need to be more tailored to their specific realities and needs.

## Section I: Context and Background

Women make up nearly half of migrant workers across the ASEAN region<sup>7</sup> and provide substantial economic contributions in both countries of origin and destination<sup>8</sup>. While labour migration can be an empowering experience for women, women migrant workers (WMWs) face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and the risk of violence<sup>9</sup>, regardless of whether they migrate through regular or irregular channels. This includes trafficking, sexual abuse, intimate partner violence (IPV), and other forms of emotional and physical violence committed by partners and family members, labour migration intermediaries, and employers, among others. Non-inclusive laws, gender specific migration bans, discriminatory cultural norms and values against WMWs, and barriers to access essential services including health care, legal support, justice mechanisms, police services, and social services even when working legally in countries of destination compound WMWs' vulnerability. WMWs who experience intersecting forms of vulnerability such as those with irregular migration status, domestic workers, sex workers, women with disabilities, women directly experiencing the effects of climate change, and members of the LGBTIQ+ community are at a particularly elevated risk of experiencing violence during their labour migration journey.

Violence against WMWs is part of the broader spectrum of violence against women (VAW), and the cultural and gendered norms that drive it. Migrant women often work in lower paid, informal employment with few if any labour protections. Notwithstanding the challenges that they face, including in joining or forming workers' organizations, WMWs in the region have been seen to be effective in establishing social and economic support networks, challenging negative perceptions, and advocating for policy change. Gender inequalities and the discrimination and abuses that WMWs face, as women and as migrants, need particular attention, including related to experiences of VAW throughout their migration journey. Additional background information can be found in Annex 4.

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<sup>7</sup> The ILO estimates that 5.2 million women make up the 11.6 million people who are migrant workers in the region according to the ILO-UN Women 2019 study (revised in 2020) on "Public attitudes towards migrant workers in Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand", page III.

<sup>8</sup> This includes remittances sent back to countries of origin. Indeed, globally, women are responsible for half of the world's estimated \$601 billion in remittances which are often spent on health, education, and family and community development. It also includes much-needed added workforce in countries of destination.

<sup>9</sup> The levels of discrimination and violence experienced can be on the basis of other identities: age, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, marital and family status, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, health status, and pregnancy as outlined in the ILO-UN Women 2019 study on "Public attitudes towards migrant workers in Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand", page 4.

## Section II: Overview of the Safe and Fair Programme

*Safe and Fair: Realizing women migrant workers' rights and opportunities in the ASEAN region (2018-2022)* is a programme implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), designed to make labour migration safe and fair for women migrant workers across the ASEAN region. With a total budget of Euro 25.5 million<sup>10</sup>, the programme is part of the multi-year European Union (EU) – United Nations (UN) *Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls*.

The programme uses a holistic multi-stakeholder approach to address the multiple intersecting factors affecting safe labour migration for women by engaging with ASEAN Member States' government authorities; ASEAN institutions; workers' organizations; employers and recruitment agencies; civil society organizations; community-based organizations; families and communities; research institutions and academia, media networks, youth, and the general public. See Annex 3 for a detailed stakeholder map prepared by the Evaluation Team. The programme supports programming in countries of origin (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, Viet Nam) and countries of destination (Brunei Darussalam<sup>11</sup>, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand), although the Programme did not have a physical presence in Brunei or Singapore<sup>12</sup>.

The Safe and Fair (SAF) Programme is structured around three objectives, as outlined below, relating to strengthened labour migration governance frameworks, increased provision of violence against women (VAW) services, and improved data, knowledge, and attitudes towards WMWs.

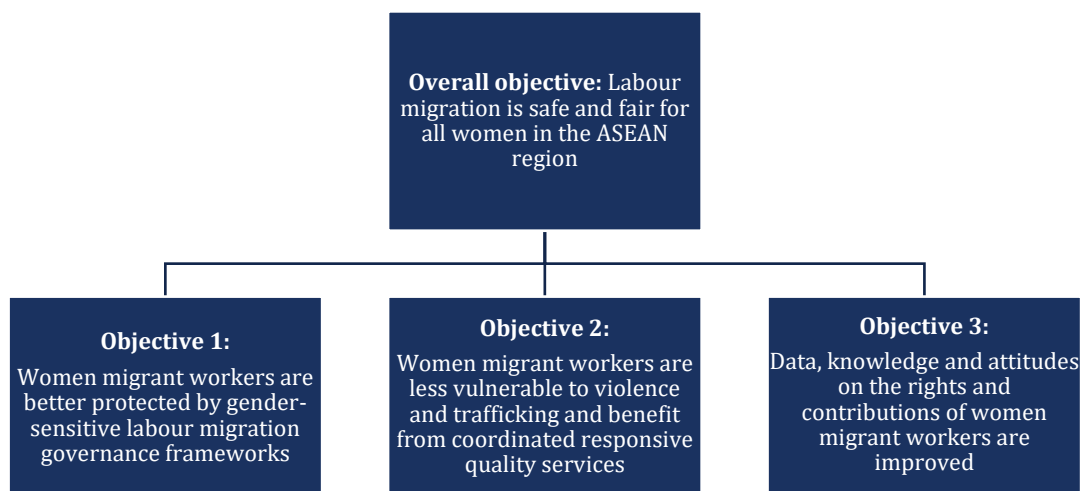
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<sup>10</sup> The total approved budget in USD is \$30,000,000 (rounded up), which includes \$16,648,833 allocated to ILO and \$13,036,461 allocated to UN Women. ILO and UN Women each contributed \$314,707. UNODC contributed USD 186,882.

<sup>11</sup> The Programme has not implemented any activities in Brunei Darussalam.

<sup>12</sup> The Programme also targets WMWs migrating to East Asia (China (Hong Kong, Taiwan) and the Republic of Korea), and the Gulf Cooperation Council States, although no programming was planned to take place in these countries.

**Figure 1: SAF Programme objectives**



The Programme uses a joint staffing model and draws on staff from both ILO and UN Women at the regional and country levels, with ILO leading on Objective 1, UN Women leading on Objective 2, and both organisations co-leading on Objective 3. In each identified country, the Programme benefits from National Project Coordinators (NPC) to oversee the implementation of the programme<sup>13</sup>. The programme’s governance structure uses a Project Steering Committee (PSC) to facilitate joint collaboration between ILO, UN Women, and UNODC, and draws on regional and national-level stakeholder input through a Regional Project Advisory Committee (RPAC)<sup>14</sup> and National Project Advisory Committees (NPACs)<sup>15</sup>. In addition, a CSO Reference Group meets annually, and was established in 2020, in line with Spotlight Initiative’s CSO Reference Group structure.

The SAF programme developed a logic model, which it refers to as a Theory of Change (TOC), as presented in Figure 2 below that links outputs to outcome-level change. To guide the evaluation analysis, the Evaluation Team developed more detailed ToC models, which can be found in Annex 15. See Annex 5 for more information on the SAF Programme.

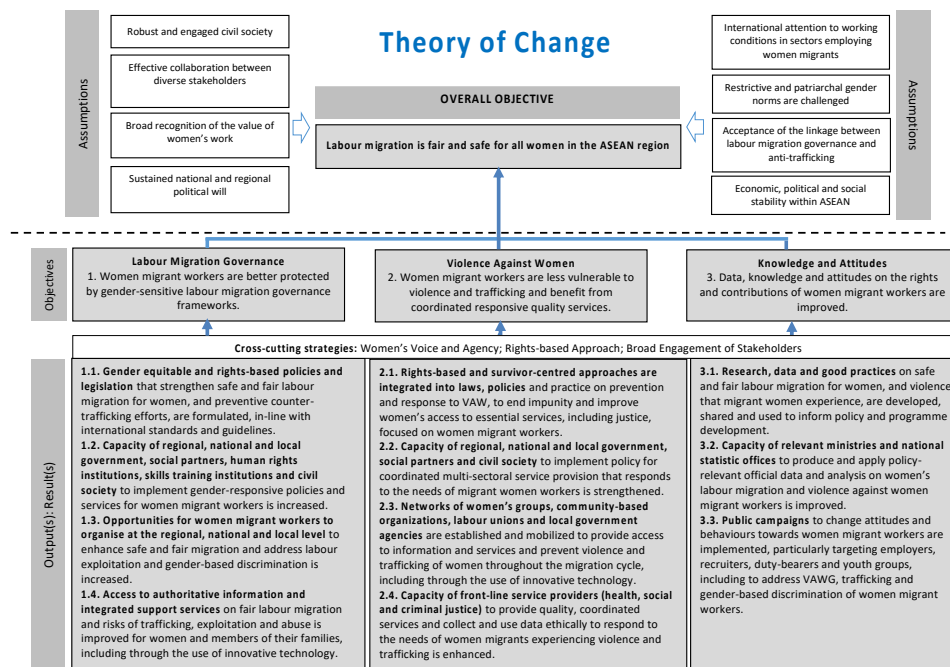
<sup>13</sup> It aims to have two NPCs (one from each organisation) in Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines and Thailand while it was one NPC representing both agencies in Malaysia, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Vietnam.

<sup>14</sup> a Regional Project Advisory Committee (RPAC) was convened at the regional level on an annual basis and comprises key tripartite plus stakeholders at the regional level including ASEAN bodies, and representatives of relevant EU Delegations and European Commission Headquarters. The RPAC provides guidance on the implementation of the programme, and endorses a proposed regional annual work plan.

<sup>15</sup> At national levels in each country, a tripartite plus Project Advisory Committee (PAC) is convened annually (and in some countries biannually) in close coordination with the EU Delegation on the ground to provide guidance on the implementation of the programme and endorse a proposed national-level annual work plan.



**Figure 2: Original TOC for the SAF Programme**



## Section III: Evaluation Purpose, Scope, and Questions

### 3.1 Evaluation purpose and objectives

The evaluation has the dual purpose of promoting accountability and learning. The specific evaluation objectives are outlined below:

- Assess the programme's relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability as well as facilitating and hindering factors.
- Assess the extent to which the programme integrated the cross-cutting priorities of gender equality, equity, human rights, disability-inclusion and non-discrimination, tripartism and social dialogue, and environmental sustainability.
- Identify lessons learned, good practices, and recommendations for similar interventions.

### 3.2 Evaluation scope

The scope of the evaluation covered all programme activities carried out in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam from the programme inception in 2018 to the end of evaluation data collection period (15 September 2023)<sup>16</sup>. While the focus was on the entire programming period, the final evaluation gave particular emphasis to the latter half of the programming period

<sup>16</sup> Although programming was more limited in Brunei, Myanmar, and Singapore, the evaluation scope also covered the activities carried out in these countries.

since the Midterm Evaluation collected data up until the end of April 2021. The evaluation also included four case studies covering Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam where in-person data was collected. The case studies were purposefully selected to represent both countries of origin and destination. In those countries selected, the SAF Programme executed significant and diverse programming and the programming staff was able to logistically support the evaluators with the in-person data collection. The evaluation scope integrated a GEEW analysis and assessed both intended and unintended effects of the programme. Its scope did not, however, include a technical review of the quality of products and services produced through the initiative as this was beyond the scope outlined in the evaluation terms of reference (ToRs).

### 3.3 Evaluation criteria and questions

The evaluation framework is based on the SAF Project Document, the ILO’s policy guidelines for results-based evaluation, and the evaluation policy of UN Women. These guidelines adhere to the norms and standards of evaluation adopted by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and the OECD/DAC Evaluation Quality Standards. The evaluation used the standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of *relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact* and included an additional criterion to assess the extent to which the SAF Programme mainstreamed the ILO and UN Women’s cross-cutting priorities of gender equality, equity, human rights, disability-inclusion and non-discrimination, tripartism and social dialogue, and environmental sustainability. Human rights, equity and gender equality principles were also thoroughly integrated throughout the standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria.

During the evaluation inception phase, the Evaluation Team modified the original evaluation questions that were included in the evaluation’s terms of reference (ToRs) by consolidating, streamlining, expanding, and correctly placing the questions under the appropriate evaluation criteria to produce ten overarching questions as presented in Figure 3 below.

The full evaluation matrix in Annex 2 details sub-questions for each of the ten evaluation questions. These sub-questions give further nuance to each question and guided the evaluation team in their assessment. The matrix also details indicators, sourcing of data, and data collection and analysis methods for each question.

**Figure 3: List of revised evaluation questions**

Criteria	Evaluation Questions
Relevance	1. To what extent is the SAF Programme aligned with international gender equality and labour migration norms, standards, and priorities, including those of the Spotlight Initiative as well as national and regional labour migration priorities of programming countries and EU labour migration strategies and political frameworks?
	2. To what extent has the SAF Programme engaged with its stakeholders, particularly the most vulnerable, throughout the programme design and implementation and responded to their needs and priorities throughout the entire labour migration journey within shifting contexts including the Covid-19 pandemic?

Coherence	3. To what extent has the SAF Programme promoted coordination and generated synergies between UN Women and ILO through joint programming as well as with the Spotlight Initiative and other UN labour migration programming across the region?
Efficiency	4. How economically and timely have programme resources (i.e., financial, human, institutional, and technical) been converted into results and to what extent has the programme structure and its management processes facilitated the achievement of results?
	5. How effectively has the programme management team employed a results-based monitoring and learning approach?
Effectiveness	6. To what extent has the SAF Programme achieved its objectives through its planned output and outcome-level results across programming objectives, countries, and stakeholder groups, taking into consideration the different experiences of particularly vulnerable groups of women migrant workers?
	7. What were the primary factors affecting the achievement and/or non-achievement of results?
Cross-cutting	8. To what extent has the SAF Programme reflected, mainstreamed, and promoted the cross-cutting priorities of gender equality, human rights, equity, disability-inclusion and non-discrimination, tripartism and social dialogue, and environmental sustainability?
Potential for Impact	9. To what extent have interlinkages and synergies between SAF Programme outcomes facilitated momentum towards gender transformational change by addressing structural barriers and exclusionary norms and harmful practices in achieving the project's stated impact-level goal of making labour migration safe and fair for all women in the ASEAN region?
Sustainability	10. To what extent are the SAF Programme results likely to be sustainable in the future?

### 3.4 Evaluation users

The primary users of the evaluation will be the programme's management team; its donor (the European Union); the Fund Governing Body through the Spotlight Secretariat and the European Commission; the ILO Evaluation Office at headquarters and the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service; and the ILO, UN Women and UNODC regional and field offices. Secondary users include women migrant workers; civil society organizations that have partnered with the programme, stakeholders that have benefited from the programme (including ASEAN governments and institutions, labour recruiters, employers, labour organisations, and researchers; as well as other organisations and UN agencies working on labour migration, violence against women, and human trafficking at national and regional levels.

The report will be made publicly available on the website of each UN organization. A management response to the recommendations will be developed and approved by the Operational Steering Committee of the Fund in consultation with the Commission, ILO and UN Women, clearly stating the follow-up actions to be taken. Findings and recommendations from the evaluation will be relevant for the Final Evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative as well as for developing future labour migration programming in the region.

## Section IV: Evaluation Methods

### 4.1. Evaluation Approach and Design

The evaluation used a ***mixed methods*** design, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative primary and secondary data through an extensive document review, two surveys, key informant interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs). It was based on a ***theory-driven case study approach*** with case studies conducted in two countries of origin (Cambodia and Vietnam) and two countries of destination (Thailand and Malaysia). The case studies were designed to facilitate an analysis of the extent to which the SAF Programme supported WMWs throughout their entire labour migration journey from pre-migration to reintegration as well as to understand the factors that contributed towards the achievement or non-achievement of results. The case studies used the ***realist technique of Context – Mechanism – Outcome Configuration*** to analyze data<sup>17</sup>. More information on the case study approach can be found in Annex 6.

The evaluation design also incorporated ***feminist evaluation*** principles, as further outlined in Annex 7 as well as a ***gender equality and equity approach*** throughout the evaluation process. This was done by applying a gender and equity-sensitive analytical lens throughout the evaluation process to ensure that the evaluation itself did not reinforce structures of inequality between men and women and sub-groups of vulnerable women migrant workers. In practical terms, it meant that the evaluation team ensured, for instance, that evaluation tools did not reinforce discrimination (based on gender, ethnicity, or other characteristic) and that a gender and equity-sensitive analytical lens was applied to all evaluation processes and products. Indeed, the evaluation integrated the ***Social Relations Framework for Gender Analysis***, developed by Naila Kabeer at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex University, UK, to understand how social relations have shaped the roles, resources, rights, and responsibilities of WMWs. This framework supported an assessment of the immediate, underlying, and structural factors that maintain and reproduce inequality across institutions, including government, workplace, family and community. The evaluation also drew on Lori Heise's ***Violence against Women Ecological Framework***<sup>18</sup> to better understand the origins and complexities of gender-based violence that WMWs face and assess the Safe and Fair Programme's attempt to address these through its programming. The evaluation also used a ***Gender Results Effectiveness Scale***, which is a World Health Organization (WHO) Gender Assessment Scale adapted by the EVAW Specialist Evaluator to assess the extent to which the programme is supporting gender transformative change by achieving results that contributed to changes in norms, cultural values, power structures, institutional barriers, and the root causes of gender inequality and discrimination (see Annex 16 for more information).

To assess the extent to which the SAF Programme supported ***gender transformative change***, the Evaluation Team adapted ideas shared by Michael Quinn Patton in a recent article on evaluation and transformation (Patton, 2022) to examine how interlinkages and synergies

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<sup>17</sup> A CMO Configuration is a basic causal explanatory framework that is based on the premise that all outcomes are a result of interactions between contexts and mechanisms.

<sup>18</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1077801298004003002>

between SAF Programme outcomes have facilitated momentum towards gender transformational change by addressing structural barriers and exclusionary norms and harmful practices<sup>19</sup>.

The evaluation also used *utilization-focused* and *participatory* approaches to encourage stakeholder involvement and ownership and to ensure that the evaluation is useful to its end users. Indeed, it used a critical reflection process where stakeholders were engaged to provide inputs and feedback at the inception phase and when sharing draft findings and recommendations. It was also aligned with UNEG Norms and Standards. Figure 4 below provides an overview for the evaluation framework. See Annex 6 for a more detailed explanation of the design and approaches used as part of this evaluation.

**Figure 4: Evaluation framework**

Design	Evaluation Questions	Evaluation Approach	Data collection	Data Analysis and Synthesis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mixed methods</li> <li>Theory-based</li> <li>Realist</li> <li>Utilization-focused</li> <li>Values / principles informed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on TORs and further analysis by the evaluation team, with input by Evaluation Reference Group</li> <li>Given complexity of programme, highly focused on learning, as well as accountability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case study</li> <li>Feminist principles</li> <li>Gender equality, equity and human rights-responsive</li> <li>Participatory</li> <li>Gender transformative</li> <li>Cross-cutting</li> <li>Emphasis on learning</li> <li>Aligned with UNEG Norms and Standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document review</li> <li>Semi-structured interviews (KIIs)</li> <li>Two surveys</li> <li>Focus group discussions (FGDs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Theory of change analysis</li> <li>Contribution analysis</li> <li>Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) analysis</li> <li>Cross-country comparison analysis</li> <li>Gender Equality and Equity Analysis drawing on a Feminist and Social Relations Framework</li> <li>Quantitative and qualitative analysis</li> <li>VAW Ecological Framework</li> </ul>

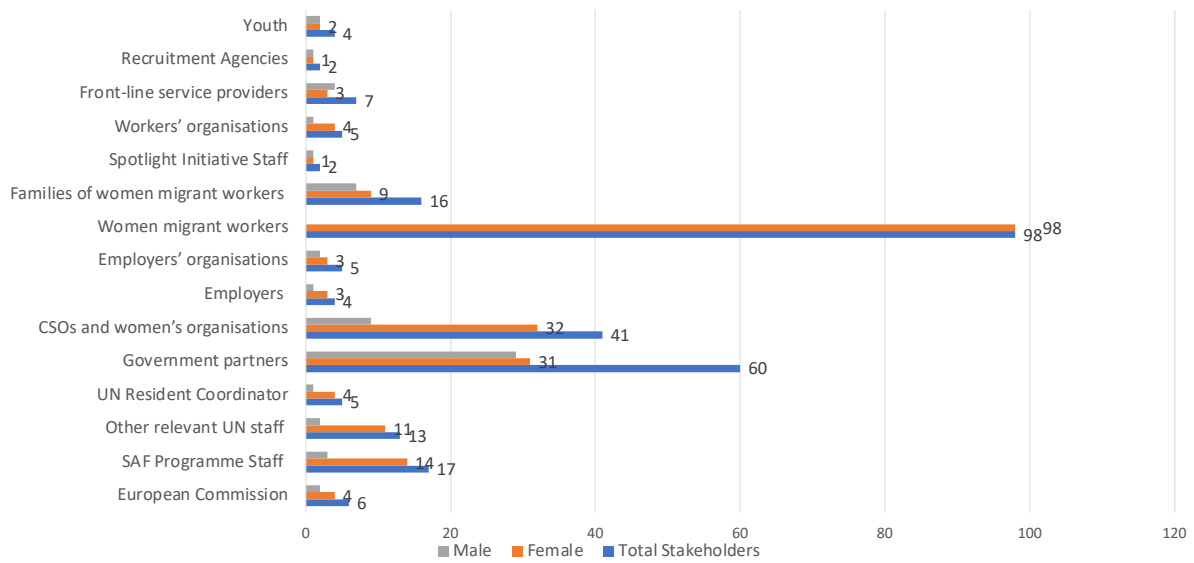
## 4.2. Data Collection

The two international co-leads on the Evaluation Team were joined by two national consultants from Vietnam and Thailand to assist with data collection in their respective countries. Data collection took place between 8 August to 15 September 2023<sup>20</sup>. In total, the Evaluation Team conducted 101 KIIs and 25 FGDs with 285 stakeholders (220 women and 65 men) both virtually and in-person. In-person data was collected in the case study countries in Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Interviews used a purposeful sampling approach as outlined in Annex 6 and took place with stakeholders from across all stakeholder groups and across all programming countries, as outlined in Figures 5 and 6 below. Annex 17 provides a detailed breakdown of stakeholders consulted per country.

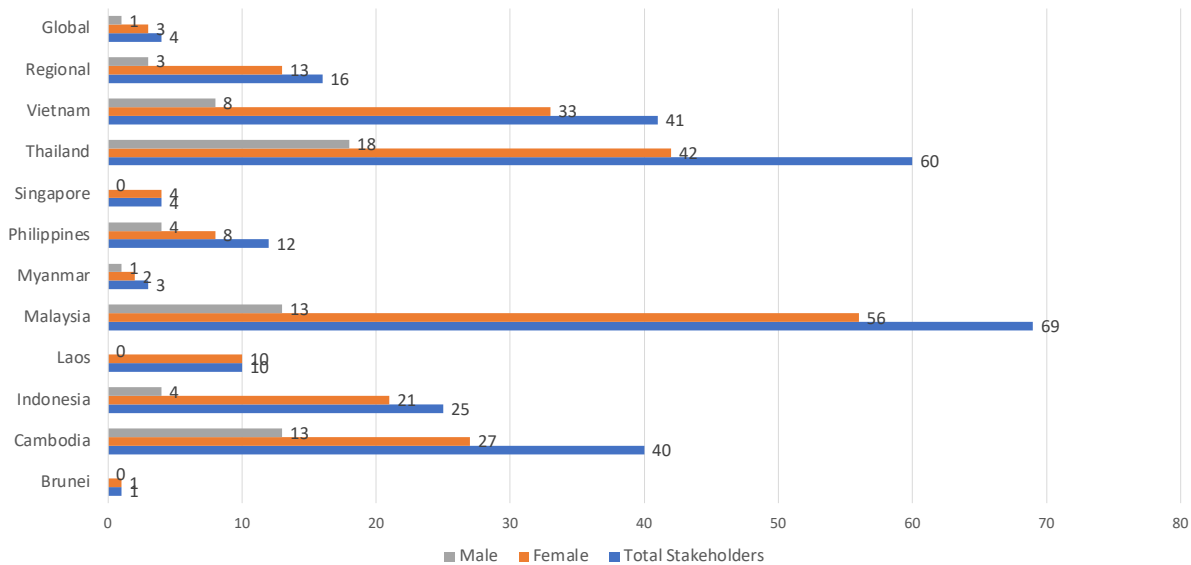
<sup>19</sup> The Evaluation Team assessed how the SAF Programme has strengthened interconnections among people, networks, institutions, ideas and movements to nurture, catalyze and accelerate the transformational trajectory of protecting and promoting women migrant worker rights, including how it may have promoted functional interconnections to generate positive transformational energy and momentum.

<sup>20</sup> This includes a one-week extension from the initially planned data collection period to allow additional stakeholders to be reached.

**Figure 5. Stakeholders consulted per stakeholder group<sup>21</sup>.**



**Figure 6. Stakeholders consulted per country.**



The evaluation team also conducted an extensive document review of both SAF programme documents and other relevant external documents. See Annex 12 for a list of documents reviewed as part of the evaluation.

In addition, the Evaluation Team designed and implemented two online surveys: one with SAF programming staff working at the regional level and a second with SAF programming staff

<sup>21</sup> Employers' organisations consisted of representatives from employers' organisations while employers consisted of individual companies.

working at the national level, namely NPCs<sup>22</sup>. The surveys focused largely on operational programming including the efficiency and effectiveness of joint organizational working arrangements<sup>23</sup>. Both surveys experienced at 89 per cent response rate (8 out of 9 responses for the regional staff survey and 16 out of 18 responses for the national-level NPC survey). See Annexes 8 and 9 for copies of each survey and Annex 10 for a summary of the survey results.

### 4.3. Data Analysis

The Evaluation Team adopted several approaches to analyze the data, including **contribution analysis** to understand how programming has contributed towards outcome and impact-level change. As part of a theory-based evaluation, the **Theory of Change (ToC) analysis** was used to examine the programme's underlying assumptions and how they have impacted the achievement of results. The Evaluation Team also used **comparative analysis** to examine programming across countries in addition to the **gender analysis** techniques identified above. **Quantitative data analysis** was done using Excel to analyze survey results and programming financial data<sup>24</sup>. All data was **triangulated** using an Evidence Matrix to ensure that the findings are robust and take into consideration the perspectives of all stakeholder groups. See Annex 6 for a more detailed description of how data was analyzed to inform the evaluation as well as the ways in which the Evaluation Team promoted quality assurance.

### 4.4. Ethics

The evaluation followed the UNEG Ethical Guidelines<sup>25</sup> and adhered to the “do no harm” principle when interviewing stakeholders, especially WMWs. Discussion questions were carefully reviewed to ensure that they did not ask participants to re-live uncomfortable experiences, noting that WMW survivors of violence likely participated in FGDs but were not specifically identified or targeted. The Evaluation Team also adhered to the World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines on research into violence against women<sup>26</sup>. See Annex 6 for more information on the ethical procedures followed by the Evaluation Team.

### 4.5. Evaluation Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

The evaluation faced some limitations which the Team attempted to overcome using mitigation strategies, as outlined below:

- **Case study approach and generalizability:** The case study approach was able to generate very rich data at the regional, national, and local levels and facilitated an

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<sup>22</sup> All survey respondents were treated equally, and data was not weighted to account for countries with only one NPC representative.

<sup>23</sup> Due to high staff turnover experienced by the SAF Team since the Midterm Evaluation, the survey was sent to both current and past SAF staff and only focused on operational programming due to limited knowledge on substantive programming among some of the newer staff members.

<sup>24</sup> Financial data refers to information on programme contributions versus expenditures.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241510189>



understanding of the programme experience across objectives. The nature of the case study supported the Evaluation Team to extrapolate and generalize on theory (analytic generalization). At the same time, it did not allow the Team to extrapolate probabilities (statistical generalizations) as the case focused only on Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam where the sample was not representative of the entire programme. The Evaluation Team mitigated this limitation by drawing on programme-wide results captured through the SAF Programme's monitoring system, implementing surveys that engaged SAF staff from across programming countries, and conducting virtual interviews with stakeholders from across those programming countries that were not included in the case study.

- **Resources:** The evaluation scope was defined and determined by the reality of limited resources, as with most evaluative exercises. The depth of exploration by the evaluation team was therefore bound by the available resources. Efforts to mitigate this limitation and to capture as many stakeholder viewpoints as possible included prioritizing FGDs over KIIs where more stakeholders could participate; prioritizing available resources to conduct virtual interviews to engage as many stakeholders as possible from across programming countries; and hiring national-level consultants to increase the extent to which data could be collected in Thailand and Vietnam.
- **Reaching stakeholders in Myanmar:** The current political situation in Myanmar and the fact that the SAF Programme currently does not have a presence there made it challenging to access stakeholders based in the country. The Evaluation Team mitigated this challenge by drawing on existing documentation, conducting virtual interviews with several CSO stakeholders in Myanmar; and conducting interviews with UN Women and ILO staff at the regional level who could speak to the results achieved in Myanmar.
- **Attributing results directly to the programme:** Due to the presence of other actors working on EAW programming and labour migration programming across the region, it was challenging to directly attribute results at the outcome and impact levels to SAF Programming activities. To mitigate this challenge, the Evaluation Team used contribution analysis to identify contributions that SAF Programme has made to larger results.

## Section V: Findings

### 5.1. Relevance

This section provides an assessment of the extent to which Safe and Fair's programming is aligned with national, regional, and global priorities and has engaged with and responded to the needs and priorities of stakeholders, particularly WMWs who are survivors of violence, across shifting contexts.



***Finding #1: The Safe and Fair Programme was well aligned with and contributed towards the advancement of international and regional gender equality and labour migration norms, standards, and priorities by bringing together, for the first time, labour migration and EVAW actors to provide strengthened support and services to WMWs throughout their labour migration experience.***

Both UN Women and ILO have a history of supporting the rights of WMWs across the ASEAN region<sup>27</sup>. Within this context, the SAF Programme was conceived to leverage the strengths of each organisation to raise awareness of and address the specific vulnerabilities that women face when engaging in labour migration which include elevated risks of experiencing multiple forms of violence. Baseline studies<sup>28</sup> commissioned by the SAF Programme during its inception phase identified a strong need for labour migration policies across ASEAN countries to be more gender sensitive and to include greater measures to prevent and address violence against WMWs. They also identified low levels of service provision to WMWs who have experienced violence, as well as a very weak referral system across VAW first responders both within and between countries of origin and destination. First responders generally had limited understanding of the unique realities facing WMWs, including their intersecting vulnerabilities, and only partial knowledge of how to support WMWs and where to refer them if they had experienced violence. It was also learned that existing labour migration services such as pre-departure orientation sessions were often gender-blind and failed to provide resources to WMWs to help protect themselves from violence as well as information on what to do if they experience violence.

By leveraging the resources available as part of the Spotlight Initiative, the SAF Programme was able to address these challenges by raising the profile of WMWs through bringing together and fostering working relationships between key labour migration and EVAW duty-bearers who were used to working in silo or who lacked support to effectively link initiatives across thematic areas. This was done by facilitating meetings and dialogue sessions that encouraged the sharing of information, experiences, and perspectives between labour migration and EVAW duty-bearers who had never previously worked together to discuss and address the issue of violence against WMWs as well as supporting stakeholders to share resources and tools across thematic areas. Indeed, as of 30 September 2023<sup>29</sup>, the programme supported the establishment of 14 joint task forces on women's protection/trafficking that linked, for example, criminal justice, labour, immigration, and VAW actors so that they could address violence against WMWs collaboratively and holistically.

The programme facilitated meetings and dialogue sessions between labour migration and EVAW duty-bearers and provided technical inputs to help strengthen labour migration laws and policies to be more gender sensitive and EVAW policies to be more inclusive of WMWs. Indeed, as of 30 September 2023, 55 legal and policy instruments ranging from labour migration regulations to

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<sup>27</sup> Immediately prior to the SAF Programme, ILO and UN Women promoted the rights of WMWs through the joint programme "Preventing the Exploitation of Women Migrant Workers in ASEAN".

<sup>28</sup> Baseline studies on policy and legislation; public knowledge and attitudes; and VAW service provision across ASEAN countries were conducted in 2019 during the programme's inception phase. Endline studies on the same topics were conducted in 2023 to compare results.

<sup>29</sup> SAF Cumulative Interim Results Report

protocols on ending violence against women (EVAW) had been supported with technical inputs and recommendations from SAF for gender-responsive and survivor-centred approaches<sup>30</sup>. In addition, eight labour laws and policies were adopted or amended with programme inputs on rights-based and survivor-centered approaches. An example of this can be seen in the Philippines where the Government amended the Act Strengthening the Policies on Anti-Trafficking in Persons, Providing Penalties for its Violations, and Appropriating Funds (Republic Act No. 11862) with technical support provided by the SAF Programme to ensure that the implementation of the Act will be gender, age, and culturally responsive and that migrant workers are also covered by the law. In Vietnam, the programme provided inputs to support enhanced gender sensitivity in Law 69 and its sub-laws, which resulted in gender-responsive legal provisions on the protection of the rights of WMWs. The SAF programme also provided technical inputs to four laws and policies on EVAW. An example of this is in Cambodia where UN Women provided technical inputs to support the Ministry of Women's Affairs to ensure that WMWs were included as a key population in the Third National Action Plan on Violence Against Women (2019 – 2023).

The programme also convened stakeholders through multistakeholder dialogue platforms such as the Regional Project Advisory Committee (RPAC) that meets annually as well as the National Project Advisory Committees (NPACs) who are established in each of the eight programming countries and who typically meet biannually<sup>31</sup>. The NPACs bring together government, civil society, and workers' and employers' groups, and are generally co-chaired by the lead government ministries working on labour migration, gender equality, and women's affairs. In most cases, this was the first time that these government ministries worked together as equal partners to address issues facing WMWs. These multistakeholder platforms facilitated the exchange of information, knowledge, and perspectives across labour migration and EVAW groups from government, civil society, and the private sector who have very different technical skills and experiences but who must work together to fully protect the rights of WMWs.

The programme also developed EVAW tools and resources and provided support to labour migration first responders so that they could integrate EVAW information and service referrals throughout their work. For instance, as further described in Finding #9, in Cambodia, the programme supported the collection of information on available EVAW services both within the country and across destination countries where Cambodian WMWs often work. This information was then used to create a smart phone application called the My Journey App where WMWs, first responders, and other stakeholders could learn about safe migration practices and access information on available services, including EVAW services, if WMWs require support while working abroad. The programme also supported the development of conceptual frameworks that could be used by stakeholders across programming countries to better support WMWs such as the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence and Harassment Against Women Migrant Workers in South and Southeast Asia Framework.

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<sup>30</sup> SAF Cumulative Interim Results Report

<sup>31</sup> In Myanmar, as per United Nations Country Team engagement principles drafted and agreed to by UN agencies in the country (also in line with the EU position), SAF has suspended all engagement with government entities. As a result of this situation, as well as the limited space for social dialogue and consultations, the 2022 NPAC meeting for Myanmar was not organized.

The combination of regular dialogue opportunities and collaboration towards achieving particular action points paired with UN visibility and significant funding has considerably raised the visibility of violence against WMWs across the region and has set the foundation for continued collaboration among labour migration and EVAW duty-bearers even after the programme comes to an end. Stakeholders agree that this has been a major advancement in terms of elevating the positioning of ending violence against WMWs on the political agendas of governments as well as strengthening the capacity of service providers to support WMWs.

The programme successfully raised awareness and elevated the profile of violence against WMWs among duty-bearers and service providers despite some initial resistance. At first, it was difficult for stakeholders to understand why the programme only targeted WMWs as opposed to all migrant workers since men are also sometimes the victims of violence. The programming team invested significant time, effort, and resources through discussions and training sessions to outline the unique challenges that women face in a patriarchal system and explain why a particular focus must be placed on addressing their unique needs and priorities. Despite considerable resistance from duty-bearers and service providers early in the programme to focus only on WMWs, nearly all stakeholders interviewed near the end of the programme had a clear understanding of the importance of a programme dedicated towards protecting the rights of WMWs. This reflects strong progress in challenging patriarchal norms among those stakeholders who were involved in the programme, particularly labour migration stakeholders who were often less aware of the intricacies of gender inequality. There remains a need, however, to further sensitize duty-bearers regarding issues of patriarchy and gender inequality, which is a highly complex and challenging task.

As already outlined in the Safe and Fair Programme Midterm Evaluation, the work around promoting the rights of WMWs that was advanced through the SAF Programme directly supports the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs); international gender equality and labour migration norms, standards, and priorities; regional labour migration priorities of programming countries; and EU labour migration strategies and political frameworks, as outlined in Figure 7 below.

**Figure 7. Programme alignment with international and regional priorities, norms and frameworks**

Global priorities including the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs (A)	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) and ERAW priorities and frameworks (B)	ILO Fundamental Conventions <sup>32</sup> (C)	ILO Technical Conventions/Standards (D)	ASEAN member frameworks (E)	EU strategies and political frameworks (F)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal 5 GEEW</li> <li>• Goal 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth</li> <li>• Goal 10 Reduced Inequalities</li> <li>• Goal 16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions</li> <li>• Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) – including articles 6 and 11, and general recommendation 26 on migrant workers</li> <li>• Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development</li> <li>• Declaration of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development</li> <li>• Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action</li> <li>• 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C029 - Forced Labour Convention (1930)</li> <li>• C087 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention (1948)</li> <li>• C098 - Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention (1949)</li> <li>• C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention (1951)</li> <li>• C105 - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (1951)</li> <li>• C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (1958)</li> <li>• C138 - Minimum Age Convention (1973)</li> <li>• C155 - Occupational Safety and Health Convention (1981)</li> <li>• C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (1999)</li> <li>• C187 - Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention (2006)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migration for Employment Convention, 1949 (No. 97)</li> <li>• Migrant Workers Convention, 1975 (No. 143)</li> <li>• Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181)</li> <li>• ILO Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers, 2011 (No. 189)</li> <li>• Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention 1930 (P029)</li> <li>• ILC 190 Violence and Harassment Convention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASEAN Community Vision 2025</li> <li>• ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW)</li> <li>• ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons (2015)</li> <li>• Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons (2015)</li> <li>• Gender Sensitive Guidelines for Handling of Women Victims of Trafficking in Persons (2016)</li> <li>• ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (2007)</li> <li>• ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (2018)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU's advanced policy framework for external relations and development cooperation on migration</li> <li>• Strategic Engagement on Gender Equality within the EU for 2016-2019</li> <li>• EU Gender Action Plan in External Relations 2016-2020</li> </ul>

<sup>32</sup> ILO member states are duty bound to align and comply with fundamental conventions. They are not subject to ratifications in order to be legally binding, as are the technical conventions/standards listed in column D.

***Finding #2: The SAF Programme was aligned with the goals and objectives of the Spotlight Initiative and was an important addition to efforts aimed at ending violence against women. At the same time, there was room for its approach to promoting participatory and bottom-up change as well as its engagement with CSOs to have further advanced the Spotlight Initiative's principles and priorities.***

The programme was overall well aligned with the ToRs of the multi-year global EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls (2017 – 2022) and its theory of change. The objective of the SAF Programme responds to the goal of the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by promoting prevention strategies and strengthened multi - sectoral responses and services to address trafficking and violence against women in ASEAN<sup>33</sup>. The Spotlight Initiative is structured around six mutually reinforcing programming pillars to end violence against women and girls: 1) advancing laws and policies; 2) strengthening institutions; 3) advancing prevention; 4) supporting services; 5) strengthening data; and 6) promoting women's movements.

The Safe and Fair Programme was directly aligned with the first five pillars by strengthening laws, policies, and institutions that prevent and respond to violence against WMWs (SAF Outcomes 1 and 2) as well as by supporting the provision of essential services to WMWs and the generation and dissemination of data on WMWs (Outcomes 2 and 3). Pillar six is intended to promote strong and empowered civil society and autonomous women's movements by advocating for laws and policies that protect the participation of autonomous women's groups; ensuring civil society participation in development planning; building capacity of civil society organisations; deploying innovative financing mechanisms to support women's civil society; and strengthening partnership and networking opportunities for civil society.

The SAF Programme made some contributions towards pillar six, such as providing women's civil society with opportunities to dialogue with government representatives to advance the priorities of WMWs as well as capacity development support to CSOs. This included support to strengthen their data collection systems. In 2022 alone, the programme supported the development of nine information systems and six referral mechanisms at the local level. Other examples of CSO capacity development support include the provision of technical support to the Child Helpline Cambodia (CHC) hotline to ensure that its interactive voice responsive (IVR) system provides

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<sup>33</sup> As outlined in the Midterm Evaluation, SAF Programme results 1.1 and 2.1 respond to Outcomes 1 and 2 of the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative in strengthening laws and policies that strengthen safe migration, prevention efforts, and respond to VAW. Project work under Objective 3 responds to the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative's Outcome 3 addressing gender equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours, and Outcome 5 addressing quality, disaggregated and quality data. Work under project Results 1.3 and 2.3 reflects the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative's outputs under Outcome 4 focusing on building the capacity of trade unions, migrant worker associations and women's organizations. In addition, capacity of service provision strengthened under project Results 1.4 and 2.4 contribute to the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative's outputs under Outcome 5.

information about safe migration, violence against women, and services available in both Cambodia and in destination countries<sup>34</sup>. While CSOs received targeted support through the provision of opportunities and capacity development support, they were largely treated by the SAF Programme as implementing partners as opposed to the Spotlight Initiative's desired approach to engage with CSOs and strengthen their capacities as strategic partners. This would have included giving CSOs increased decision-making autonomy and supporting them to not only implement activities but to strengthen their advocacy and build connections and momentum between organisations as part of a movement-building approach.

The reason for this disparity is largely because the SAF Programme was designed prior to the establishment of the Spotlight Initiative and had to be retrofitted for greater alignment. As explained in the Midterm Evaluation, efforts to retrofit the programme included mapping each programme indicator against the indicators of the Spotlight Initiative, engaging Resident Coordinators (RCs) through the NPACs since RC engagement was a priority of the Spotlight Initiative as part of the principles of the UN Reform<sup>35</sup>, and engaging stakeholders in programme implementation decisions through the RPAC, NPACs, and CSO Reference Group.

While these retrofitting efforts were important, the programme kept its original logical framework and did not make any substantial changes to the programme design at outcome or output level to better align with the Spotlight Initiative in support of women's movement building under Pillar 6. As part of efforts to support Pillar 6, the SAF Programme established a CSO Reference Group in 2020 that brought a select number of the programme's civil society partners together to exchange information, network, and provide inputs on programme implementation modalities. CSO engagement was meant to strengthen the quality of programme implementation while also providing capacity development and networking opportunities to strengthen the CSOs themselves. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, few CSO Reference Group meetings took place and primarily online thus limiting the opportunities for networking. In addition, only a small number of CSOs engaged in the programme were invited to participate in the CSO Reference Group, thus limiting its reach. CSOs who participated in the Reference Group mentioned that they felt as though that there was limited space for CSOs to make meaningful suggestions to changes in programme implementation. Indeed, CSO representatives interviewed were largely in agreement that the meetings were useful for sharing information but that there seemed to be limited potential for their involvement in making actual changes to the programme design or delivery. While the Spotlight Initiative prioritizes empowerment and movement building across civil society, the CSO Reference Group was not designed using empowerment principles or to encourage movement building.

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<sup>34</sup> The IVR system was developed in 2021 with contributions from peer networks and has been introduced to members of peer networks and community-based organizations as a tool for self-learning. The IVR system provides an alternative option for users – including those with reading difficulties and those who may not want to engage with counselors directly due to privacy concerns – to access essential information on violence against women. With the IVR system in place, the callers can decide if they want to know more about the topics or whether they prefer to receive services by speaking with the helpline operators directly.

<sup>35</sup> As outlined in the Secretary-General's report *Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: ensuring a better future for all*: A/72/124 -E/2018/3

As a donor-funded programme with an established results framework, the SAF Programme had limited flexibility to adjust its design based on stakeholder feedback obtained during programme implementation. During the programme's inception phase, considerable stakeholder consultation occurred to help inform the programme design and implementation modalities. Stakeholders were then encouraged to continue to engage in the programme implementation by participating in the RPAC, NPACs, and CSO Reference Group. However, the programme itself lacked mechanisms to facilitate modifications to the programme design throughout programme implementation based on stakeholder feedback. Many of the NPAC participants across programming countries who were interviewed believed the NPACs were useful for coordinating programme implementation and that such a platform should be included in future programming. However, they also expressed frustration at having few opportunities during NPAC meetings to influence modifications to programme design elements or implementation modalities or to discuss strategic issues with the other participants. The lack of mechanisms to adjust the programme design during its implementation also left some stakeholders who joined the programme after its inception phase, particularly those at the grassroots level, disappointed with their level of engagement in designing local initiatives and community-based programming. Many CSOs interviewed who joined the programme after its inception phase felt that the programme design was rigid and that there was little opportunity for grassroots actors to make suggestions on what kinds of activities should be done at the community level.

***Finding #3: The SAF Programme largely integrated a holistic approach to programming aimed at eliminating violence against WMWs by providing programming that spanned across a WMWs' migration journey. Some of these elements such as strengthening the capacities of first responders in both countries of origin and destination have the potential for further scale-up while others such as support for safe remigration to destination countries and reintegration into countries of origin require strengthening.***

The evaluation case studies were designed to examine the extent to which the SAF programme provided support throughout a WMWs' entire labour migration journey from pre-departure to reintegration in an effort to respond holistically to the complex challenges facing WMWs. As further explained below, they found that the programme was successful at informing WMWs about safe migration practices prior to migration. It also provided support to VAW first responders across the labour migration journey in both countries of origin and destination but that this support was sometimes limited and showed great potential for scale-up in future programming. As further explained below, they also found that WMWs who migrate through regular channels are particularly susceptible to violence and exploitation once their employment contract and thus their regular status ends, and that reducing these vulnerabilities needs to be a focus in future labour migration programming. Finally, the case studies found that for labour migration to be part of a meaningful sustainable development strategy, more support is necessary to help WMWs effectively reintegrate into their communities of origin and for the benefits of migration, including remittances sent home, to support sustainable development more directly in migrant worker communities.

***Support to WMWs before migration***

The SAF Programme provided valuable support to WMWs in their countries of origin before they began their migration journey by providing information sessions on safe labour migration in migrant worker communities to potential WMWs even before they decide to migrate or in between migration trips. It also supported pre-departure orientation sessions (PDOs) offered by migrant workers centers (MRCs) to ensure that the materials are gender sensitive and include information on VAW prevention and service provision. This work to inform WMWs about safe labour migration practices which focus largely on migrating through regular channels, is also a form of anti-trafficking prevention since a WMW is much less likely to be trafficked when she migrates through formal channels where she has the support of a registered recruitment agency and formal paperwork that facilitates access to justice and support services.

In response to Midterm Evaluation recommendations, the SAF Programme strengthened its engagement of family members, community members, and local authorities in WMW communities to provide them with information on both safe labour migration practices as well as where to go for support if a WMW that they know is experiencing difficulties or has suffered violence or trafficking abroad. Indeed, the case studies identified that these community members were provided with information on available law enforcement, judicial, and health services available in both countries of origin and destination to strengthen their capacities as first responders to WMWs in crisis. Family members interviewed through the case studies explained how the information sessions helped them to know who to inform in their country of origin if a WMW is experiencing violence or exploitation abroad and how to go about advocating for case management to bring them home safely and/or to access justice mechanisms. As highlighted by the Midterm Evaluation, family members are one of the most important first responders to WMWs and require strengthened capacities to support WMWs in times of need.

An unexpected result identified by the case studies that emerged from engaging family and community members in violence against WMW prevention and information sharing on safe labour migration practices is that family members of those WMWs who were already working abroad were able to attend community information sessions in the WMWs' absence. The family members were then able to transmit this information to the WMWs upon their return so that when they migrated again, they could do so through safe regular channels.

Another unexpected result identified through the case studies was the sharing of information across migrant workers of different genders based on the information-sessions that targeted WMWs. Once WMWs learned about the importance of safe labour migration practices and how to migrate safely, this information became widely shared throughout the migrant community, therefore also benefitting men.

In addition, the SAF programme engaged local authorities in community-level information-sharing sessions, which also strengthened their capacities to support WMWs as well as their ownership in making access to VAW services more available across WMW communities. Through the case studies, WMWs at the community level described this as a necessary and key element in linking family and community members as first responders to available services in both countries of origin and destination. Raising awareness among local authorities of the specific vulnerabilities of WMWs helped to prioritize this issue at the local level and encouraged engagement and buy-in



among community members, especially men. Active engagement of local authorities seems to encourage men to take the issue seriously and be more supportive of WMWs.

The second half of the SAF Programme has demonstrated that capacity development support for family members of WMWs, community members, and local authorities is essential to support a safe and fruitful labour migration experience for WMWs and to prevent and respond to violence against WMWs. This kind of support, although successful, was quite limited in scope only covering a few handfuls of WMW communities in each country of origin. Future programming would benefit from further investing in this promising practice and supporting scale-up across WMW communities.

### ***Support to WMWs during migration***

Once WMWs are working in a country of destination, they require access to services, including health, judicial, and EAW services as well as support in the case that they experience violence, exploitation, or trafficking. According to FGDs with WMWs, the most common first responders in destination countries for WMWs who migrate through regular channels are the recruitment agencies that set up the work placement, embassies from the countries of origin, employers, and local police.

The SAF Programme increased the capacity of recruitment agencies to integrate information on VAW services into pre-departure orientation as well as respond to cases where women have experienced violence. It did so through training sessions organized by recruitment agency association in countries of origin. While this support was crucial, it was limited in scale to only one or two training sessions per association that did not always include all of the recruitment agencies. This was due largely to the fact that recruitment agencies were closed for much of the pandemic. Due to the importance of strengthening the capacities of recruitment agencies as first responders, there is considerable room to further scale-up this support in future programming.

According to WMWs interviewed in FGDs, key first responders for WMWs when abroad include:

1. Family and community members
2. Recruitment agencies
3. Embassies
4. Employers

The SAF Programme also strengthened the capacities of embassy and consular staff in destination countries to respond to WMWs who have experienced violence. For instance, SAF provide extensive technical support to the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to adopt the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Supporting Overseas Vietnamese Women Victims of Violence, Abuse, Sexual Harassment and Trafficking in Persons which are now being implemented throughout all Vietnamese embassies and consulates across the world. These SOPs are a practical tool to guide foreign service officials and diplomats of Viet Nam embassies and consulates overseas to provide strengthened protection of and survivor-centric support for Vietnamese citizens abroad, especially for survivors of violence against women or trafficking in persons. The SOPs also institutionalize trainings that have been organized for foreign service officials since 2019 by SAF so that services to WMWs can be provided despite government staff turnover. After

learning about the Vietnamese success, the Philippines Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested support from the SAF Programme to create its own set of SOPs to better support WMWs through strengthened referral mechanisms across its embassies and consulates. Due to the importance of these first responders, there is also room for considerable scale-up of the capacity development of embassies and consulates from other countries of origin across the region. The fact that Philippines Ministry of Foreign Affairs wanted to develop SOPs based on the positive experience of Vietnam suggests that there is an interest among embassies to engage in this kind of support and that SAF has established the necessary materials to support this engagement. The elements are currently in place for the successful scale-up of this kind of support.

Under conditions where employers have not been the perpetrators of violence or exploitation, WMWs in FGDs identified them as first responders if they were to experience violence while working in destination countries. Employers are duty-bearers who play an important role in ensuring that their work environments are free from exploitation; free from violence including sexual harassment; and are overall safe, comfortable, and inclusive workspaces for women. Indeed, employers have obligations as outlined in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs)<sup>36</sup> which are the world's most authoritative normative framework guiding responsible business conduct and addressing human rights abuses in business operations and global supply chains. Even so, employers oftentimes have limited understanding of the unique vulnerabilities of WMWs and lack the knowledge and tools to effectively respond when female employees experience forms of violence.

The SAF Programme engaged employers to help prevent and address violence and harassment in the workplace. For instance, it engaged the ASEAN Confederation of Employers (ACE), which has members in seven ASEAN countries, through the programme's RPAC and co-developed an employers' toolkit on gender equality and elimination of violence and harassment at work. It also conducted a training to ASEAN employers on the elimination of violence and harassment at work, including the protection of women migrant workers. The toolkit was then adapted and translated by the Employers' Confederation of Thailand (ECOT) into the Thai language and used by ECOT to train employers in Thailand. ECOT also collaborated with SAF to improve the housing conditions of migrant workers in the agriculture and construction sectors in Chonburi and Rayong provinces to reduce risks of violence that women migrant workers face in employer-provided accommodation. The SAF Programme also collaborated with the Malaysian Employers Federation to develop tools and conduct trainings on violence and harassment, including company templates, to help employers prevent and address violence and harassment.

While these initiatives were important, the overall engagement of employers through the SAF Programme was relatively limited for an initiative of this size. Due to the importance of their role as first responders as well as the potential for employers to be perpetrators of violence or permissive of violence occurring within their workspaces, this is a key stakeholder group that requires continued engagement in future programming. Employers are a challenging stakeholder group to engage in migration programming due to the huge number of employers across ASEAN

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[https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinesshr\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinesshr_en.pdf)

countries and the fact that most migrant workers are employed by small and medium enterprises that are numerous, spread out, and often lack resources to strengthen their policies. The SAF Programme's strategy to engage employers through employers' associations was an effective and efficient way to reach them. There is, however, potential to further engage employers by working through corporations and to collaborate and partner with other UN agencies such as IOM and UNDP who are working with corporations to advance the UNGPs<sup>37</sup>. A concrete example of this could be to work with IOM to further mainstream gender equality and EVAW principles into post-arrival orientation (PAO) sessions with employers whenever they take place<sup>38</sup>.

### ***Support to WMWs after migration***

The case studies found that WMWs who migrate through regular channels are particularly susceptible to violence and exploitation in countries of destination once their employment contract ends. This is because their work visas and paperwork are tied to their employment contracts. At the end of their contract, WMWs are typically required to go back to their countries of origin and reapply again through regular channels. However, this is costly as it requires finances to return home and well as to pay the necessary fees to reapply through the formal migration procedures. While the international standards (ILO Convention 181 and ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment) stipulate that employers should bear all recruitment costs, including travel, this is often not enforced, and thus migrant workers end up having to pay the costs of returning to their countries of origin<sup>39</sup>. Some WMWs who initially migrated through official channels find themselves without sufficient financial resources to return to their countries of origin while others would prefer to avoid paying again the official recruitment fees. Under these scenarios, many migrant workers decide to stay and continue working in the country of destination but with a different employer. This creates a situation where WMWs who originally migrated through official channels then become irregular migrant workers without the access to services and protections provided to those with the correct paperwork. By slipping from a regular to irregular status, these WMWs become more susceptible to violence and exploitation. The case studies identified this as a key moment of vulnerability in a WMW's migration journey which the SAF programme was not designed to address. There is potential for future programming to support WMWs to avoid slipping into an irregular status by providing pre-emptive support to help WMWs save enough money to cover the costs of returning to their countries of origin as well as by engaging in advocacy with governments in countries of destination to make the process of reapplying easier and less expensive.

The case studies also found that WMWs require more support to effectively reintegrate into their communities of origin after their labour migration journey ends and that their communities require support to benefit from sustainable development. This includes support to WMWs and their families to learn how to use money made abroad (including that sent home through

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<sup>37</sup> UNDP is actively engaged in promoting the UNGPs through its business and human rights programming while IOM is currently developing a Migration, Business, and Human Rights in Asia Programme that builds on its private sector work through projects such as the CREST initiative.

<sup>38</sup> Mandatory PAO sessions do not take place in all ASEAN countries.

<sup>39</sup> In some cases, MRC partners have covered the costs of supporting irregular WMWs to return to their countries of origin.

remittances) to generate income on a sustainable basis in their communities of origin. It also includes supporting the overall development of economic opportunities that promote sustainable development within the communities of origin. In response to recommendations made in the Midterm Evaluation, the SAF Programme integrated livelihoods support into the second half of its programming. This included building the capacity of reportedly 154 personnel from 20 service-providing organizations in Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore to provide financial literacy training to over 640 WMWs and their families. Indeed, the SAF Programme supported the CSO “ATIKHA Overseas Workers and Communities Initiative” which developed manuals for financial literacy trainings that have been institutionalized for ongoing and sustainable usage. In addition, the programme supported technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions in the Philippines and Viet Nam to provide certified livelihood skills to reportedly 277 WMWs. Through the case studies, WMWs expressed deep appreciation for these livelihood support initiatives and expressed a need for continued support and scale-up. Stakeholders also explained that more support is needed to help WMWs reintegrate into their communities of origin at the end of their migration journey. This includes support to reduce negative stigmas from family and community members against WMWs who may have had to leave behind their children while abroad and who may find it emotionally challenging to reintegrate.

Stakeholders also explained that support for WMWs and their reintegration needs to follow a holistic approach that promotes the sustainable development of the entire migrant worker community. The SAF Programme supported the Quezon City Public Employment Services Office (PESO) who administers an MRC in the Philippines to develop a five-year strategic plan that integrates a full migration paradigm across their work. This paradigm is based on the view that migration should support sustainable development in migrant worker communities and that support should not exclusively be targeted towards migrant workers but should also include their families and other community members. These family and community members require capacity development in financial planning to learn how to responsibly spend remittances as well as opportunities to invest in economic development opportunities that will benefit the long-term development of the community. Supporting MRCs to further advance the sustainable development of the entire migrant worker community is a promising practice whose replication and scale-up would have lasting positive effects on all community members.

***Finding #4: The Safe and Fair Programme adjusted its programming approaches in response to the COVID-19 pandemic by providing increased service provision, information, and shifting activities online wherever feasible. At the same time, there was room to have further modified its programme design and results framework to more fully respond to the most pressing needs of WMWs.***

The COVID-19 pandemic created an enormous crisis for migrant workers by generating new challenges and exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. As outlined in Annex 4, migrant workers were largely sent home to their countries of origin often without receiving their full pay and without support to reintegrate into their communities or find income-generating activities. Migrant workers struggled to have sufficient income for food and medicine, and often found themselves without lodging due to quarantine rules. WMWs suffered the most as they typically

assume the burden of ensuring that necessities are available for their families and are the first to go without these necessities if they are limited. The stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic including its lockdowns and travel restrictions also resulted in significant increases of intimate partner violence (IPV) against WMWs in migrant worker communities. A recent global study commissioned by UN Women found that 70 per cent of women interviewed said they think that verbal or physical abuse by a partner has become more common since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>40</sup>.

WMWs who were able to remain in the country of destination were often excluded from social security and/or not prioritized to receive COVID-19 assistance (including personal protective equipment). In many cases, migrant workers were held in their places of employment without the full respect of their human rights. This includes domestic workers who were often required to remain at their place of employment without days off or an ability to leave. Many had their communication with the outside world revoked, with reports of violence committed against them. The context in which the SAF Programme was operating also dramatically shifted, which created huge challenges for its implementation. Government partners had turned their priorities towards a pandemic response while employers were in crisis mode. The capacities of service providers were reduced even further as they were often unable to meet people in person and deliver their services. With outward migration essentially at a stand-still for much of the pandemic, recruitment agencies had largely closed and recruitment-related activities including PDO sessions were suspended.

Within this context, the SAF Programme made considerable efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and adjust its programming within the existing parameters of the programme design and results framework to meet the most pressing needs of WMWs. It did so in several ways<sup>41</sup> that include providing legal aid and case management services support to increase access to justice for WMWs who had experienced violence, harassment, abuse, and/or exploitation. An example of this is through support provided to MRCs to strengthen their ability to provide legal aid. Indeed, the programme partnered with the Cambodian Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training via the Provincial Department of Labour and Vocational Training and the National Employment Agency (NEA) to operate two MRCs in Kampong Thom and another in Siem Reap to provide essential services, information, counselling, and legal aid to WMWs. In Indonesia, the programme supported the integration of the Gender Responsive Migrant Worker Resources Center (MRC) and the One- Roof Integrated Services (LTSA) to provide for Indonesian migrant workers with ease of access, all under one roof, to comprehensive gender-responsive services, including information, pre-employment consultations, trainings for prospective migrants, psycho-social counselling service, case handling, and legal aid.

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<sup>40</sup> Measuring the Shadow Pandemic: Violence against Women during COVID-19. 2021  
<https://data.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/documents/Publications/Measuring-shadow-pandemic.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> The following paragraphs provide some illustrative examples of how the SAF Programme responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and do not represent a complete overview of the support provided to WMWs and other stakeholders.

The programme also provided support to strengthen the capacities of hotline services to engage with WMWs in their own languages in countries of destination. In Malaysia, SAF supported the Women's Aid Organization (WAO) to provide interpreters in Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog, and Vietnamese so that WMWs who are not fluent in Malay could access the hotline's services. In Cambodia, SAF supported hotline services by strengthening the administrative data collection and analysis of VAW, including WMW cases. In Thailand, SAF supported a new psychosocial hotline jointly operated by Mae Sot Hospital and the CSO Rights Beyond Borders to set up a referral system to respond to VAW, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme also worked with the BBC Media Action to provide real-time information to WMWs in Myanmar and those working abroad to facilitate a more successful migration journey throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, the programme provided technical and other support to shelters and quarantine facilities hosting WMWs to promote gender-responsive management of the facilities. For instance, the programme supported Village Focus International (VFI) in Lao PDR to provide shelter services to WMWs in Pakse. Similarly, SAF supported Tenaganita in Malaysia to deliver MRC services in Kuala Lumpur and Penang where it reportedly assisted 141 WMWs in 2021 to receive case management and counselling services, legal assistance, and temporary shelter. When travel restrictions permitted, the programme also supported the distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE), service directories and IEC materials on COVID-19 safety measures in communities where migrant workers needed such support. In Myanmar, the programme reportedly provided one-off cash assistance to over 100 vulnerable WMWs who had been affected by COVID-19 in the Thanintharyi Region and conflict-affected areas in Kachin State as a violence against women prevention measure, thereby reducing their vulnerability to traffickers or unscrupulous brokers.

The SAF Programme also provided support to service providers from all sectors including migrant worker resource centres (MRCs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) to develop greater capacities to extend outreach and provide service provision to those WMWs who might have been unable to access the physical offices of service providers. This included supporting WMWs peer networks<sup>42</sup> to shift their work to online spaces to better support preventing and responding to violence and trafficking during the pandemic. An example of this can be seen in Malaysia where SAF supported the Malaysia Trades Union Congress (MTUC) to disseminate information online through Facebook groups which were popular among WMWs covering topics that included labour rights and how to access support services reaching an estimated 1,368,000 WMWs<sup>43</sup>. These efforts were in line with the programme's own internal efforts to move as many of its activities online wherever feasible to continue with programme implementation throughout the pandemic. For instance, RPAC, NPAC, and CSO Reference Group meetings were moved online when limits on in-person gatherings and travel restrictions did not permit in-person meetings.

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<sup>42</sup> Peer networks are informal groups that provide safe spaces for WMWs to share information on such issues as VAW, trafficking and safe migration. Peer-to-peer contacts also enable these women to expand their reach to other groups of WMWs. Moreover, peer networks provide initial emotional support and referrals to specialized VAW services where members experience violence; they are often seen as the first point of contact for a referral mechanism.

<sup>43</sup> SAF Annual Report 2021

The programme's policy advocacy work also responded to the new realities of the COVID-19 pandemic by including advocacy to ensure that mandatory immunization and insurance as prerequisites to work abroad did not become costs that were passed unfairly to migrant workers; that services provided to migrant workers were gender-responsive, especially to the needs of WMWs, including when they experienced violence and other forms of abuse; and that employers and governments aimed to extend health and social services including access to COVID-19 testing and medical services to all migrant workers, including women and those who were undocumented, especially when faced with violence, illness, or sexual and reproductive health needs. The programme was also actively involved in supporting government partners to ensure that their COVID-19 response and recovery plans were gender sensitive and inclusive of WMWs. For instance, the programme supported advocacy efforts in the Philippines that led to all of the women senators to endorse a Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Pandemic Management act so that violence against all marginalized women be included among key priorities in COVID-19 response and recovery plans<sup>44</sup>.

While the SAF programming staff made considerable effort to advance programming and respond to the needs of WMWs within the challenging context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme was limited in terms of what it could do since it had to remain within its existing design parameters and results framework. Had the programme experienced greater flexibility in terms of modifying its results framework, it could have potentially been readjusted in a more significant way to meet the most pressing needs and priorities of WMWs more fully within this crisis scenario. This could have included more targeted and invested support for migrant worker reintegration, the generation of livelihoods, and the provision of necessities such as food, medicine, and lodging as well as efforts to reduce IPV in migrant worker communities both during and after the pandemic.

The programme did provide some limited support for livelihoods as outlined in Finding #3 and in some cases supported the provision of urgent necessities to WMWs through CSOs. It also invested some resources to eliminate IPV through efforts, for example, in Thailand<sup>45</sup> and Vietnam<sup>46</sup> to make national laws on domestic violence more survivor-centred and to address the needs of WMWs who have experienced IPV at different stages of the migration cycle. However, these investments were quite minimal considering the importance of the issues within the pandemic context which could have warranted a shift in the programming framework to allow for greater support. Such a shift could have included more investment in interventions to support WMWs' access to livelihoods within their communities of origin, efforts to encourage economic development within migrant worker communities, and more social norms work at the community level through community dialogue and information-sharing to eliminate IPV against

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<sup>44</sup> SAF Programme 2021 Annual Report.

<sup>45</sup> The SAF Programme commissioned the legal review: *Domestic Violence Laws in Thailand – Recommendations for Strengthening Protections for Survivors and Who Is Going to Believe Us? Work-Related Sexual Harassment in Thailand with a Focus on Women Migrant Workers* which influenced legislative revisions.

<sup>46</sup> SAF Programme provided inputs on the draft Vietnamese Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control of 2007.

WMWs. This social norms work could have taken place during the pandemic through the use of virtual communications tools such as radio broadcasting as well as support for local groups and organisations who promote gender equality as well once pandemic-related restrictions were lifted by ramping up efforts to address IPV through community dialogue and awareness raising throughout safe migration community outreach activities.

With donor support, the SAF programme could have potentially been more responsive had a new outcome or additional outputs been integrated into its results framework to directly support this kind of work. Some other labour migration programming in the region was able to respond in this way due to donor flexibility such as the IOM Corporate Responsibility in Eliminating Slavery and Trafficking (CREST) initiative which created a new outcome that supported a humanitarian response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This helped the programme to be more productive and to better serve migrant workers during the crisis<sup>47</sup>. The European Union uses a separate funding system for humanitarian work while the Spotlight Initiative was focused exclusively on development programming. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, a stronger nexus between development and humanitarian work may have helped the SAF Programme better respond to the most pressing priorities of WMWS. Future development programmes need the flexibility and support from donors to readjust their design and results framework when faced with a crisis of this scale.

## 5.2. Coherence

This section provides an assessment of the extent to which the Safe and Fair Programme is synergetic and aligned with UN Reform efforts, the Spotlight Initiative, and other similar UN migration initiatives across the region.

***Finding #5: The SAF Programme was implemented largely in alignment and in consultation with other UN labour migration programming and initiatives in the region. At the same time, there exists potential to generate programmatic synergies with other UN labour migration, EAW, and trafficking programming in the region to create greater impact.***

The SAF Programme regularly communicated and coordinated with other UN labour migration programming in the ASEAN region, such as ILO's Triangle and IOM's PROMISE initiatives, the ILO-IOM-UNDP Ship to Shore Program, and the ILO-IOM-UN Women Bridge programme in the Philippines to identify potential synergies and avoid duplication. Areas of collaboration often focused on advocacy and capacity building initiatives. An example is SAF's collaboration with Triangle on building capacity at the regional level on fair and ethical recruitment practices.<sup>48</sup> Another area of coordination was entering into joint partnership to strengthen the capacity of the ASEAN Trade Union Council and its affiliates to organize WMWs and to provide services to them. SAF has liaised with IOM's PROMISE programme, keeping them abreast of activities and participating in each other's governance meetings. As a regional programme, SAF was an integral

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<sup>47</sup> Final Evaluation of the CREST Initiative Finding #7

<sup>48</sup> SAF Cumulative Report, 2023.



part of the ILO's Asia Pacific regional portfolio, which included the Ship to Shore Programme and the Triangle Initiative.

The SAF Programme reportedly engaged and collaborated in various contexts and fora with other UN agencies more broadly in an advocacy capacity, including with UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR and IOM. These initiatives range from the drafting of articles for media publication on WMWs and GBV as a united One UN, to SAF organizing a side event highlighting the importance of multi-sectoral partnerships in championing human rights at the 10th Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (APFSD), together with ILO's TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme, the UN Human Rights (OHCHR) Regional Office for South-East Asia, the European Union (EU) Delegation to Thailand, Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Indonesia Ministry of Manpower (MOM).<sup>49</sup>

The SAF Programme also collaborated with another jointly implemented programme by the ILO, UN Women and IOM, the Governance of Labour Migration in South and South-East Asia (GOALS). SAF reportedly developed a framework with GOALS and engaged over 125 CSOs, governments, NGOs, trade unions across the regions in consultations. Based on an evidence-based global framework to prevent GBV and harassment against women and girls launched in 2019, they aimed to further develop the framework to address violence against WMWs through articulating knowledge-based strategies validated by stakeholders that is context-specific in preventing violence against women migrating for work. Launched in the fourth quarter of 2022, there is the intent to explore piloting and testing with multiple stakeholders.<sup>50</sup>

The SAF Programme also worked with ASEAN partners on some important initiatives such as the Midterm Review of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Women. The review identified key recommendations in terms of initiatives to be prioritized to effectively address VAW, including WMWs in the region. SAF also supported the regional SOP Guideline and cross-border assistance and referral mechanisms for WMWs.<sup>51</sup>

The evaluation does note SAF's engagement of WEE actors through ASEAN as part of Component 3. SAF reportedly worked with UN Women's WEE Programme in collaboration with ASEAN's 'We Strive Campaign to End Gender-Based Workplace Exploitation'. The Women's Empowerment Principles enabled private sector engagement with signatories. Yet the evaluation notes limited collaboration with women's economic empowerment actors in adding value to community-based support and reintegration initiatives. SAF did reportedly work in partnership with technical and vocational training institutes in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam to support WMWs in skilling and certification. SAF also trained on handicrafts in Myanmar and provided support to entrepreneurship and financial planning to returned WMWs in Lao PDR.<sup>52</sup> Greater and more systematic investment in this area would have helped support SAF's overall objective and serve to add greater value to initiatives taking place at the community level, as well as engage

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<sup>49</sup> SAF Annual Report, 2022.

<sup>50</sup> SAF Annual Report, 2022

<sup>51</sup> Mid-Term Review of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Women (2016-2025), 2021.

<sup>52</sup> SAF Annual Report, 2022

more effectively on both pre-departure and reintegration initiatives. The SAF Programme was notably absent from existing labour migration government fora, such as the Bali Process and Colombo Process. Participation in these fora provide further opportunity to mainstream gender and find opportunities to create synergies at the regional and national levels.

Finally, there were missed opportunities to mainstream EVAW materials and approaches into the pre-departure orientation (PDO) trainings and post-arrival orientation (PAO) trainings as well as engagement with employers that were underway by other UN agencies, particularly IOM. While the SAF RO team did make some progress in this area, particularly in contributing to the development of PDO manuals in Cambodia and addressing PDO elements in Code of Conducts in Philippines and Vietnam, there were reportedly both political barriers and challenges in forming partnerships among the UN agencies to collaborate, and in some cases, such as Singapore, where SAF was not able to broker an agreement with the government.<sup>53</sup> The programme's impact and influence could have been significantly expanded by forming stronger collaborative relationships with other UN labour migration actors in the region in such efforts.

***Finding #6: The Safe and Fair Programme achieved important cross-border and regional-level successes, particularly in partnership with ASEAN. At the same time, regional Safe and Fair Programme staff invested significant time and effort in supporting national-level initiatives, which detracted effort away from regional level programming and raised questions about different configurations of roles and responsibilities at the national level vis-à-vis country directors and UN RCs in support of UN Reform.***

SAF achieved cross-border and regional level successes, particularly in partnership with ASEAN, which brought coherence at the regional level for SAF. These include the collection and use of sex-disaggregated ILMS data with the ILMS focal points of the ten ASEAN Member States; and its publication, "Making Women Migrant Workers Count: Sex Disaggregation of Labour Migration Statistics in ASEAN" which SAF disseminated at the annual technical regional meetings of the ASEAN ILMS focal points. Another example of regional success includes SAF's collaboration with the ASEAN Confederation of Employers (ACE), which has members in seven ASEAN countries. They partnered with SAF to develop policy briefs that make a business case for preventing violence and harassment at work, and good practices in promoting women's leadership and mainstreaming gender policies. These briefs were used to educate 14 employers from seven ASEAN countries on gender equality, violence and harassment in the world of work. Yet another example is SAF's organization of cross-border knowledge exchanges for trade unions, service providers, and other social partners in countries of origin and destination. Such efforts resulted in improved knowledge about working and living conditions in countries of destination, new rules and policy frameworks about women's labour migration in different countries, and strengthened cross-border coordination to support women migrant workers across 11 migration corridors.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> The Government of Singapore offers mandatory PAO for domestic workers. There were discussions about the possibility to conduct PAO for WMWs in other sectors, but nothing was concluded.

<sup>54</sup> SAF Annual Report, 2022.

At the regional level, SAF also supported the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) and the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) in collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat to develop ASEAN Guidelines for Developing National SOPs for a Coordinated Response to Violence against Women and Girls. These guidelines build upon SAF learnings in the region.<sup>55</sup> SAF's regional level successes are notable for their involvement of Singapore, Brunei and Myanmar, which helped build a regional coherence for the programme.

Yet while achieving these successes at the regional level which supported a level of coherence for the programme, there was a challenge to operational coherence between regional and national levels. Particularly notable was the high staff turnover among NPCs at the country level, as well as among staff at the regional level. This turnover was reportedly caused in part by heavy workload, short-term contracts, and the challenge to find the specialized skillset required for the NPC role. In response, the regional staff often stepped in to support national-level programming, which took resources away from regional level efforts.

The diversity in country programming contexts under SAF is remarkable, both with regard to diverse socio-political contexts and the variance in status of UN Women and ILO offices established within countries. Between the two agencies, there are countries with directors in place for both, such as the case of Indonesia and Vietnam; while for others there is just one office established with a head of office, such as the case of Malaysia and Lao PDR.<sup>56</sup> The SAF regional team balanced their regional level workload with needs at the national level in supporting NPCs, yet those needs varied across the region due to this diversity. While the evaluation did not systematically interview all country directors, heads of office, and RCs to inquire about roles and responsibilities across the regional programme, there were multiple emphatic voices within the region among senior officials that expressed an interest in further reflection on roles and responsibilities for future regional programming, particularly for the function of the UNCTs, as well as country directors in those countries with established presence.

One long-term senior official representing an established country programme office in a country with both ILO and UN Women presence expressed the need for a country-level design process in creating greater coherence for the programme, not simply development of work plans based on a design developed at the regional level. A similar sentiment was also expressed by several NPCs working in established country programmes. The director also expressed concern about the design process currently underway for future SAF programming and the lack of country director involvement. A more prominent role for those country offices that are established may lead to more effective and coherent national level programming in those countries, thus contributing

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<sup>55</sup> SAF Annual Report, 2022.

<sup>56</sup> SAF was implemented in 10 countries, which included 10 country directors and heads of office across both the ILO and UN Women. Some of these directors were responsible for multiple countries. These include 6 ILO directors: 1 for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR; 1 for Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei; and 1 each for Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines, and Myanmar. These also include 4 UN Women directors: 1 overseeing 7 countries – Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei; and 1 each for Indonesia, Vietnam and Myanmar.

toward greater programmatic coherence overall and enabling the regional office to focus their energy elsewhere.

At the country level, through heads of ILO and UN Women agencies, SAF also worked with the UN Resident Coordinator System. Many UN Resident Coordinators provided their advice, leadership, and political advocacy on the SAF Programme, and joined NPACs and several SAF activities. Yet reportedly the level of participation was uneven across the region. One resident coordinator argued for greater cross-border collaboration among UNCTs across the region in support of UN Reform in a regional and cross-border programme like SAF. Such engagement would have further strengthened the coherence of SAF at the regional and cross-border level, possibly adding to greater levels of success, and provided additional support to members of the SAF regional team. While the regional SAF team made significant gains in their advocacy work at the regional level, it is likely that increased engagement by the RCOs would have further maximized these gains with a more clearly developed role for RCs and UNCTs. Further, where capacity was present at the national level to support programme design and to build greater coherence at the national level, the regional staff could have devoted greater efforts at the regional level in support of SAF objectives, contributing to even greater regional coherence.

***Finding #7: Through the SAF Programme, ILO and UN Women were successful at jointly planning and implementing activities while achieving thematic synergies across programme outcomes. Fewer synergies were achieved with UNODC due to its limited programme participation. At the same time, the programme was designed in components, with ILO leading Outcome 1 and UN Women leading Outcome 2. This separation with clear division of roles and responsibilities sometimes extended down to the national level where partners were often not shared across agencies.***

### **Coherence across outcome areas**

The SAF Programme was designed in three components, with ILO leading Outcome 1 and UN Women leading Outcome 2, and a joint contribution toward Outcome 3, which the agencies co-led. The programme achieved thematic synergies across outcomes in many cases, contributing toward coherence in programme delivery. There are multiple examples where EVAW service provision was integrated into labour migration policies and procedures while the needs of WMWs were included in EVAW policies.

At the policy level, for example, SAF supported the development and implementation of gender-responsive labour migration policies in Indonesia. In 2022 SAF then partnered with the Ministry of Manpower and the Migrant Worker Network (Jaringan Buruh Migran) to train 39 provincial and district government officials on how to develop gender-responsive policies and services for women migrant workers, and how to mitigate the risks of labour rights' violations and violence and harassment. SAF then worked in collaboration with labour attachés, women migrant workers and workers' organizations in countries of destination (Malaysia and Taiwan, China), to support officials to improve their understanding of how to apply gender-responsive technical guidelines to implement Ministerial Decree No. 294/2020 and gender-responsive SOPs in delivering services for migrant workers.

Another example where EVAW and labour migration actors came together to improve labour migration outcomes for WMWs and to support WMWs who have experienced violence and harassment is in the Philippines, where SAF gave technical inputs to the establishment of a new Department of Migrant Workers in 2022. While there is some delay in its operationalization, the DMW does plan to designate gender focal points who will also serve as EVAW focal points in migrant workers offices housed in Philippine missions abroad. Its mandate is to provide a full-cycle reintegration programme that includes social, psychosocial, gender-responsive reintegration needs, including skills certification and recognition of equivalency, and promotes access to social protection instrument and financial services, and the reintegration of survivors of VAW and trafficking in persons.<sup>57</sup>

SAF has also been working with the Department of Foreign Affairs to develop the capacity of Philippine embassy and consulate officials to provide EVAW assistance and referrals to WMWs who have experienced violence in countries of destination. This work was expanded to Vietnam where SAF provided training on VAW response and supported the development of SOPs for foreign service officials to respond to VAW.<sup>58</sup>

Yet another example is found In Thailand, where SAF partnered with the Department of Labour Protection and Welfare (DLPW) to train 193 labour inspectors on international labour standards, trafficking and forced labour, labour inspection of domestic work, and violence and harassment. In addition, 104 DLPW-contracted interpreters were also trained to apply proper terminology and interview techniques so that they can better support labour investigations related to migrant workers who cannot speak Thai. SAF training of labor inspectors has incorporated EVAW into labour migration through addressing vulnerabilities of WMWs within workplaces, including elimination of violence and sexual harassment.

The ILO and UN Women’s collaboration was a value added in their respective expertise on labour migration governance and VAW. Figure 8 below portrays the SAF regional level’s perception that together the ILO and UN Women combining efforts made achievements that each agency alone could not have achieved.

**Figure 8: Regional level survey results on synergies achieved between ILO and UN Women<sup>59</sup>**

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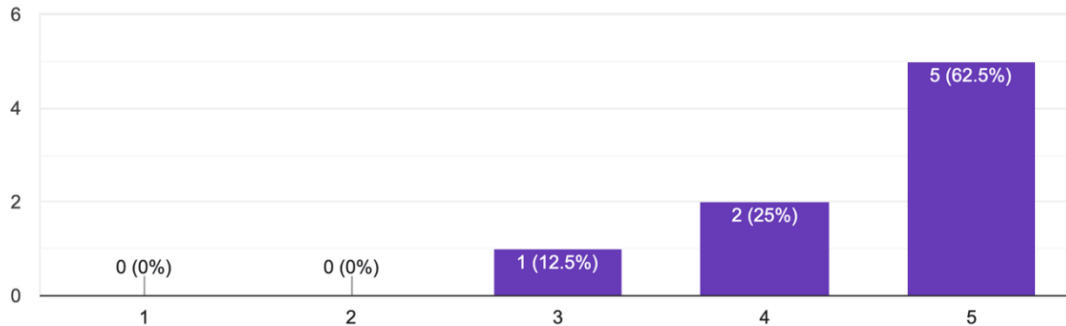
<sup>57</sup> SAF Cumulative Report, 2023.

<sup>58</sup> SAF Final Report, 2022.

<sup>59</sup> 5 indicates high; 1 indicates low.

17. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the degree to which the combined capacities of UN Woman and the ILO as partners achieved synergies...comes that each partner alone could not achieve?

8 responses



Yet while a level of coherence was achieved across outcome areas, there was a clear division of roles and responsibilities between the ILO and UN Women under Outcomes 1 and 2 which extended down to the national level. The programme design dictated that activities carried out under each outcome were reported on by the agency leading that outcome. This separation with clear division of roles and responsibilities was often regarded by ILO and UN Women officials as positive, enabling the logistics of programme implementation, but it challenged the notion of “joint” programming, and whether the approach effectively fostered UN Reform. In one SAF country where both agencies were established, the evaluation notes there was reportedly an interest to take “credit” for activity outputs through reporting, which detracted from a spirit of joint programming. Several country directors commented that while NPAC meetings serve to bring stakeholders together, the formality of these meetings prevented bringing together the siloed components of the programme.

The siloing of the outcomes by agency extended down to the national level where partners in some cases were not shared across agencies. While both UN Women and ILO contributed towards the achievement of all outcomes, activities were sometimes executed by only one of the partners at the national level drawing on the agency’s existing partnership network. This was a common phenomenon across multiple programme countries, which posed a challenge to the mutual benefit that both the ILO and UN Women could achieve through SAF, that of expanding their own networks and broadening labour migration and EAW dialogue among a larger group of partners, all while making even greater use of each agency’s expertise. There was room for partnerships to have been better shared across agencies with the aim of strengthening each agency’s partnership base as well as making greater use of their respective areas of expertise. There was also room for greater awareness among SAF partners to understand the roles and contributions of both ILO and UN Women at national and regional levels as the leading UN agencies managing SAF.

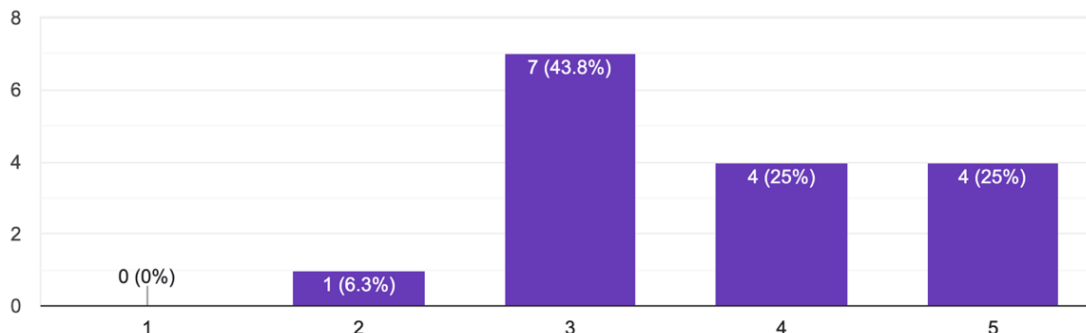
The NPC survey results indicate mostly joint implementation by the two agencies in their countries of operation, yet a more significant response from 7 out of the 16 respondents marking

an “average” level. The different responses may reflect varying interpretations as to what “joint” means, as well as the varying circumstances at the national level regarding office presence.

**Figure 9: NPC survey response on degree of ILO and UN Women joint implementation of programming<sup>60</sup>**

17. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the degree to which the ILO and UN Women jointly implemented programming through the Safe and Fair Programme in your NPC country of operation?

16 responses



### Sharing of knowledge

The SAF Programme’s M&E system generated significant data which was shared in various ways and through various fora. These include the use of “flash reports” to share information about activities underway with stakeholders such as RCs and EU representatives, as discussed below under finding #14. Knowledge was also shared through annual RPAC meetings, which involved ASEAN representatives and other stakeholders, as well as at NPAC meetings established in those 8 countries with SAF presence. These fora made up SAF’s governance structure, with opportunity for knowledge sharing, both between stakeholders and with data generated from SAF’s M&E system.

Yet another forum was the ASEAN CSO Working Group, established by SAF for partners in 2019 with the expressed purpose to provide knowledge-sharing and advisory support to facilitate the design and implementation of SAF’s activities. Since members are also implementing partners that work directly in the communities, they are able to provide information and updates about changes in national policy (and their impact on the ground) and on the new and emerging trends they are observing in relation to WMWs, both in countries of origin and countries of destination. In June 2022, for example, the ASEAN CSO Reference Group reportedly met to learn about the progress of programme implementation. The discussions focused on the cross-border support available to women migrant workers, especially support for cross-border referrals in the context of VAW during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> 5 is high; 1 is low

<sup>61</sup> SAF Annual Report, 2022.

CSO representatives interviewed overall expressed varying levels of appreciation for the effectiveness of these knowledge sharing meetings. While some noted the CSO Working Group meetings as fulfilling their purpose, many noted they were too formal to go beyond knowledge sharing and did not serve as a means of supporting genuine dialogue and planning. The rigidity of the programme design, as discussed above under finding #2 contributed toward this sentiment. A more engaging exchange would have supported greater coherence and ownership at the national level.

### **UNODC contributions as a SAF implementing partner**

The SAF Programme began with ILO and UN Women as implementing partner agencies. In the early stages of the programme, UNODC was invited to join upon the request of stakeholders who believed SAF should have a stronger anti-trafficking focus. UNODC reportedly signed a multi-year partnership agreement with UN Women after the planning process was completed and their agreed-upon contributions were then added into the programme design.

UNODC contributed to the development of tools, national actions plans, and standard operating procedures for officials working in the policy, justice and law enforcement sectors based on their area of expertise on crime, trafficking, law enforcement and data collection.<sup>62</sup> Other UNODC contributions include workshops in Malaysia in 2019 connecting law enforcement with civil society actors and hosting an in-person forum on combatting human trafficking online in 2022 in Cambodia, which brought together migrant women, youth, civil society, and anti-trafficking stakeholders to discuss the effects of Covid-19 and the screening of a documentary detailing the pandemic stories of WMWs, as told by them. UNODC also contributed towards the Project Steering Committee and provided technical advice on the SAF Programme.

UNODC played a minimal role in the SAF Programme implementation due to the fact that it was allocated a small amount of funds. While UNODC executed some small-scale activities as detailed above, they used existing funding linked to other donor funded activities to do so. The limited funds for UNODC appeared to be a major barrier to developing more meaningful synergies and cross-agency work, given the scope of the programme. This constituted a missed opportunity for SAF as a programme with significant funding and the ambitious goal of safe and fair migration for all women across ASEAN. UNODC could have played a larger role in strengthening anti-trafficking systems across the region, and support greater government response on prevention of trafficking, while supporting the tailoring of systems specifically to women migrants.

### *5.3. Effectiveness*

This section provides an assessment of the extent to which the Safe and Fair Programme has achieved its planned outputs and outcomes, including any differential results across countries and groups of vulnerable women migrant workers.

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<sup>62</sup> SAF Cumulative Report, 2023.



***Finding #8: As of September 2023, SAF Programme reports confirm that the programme has largely met and/or surpassed nearly all of its targets across output indicators as well as surpassed several outcome indicator targets.***

The SAF Programme went well beyond its targeted results numbers under its three objectives under *Outcome 1: WMWs are better protected by gender-sensitive labour migration governance frameworks*.<sup>63</sup> The reporting on output indicators under Outcome 1 conveys achievement of targeted numbers in the areas of opportunities for WMWs to organize at regional, national and local levels (9,142 WMWs are networked, well beyond the 5,000 targeted); numbers of WMWs accessing and provided support services (63,893 WMWs of a total of 133,035 migrant workers and family members access services, well beyond the 50,000 women migrants targeted); and 6 countries with dedicated national strategies or action plans on EVAW, which include women migrants (double the number targeted). Most outcome indicators are still to be determined and reported on by the programme, although there is a record of 2,398 complaints successfully resolved for WMWs reported, well beyond the 1,981 targeted.

For *Outcome 2: WMWs are less vulnerable to violence and trafficking and benefit from coordinated responsive quality services*, the programme achieved under each output area. These include numbers of users of community-based and women-led networks are active in preventing VAW and trafficking (130,342, well beyond the 2,750 users targeted); and numbers of women migrants who are provided with information by networks (326,794 migrant women, well beyond the 7,500 migrant women targeted). By the end of the programme SAF may also achieve its targeted number of laws and policies on EVAW provided with technical support and inputs by UN Women to ensure integration of rights-based and survivor-centered approaches.

The SAF endline report<sup>64</sup> for Outcome 2 indicates that a total of 479,489 MWWs and their families benefited from SAF services and 1,133 WMWs participated in certified trainings. Services provided encompass a wide array of activities, including the dissemination of critical information, the provision of support services for psychosocial support, healthcare, legal assistance and social services, capacity building initiatives, and support to MRCs and helpline services.

Under *Outcome 3: Data, knowledge and attitudes on the rights and contributions of WMWs are improved*, one outcome indicator is reported as a total of 246 governmental agencies and CSOs implementing activities to protect the rights of WMWs in the ASEAN region, well beyond the targeted 46 agencies. Again, there is significant achievement on output indicators, including number of research studies and knowledge materials produced and disseminated focusing on safe and fair labour migration, and VAW (140 achieved, well beyond the 50 initially targeted); and 35,654,032 stakeholders reached through awareness-raising campaigns aiming to change attitudes and behaviors toward WMWs, well beyond the 500,000 targeted.

***Finding #9: The Safe and Fair Programme was particularly effective at strengthening VAW referral pathways for WMWs across the labour migration journey in both countries of origin***

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<sup>63</sup> SAF Cumulative Report, Annex A: Results Framework

<sup>64</sup> Violence against Women Migrant Workers in ASEAN: Endline Study of Quality Service Provision for Women Migrant Workers in ASEAN. Revised endline study report (draft), dated 10 October 2023.

***and destination. The quality and availability of services provided through these referral mechanisms remain, however, in need of strengthening.***

The SAF Programme has effectively addressed VAW in the context of labour migration and has strengthened referral pathways for WMWs across their labour migration journey. SAF's baseline report found that services on VAW in general were weak and uncoordinated, and services to meet the needs of WMW who experienced violence were even more uncommon, and with little research available. Where data systems did exist concerning WMW access to services, there were only agency-specific data sets for agency use and no centralized coordination of data collection.<sup>65</sup>

The output in this area of work is significant for the programme over its five-year period, both in the work of strengthening capacity of service providers and other partners in coordinating their efforts in delivering services and for the numbers of WMWs reached through the programme, as detailed in Finding #8. Both labour migration and ERAW service providers were given information on available VAW services, trained on how to respond to women who have experienced violence, and support to develop SOPs and other frameworks as a means to strengthen their response and referral processes. Findings #9 and #10 under this section are interlinked: Finding #9 is focused on the delivery and coordination of services for WMWs, and WMWs access to these services; while Finding #10 is focused on capacity building of service providers and the quality of services delivered. SAF strategies for reaching WMWs and coordinating services are detailed below, followed by discussion on the challenges SAF faced in targeting its service provision and meeting WMW needs.

### **Strategies for reaching WMWs**

A range of governmental and non-governmental partners across the labour migration, trafficking and VAW fields made services available in a multitude of ways. Information was shared through trainings, information-sharing sessions, and social media pages and other online technologies. Information was also shared at various venues, including MRCs, hotlines, shelters, SAF partner facilities, and WMW workplaces.

SAF employed several strategies to reach WMWs to protect and promote their rights, including recruiting migrant volunteers and building their capacity to provide information and referral support to their peers in less accessible areas, such as WMWs working and living in construction camps. In partnership with CSO partners Raks Thai Foundation and World Vision Foundation Thailand, as well as government partners Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, and Ministry of Labour, SAF trained more than 400 women and men migrant volunteers on labour rights, work safety measures, public health information, and COVID-19 safety information. The migrant volunteers trained their peer groups and served as resources for WMWs on referrals. They were also trained to act as a liaison between governmental authorities, such as public health authorities, the Migrant Worker Resource Centers (MRCs) and WMW communities.

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<sup>65</sup> Baseline and Target Setting Report (2019) "Safe and Fair Programme: Realizing Women Migrant Workers' rights and opportunities in the ASEAN Region".

The case study results point to the positive experience of WMWs housed in construction camps in Thailand who engaged with trained migrant peers coming often to their workplace. The case study found that such an approach fostered trusting relationships, which was a positive means for conveying and receiving information by both parties. WMWs appreciated the support from migrant volunteers in providing information, as well as facilitation and referral to services, and the migrant volunteers enjoyed their work and the status they held within the migrant community. The approach is an effective and promising means for conveying information to WMWs that can be scaled to focus on other topics and in other sectors, although the case study results did reveal the approach may be more successful with some nationalities compared to others.

The SAF Programme's partnerships with MRCs, trade unions, and other CBOs made support possible for WMWs to join unions, networks, and associations and engage with their peers in advocating for change. Through these networks, they received training on a range of topics, including VAW, labour migration, public speaking, and advocacy campaigns. In Malaysia, two domestic worker associations were supported -- AMMPO, an Indonesian domestic workers association which began with SAF support; and PERTIMIG, a Filipino domestic workers association. They engaged in multiple kinds of communication strategies, and they were also a source of support to other domestic workers in need of assistance. The evaluation found examples in Malaysia with PERTIMIG and AMMPO, as well as cross-border examples of a WMWs trade association in Indonesia liaising with Indonesian WMWs overseas, where via communication channels established, support on case management and referrals were provided by migrant peers.

Another significant means for outreach to WMWs were SAF's partnerships with Migrant Resource Centers (MRCs) across the region. Their scope of services varied across locations and depending on their capacity and needs identified. The SAF Programme provided support to make their services more gender sensitive. Their interventions included disseminating information on labour rights, safe migration, VAW, and trafficking in persons; case management services, including counseling, legal aid, and referrals to other service providers; delivering trainings to build capacity of WMWs to be community leaders; organizing WMWs in peer support networks or associations; support to skills training for livelihood opportunities, including financial literacy classes and language lessons; and provision of capacity building training to MRC staff and others in local communities on gender equality, VAW and labour migration. Those WMWs receiving assistance through MRCs numbered 6,079 WMWs, or approximately one-third of the total number of 20,151 WMWs who received assistance from SAF over its five-year period of implementation.<sup>66</sup>

Other community-based examples in countries of origin include SAF's partnership with the Child Helpline in Cambodia and the use of video, including five infographics focusing on helplines, safe migration, women's rights, which reached a total of 98,341 people online. As outlined in the following textbox, the SAF Programme also supported the creation of a smartphone app in

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<sup>66</sup> SAF Cumulative Report, 2023.

Cambodia called the My Journey App designed to share information on safe labour migration practices as well as available services to WMWs, including EAW services in both Cambodia and in countries of destination. This information could also be used by service providers to help strengthen their knowledge of where they could potentially refer WMWs.

### **Box 1: My Journey App in Cambodia**

*Over the course of the SAF Programme, the initiative collected information on available services, including EAW services, that WMWs can access in both Cambodia and in countries of destination. This information was then compiled into a smartphone app called the My Journey App. The app provides user-friendly information in both written and audio forms that outlines for WMWs the importance of migrating through regular migration channels, explains how to migrate safely and how to prepare for labour migration, as well as what to do and what services are available to support them if they require assistance while working abroad. The app also includes contact information for helplines and service providers if a WMW is in need.*

*The app is currently being rolled out across WMW communities and is used in community information sessions as well as PDO training sessions. The roll-out includes training sessions on how to use the app while in some cases, WMWs are provided with a smart phone so that they can access the app. Service providers can also use the app to identify what other services are available to facilitate referrals. WMWs and service providers explained in interviews how the app is useful in that it contains all necessary information in one place and can be easily updated.*

*Challenges that were identified with the app include difficulties among some WMWs to feel confident using a smart phone to access the app as well as limited programming time to fully roll-out the app across stakeholders and WMW communities. Now that the app is developed, it has the potential to be replicated in other countries. However, there is currently no funding available to support the maintenance, roll-out, scale-up, or replication of the app once the SAF Programme comes to an end on 31 December 2023.*

In communities in Indonesia with high out-migration rates, a bazaar called “Realizing the protection of women migrant workers starts from the village!” was organized by the SAF-supported MRC in Blitar, in collaboration with village government and a youth group. Also in Indonesia, a “Migrant day fun walk” was organized in December 2022 to raise public awareness about trafficking in persons. SAF information leaflets on safe migration, which included information about MRC-LTSA services, were distributed to the public. A SAF video on safe and fair migration was also played.<sup>67</sup>

### **Coordination of service providers**

A significant approach to supporting the coordination of services was through the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) to strengthen referral systems across the region. The endline study for the programme found the development and implementation of SOPs with an integrated referral pathway as an effective means for coordinating services in multiple countries.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> SAF Programme Cumulative Report, 2023.

<sup>68</sup> Violence against Women Migrant Workers in ASEAN: Endline Study of Quality Service Provision for Women Migrant Workers in ASEAN. Revised endline study report (draft), dated 10 October 2023.

In Malaysia, SAF partners developed comprehensive resources and guidelines for a multi-stakeholder platform which helped to improve referral processes, staffing support, venue arrangements, logo endorsement and increased participation among stakeholders. In Vietnam, SAF supported the Ministry of Public Security to establish a referral mechanism for WMWs who experienced violence and trafficking. This mechanism aligned with the National Anti-Trafficking Action Plan. The SOP facilitates access to information for WMW about their rights, legal support and medical assistance.

With SAF's support, the MRCs in Indonesia were integrated into the Government One-Roof Integrated Services Centers (LTSA) to expand services to women interested to migrate, providing information on safe migration and placement services. This integrated model was awarded the Indonesian Migrant Worker Award by the Ministry of Manpower and was expanded to the fisheries sector.<sup>69</sup> MOUs with local hospitals enhanced access to healthcare services. In Thailand, a cross-sectoral referral mechanism involving 13 agencies was established in Mae Sot, Tak Province, a city that shares a well-used border crossing with Myanmar. This effort resulted in the development of an SOP in 2021 to coordinate services for WMWs who experienced violence. In 2022, the Mae Sot GBV Task Force supported 67 cases of violence against WMWs through their coordinated services.

While the SAF Programme made use of a multitude of ways to provide services to WMWs and coordinate these services, the evaluation identified several challenges related to the provision of a service in response to a demand or need. The discussion below outlines challenges faced involving location and effective targeting of services, meeting WMW expectations, addressing particularly vulnerable moments during the migration journey, and assisting vulnerable groups within the WMW population.

***Targeting location of services:*** Given the mobility of WMWs as a population, the importance of reliable data is paramount in identifying locations with high out migration rates in origin countries, and the predominance of WMW labor in select sectors and locations within destination countries. The SAF Programme, in addressing fair and safe migration for WMW, largely identified these areas well based on the vast experience of work in the region on labour migration that is evidence-based. Yet there were challenges with targeting of services.

A 2023 UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluation in Indonesia noted that enhancing the capacity of frontline service providers under the SAF Programme did not necessarily result in WMWs' access to their services.<sup>70</sup> The evaluation identified some survivors of violence and trafficking, upon return to their communities, receiving psycho-social support and referral services from frontline CSOs, yet the locations targeted by the Programme were uneven. The area of Sumenep, for example, did not have a high concentration of WMWs. The evaluation also found that shelter homes supported by SAF benefited survivors of GBV with their services, although it remained

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<sup>69</sup> SAF Programme Cumulative Report, 2023.

<sup>70</sup> UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluation for Indonesia, draft synthesis report, 2023.

unclear whether any WMWs accessed these services. More targeted selection of locations was recommended to enable greater availability and access by WMWs.

Access and availability of healthcare services in Cambodia was also problematic. WMWs often do not have access to psychosocial support at the community level and have to travel great distances to receive support. In Cambodia, WMWs explained that they have to travel all the way to Phnom Penh from their communities in the provinces to receive psychosocial support services, which is not very practical due to the long travel time and the financial expenses involved. It is also hard to explain to family and community members why they have to go to the capital without disclosing their need for these services. The availability of psychosocial support services is very limited across rural Cambodia, which limits access by all women, including WMWs.

The tension of providing services to a mobile population of WMWs versus supporting services for the larger population was acknowledged by the programme. The endline report references the shift from targeting WMWs within the population with services to developing services for all women whether they are preparing to migrate, are migrating, or have returned from their migration journey. The examples above also point to the SAF Programme's greater emphasis on pre-departure services than reintegration services in meeting WMW needs in origin countries.

***Outreach to WMWs and cultivating trusting relationships:*** In Malaysia, the MTUC operating the MRC in Johor experienced challenges with outreach to WMWs. Their experience reaching men was significantly more successful compared to women until they changed their staffing and hired women, but even so it was still a challenge. Ironically, their outreach to WMWs increased during the pandemic through online searches. While they had a challenge identifying WMWs within chat groups and other online fora, they were successful in increasing their level of outreach and offering resources to those who were responsive. The WMWs interviewed who attended training at the MRC spoke positively about the support they received from the MRC, specifically in replacing one of their passports. Yet they were apprehensive still and wondered whether the MRC was a resource they could trust in other circumstances, such as encounters with the police. These WMWs were typical among those interviewed in destination countries, with regard to expressing interest in finding trusted resources and, specifically in this case, a person at the MRC in Johor they could trust. This example in Malaysia portrays WMWs as placing emphasis on the personal relationship, and the ongoing effort required to cultivate trust on the part of the service provider. The case study also points to the importance placed on trust in the case of migrant peers and WMWs working in construction sites in Thailand.

***Finding #10: Safe and Fair programming effectively raised awareness of the importance of safe migration practices through regular migration channels among WMWs across migrant worker communities in countries of origin, thus contributing to VAW prevention and anti-trafficking efforts. At the same time, there remain considerable incentives that are outside the control of the Safe and Fair Programme for WMWs to engage in irregular migration even if they understand the potential benefits of using regular migration channels, as well as the need for further investment in reinforcing those gains made.***

An array of trainings and capacity building on safe migration were provided to frontline service providers and others engaged in liaising directly with women in origin countries. These include the training of 291 municipal, district and community leaders, as well as frontline service providers on migration-related regulations for safe employment, ethical recruitment and gender-responsive services by SAF in partnership with the provincial Department of Labour and Vocational Training (PDLVT) in Siem Reap and in Kampong Thom. In Lao PDR, 162 village leaders were trained on safe migration, EAW and trafficking in persons. Similarly, in Myanmar, SAF conducted trainings with 52 village and village tract administrators near the Loikaw MRC on safe migration, EAW and labour rights. In the Philippines, trainings were provided to government partners on safe migration to help strengthen SAF-supported MRCs. And in Vietnam, SAF supported 90 officials from three provincial governments to enhance their ability to deliver services.<sup>71</sup> Fourteen task forces were also established on women's protection from trafficking in the region, and nearly 6,000 front-line service providers were trained to handle women's protection issues in a coordinated manner.

The SAF Programme supported 28 Migrant Resource Centers (MRCs) in 9 ASEAN countries.<sup>72</sup> They took various forms in different contexts in both origin and destination countries. In Cambodia, they were mobile units operated by the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC) in Phnom Penh and Kandal Province and offered counseling services, shelter, legal assistance and referrals to other front-line service providers. In Malaysia, MRCs were operated by the SAF partner Malaysian Trade Unions Congress (MTUC) in Johor, and offered counseling and case management services. In Lao PDR, MRCs were operated in collaboration with the Provincial Federation of Trade Union and the Provincial Lao Women's Union. They reportedly reached out to 1,472 community members, including 154 students looking for jobs overseas. They heard advice regarding the risks of violence and trafficking as well as the availability of MRC services. Through outreach activities, community members, including returnee migrant workers and potential WMWs learned about labour rights, social protection, safe migration and available services for migrant workers.<sup>73</sup>

In Indonesia, SAF established MRCs through multi-stakeholder partnerships. SAF worked with the Confederation for All Indonesia Trade Unions (Konfederasi Serikat Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, or KSBSI) to operate the MRCs in Blitar and Tulungagung Districts in cooperation with Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (KPI); and with the Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia, or SBMI) to operate the MRCs in Cirebon and East Lampung, in partnership with the Women's Crisis Center. In addition to providing services to women interested to migrate, the MRCs also raised awareness among the public about migration and women's contributions, and provided services to returned WMWs.

Overall, service providers receiving training on EAW and labour migration through SAF spoke positively about content of materials used, including SAF research products, as well as the support they received through capacity building efforts. Most of the WMWs who participated in the evaluation clearly understood the benefits of migrating through regular migration channels,

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<sup>71</sup> SAF Programme Cumulative Report, 2023.

<sup>72</sup> SAF 2022 Annual Report.

<sup>73</sup> SAF Programme Cumulative Report, 2023.

although there was less awareness on how to engage in safe migration practices among the WMWs. Further, some WMWs expressed in FGDs that they did not understand how to go about migrating through regular channels, while others did not fully trust the regular migration systems and processes. Some WMWs also stated that they would still likely engage in irregular migration in the future due to the high costs and long processing times of migrating through official channels.

Even with increased awareness and understanding about safe migration practices, and an understanding of how to migrate regularly, there are certain elements both outside the control of the SAF Programme, as well as outcomes realized that need further reinforcement. Stakeholders in Indonesia, for example, described the gains they have made in bringing together diverse actors from multiple levels of government and civil society in piloting the LTSC-MRC project. The gains realized in coordinating their efforts were challenged, they noted, by several realities, that of turn-over in staff, particularly in government, and the presence of brokers who are still looking for opportunities to benefit from the irregular migration of women.

It was also clear to the evaluation, based on FGDs with WMWs, that there was a need to cultivate WMWs' trust in government as well as their trust in the village head, which is dependent upon the ongoing effective coordination of stakeholders as well as individual personalities upholding the integrity of their roles and responsibilities. Greater levels of trust by potential women migrants would then support greater interest in engaging in a regularized migration process.

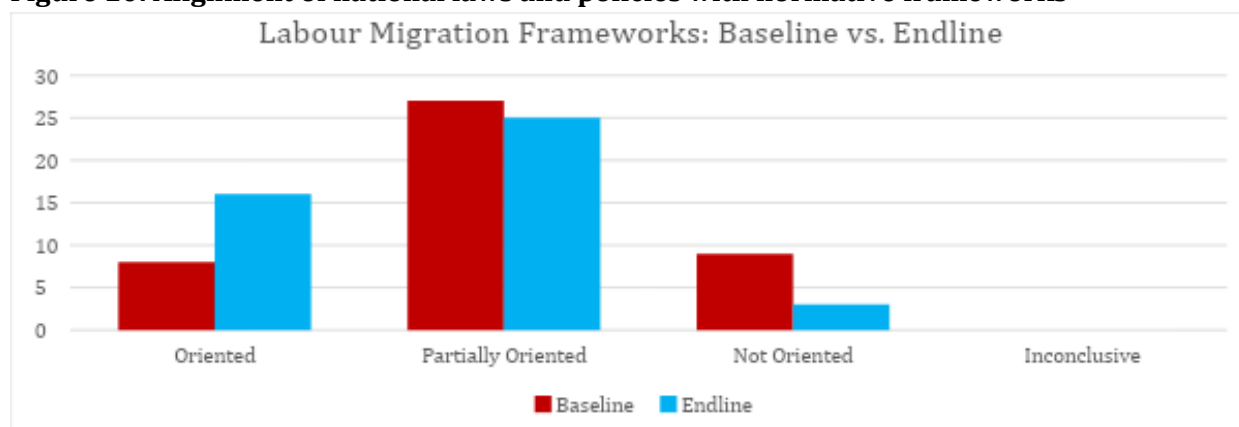
***Finding #11: There are concrete examples of the Safe and Fair Programme having effectively leveraged the comparative strengths of UN Women and ILO by supporting government ministries in countries of origin and destination to strengthen political frameworks and implementation plans. These served to better protect the rights of WMWs and increase VAW service provision to WMWs.***

The SAF Programme has effectively leveraged the comparative strengths of UN Women and ILO in a number of countries across ASEAN in supporting partners at the institutional and policy level. Over the five years of implementation, from 2018 to 2023, SAF supported the development and revision of 55 laws, policies, and regulations on gender-sensitive labour migration governance in 8 countries across ASEAN. Other areas of institutional work include support to the development of National Action Plans, guidelines, and SOPs to facilitate implementation of policies.

Comparison from baseline to endline of SAF technical inputs found improvement in greater alignment of national laws and policies in ASEAN with international labour migration normative frameworks, as found below in Figure 10. Capacity building efforts by SAF supported governments, employers' organizations and workers' organizations to improve their understanding of international labour and gender normative frameworks, contributing to policy development and revisions, as well as the support to WMWs themselves in advocating for change. Figure 10 identifies the numbers of labour migration laws and policies at the start of the SAF Programme that were aligned with normative frameworks in 3 areas: oriented, partially oriented and not oriented. By the end of the SAF Programme, those oriented with normative frameworks increased, while those partially oriented and not oriented decreased.



**Figure 10: Alignment of national laws and policies with normative frameworks**



*Source: SAF Programme Endline Report*

An example of a policy that is now partially oriented is the Employment Amendment Act of 2022 in Malaysia. The Malaysian Government changed the terminology in the Act from “domestic servant” to “domestic employee” and enabled domestic workers to access some social security provisions. Although more progress is needed for full coverage under the Act, it is a significant step forward, in part due to the advocacy efforts of the members of the SAF supported domestic worker associations PERTIMIG and AMMPO.

An example of what may be considered a fully oriented policy is SAF’s technical inputs to the establishment of the new Department of Migrant Workers in the Philippines. The department has designated gender focal points who will serve as EAW focal points in Migrant Workers Offices housed in Philippine missions abroad. Established under RA 11641, its objective is to ensure a “full-cycle reintegration programme” that includes psychosocial support, skills certification, and the reintegration of survivors of VAW and trafficking in persons. SAF has worked with the Department of Foreign Affairs to develop the capacity of Philippine embassy and consulate officials to provide EAW assistance and referrals to WMWs who have experienced violence in countries of destination. Elements of this work has also expanded to Vietnam and Cambodia.

In Malaysia the SAF Programme supported the development of a National Action Plan on Forced Labour (2021-2025). The Plan focuses on increasing awareness and understanding of stakeholders; building capacity for law enforcement; improved migration management; and priority interventions to address forced labour. SAF’s inputs support the inclusion of women migrants’ needs and concerns. While there were questions expressed about the extent of the Government of Malaysia’s ownership over the NAP, given how it was developed, the approved NAP helps to support the institutionalization of SAF values and objectives.

Other SAF initiatives at the institutional level include support to the development and implementation of SOPs in strengthening systems and processes. Staff turnover, especially for officials in the government, is one of the biggest threats to sustaining the effect of these initiatives. Yet with SOPs in place at the institutional level, there remains a greater chance of government partners’ continued engagement in taking on the roles and responsibilities stipulated in the SOP.

Indonesia is an example where regular official turnover at multiple levels in government has required significant work by SAF NPCs in cultivating new relationships and supporting continued participation in the SOPs.

***Finding #12: There appears to be some improvement in attitudes towards WMWs among target groups, but the scope of this change is minimal and isolated, in part due to a lack of coordination between SAF stakeholders and a lack of financial investment under the programme's third outcome area regarding changing attitudes. In addition, the programme missed key opportunities to advance social norms work at the community level to promote women's empowerment principles and address domestic violence in migrant worker communities.***

The SAF Programme engaged in a range of activities under Component 3, which focused on data, evidence and public opinion regarding WMWs. The SAF Programme engaged civil society partners in influencing public opinion about WMWs in destination countries in multiple ways. Some of these efforts were projects implemented by SAF partners, while some were smaller interventions, often organized around a specific day, such as World Migrants Day. Examples of projects include several in Malaysia focused on youth and journalists as catalysts for change. Liber8 focused on youth, and Asia Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) focused on journalists. Both programmes fostered discussion and reflection among participants through training and capacity building, while Liber8 also engaged in campaigns.

Liber8 engaged 62 university law students in 2022 to conduct a 3-month Advoc8 Legal Affairs programme focused on learning about WMWs in Malaysia. During FGDs with the Liber8 staff and participants in the programme, there was clear learning and changed attitudes achieved among most youth participants. For several it fostered an academic interest to research WMWs in Malaysia, which culminated in the publication of an article in a Malaysian academic peer reviewed journal. While the programme was effective in promoting change among participants, and their learning may have influenced others' learning, the scale was minimal. In 2021 Liber8 reached 13,963 students across Malaysia through "Advoc8 on the road (University Edition)" campaign. They conducted online workshops aimed at increasing knowledge among youth about women's labour migration and to support the youth to implement their own public campaigns in their communities. As part of the campaign, 146 people were reached and engaged by a chatbot with information about VAW and WMWs. Five virtual workshops were also arranged, reaching 311 students.

The training of Malaysian journalists on drafting stories on WMWs was also effective with regard to the engagement of participants and their increased levels of learning. Yet given the short duration of training solely focused on journalists, there were no articles published following the training. In reflecting on this, AIBD staff realized the need to train their supervisors as well as others who are in decision-making positions in their workplaces. As promoting the publication of articles on WMWs was not an easy task for the journalists when they went back to their workplaces, AIBD staff also reflected on the need for extending training with the journalists to cover the whole of the journalistic process from conception of idea to carrying it through to publication.

While the focus was on public broadcasting with a smaller readership compared to other platforms such as social media, it provides value as a public form of expression and communication aimed at influencing society at large. Greater gains could have been made through continued work in this area, specifically through partnerships with other SAF partners to influence societal attitudes. The partnership with AIBD is an example of work that was initiated later in the programme and did not have the necessary investment to expand and maximize its potential towards contributing to outcomes under Component 3 more fully.

SAF produced and disseminated a total of 140 research studies and knowledge products discussing different facets of women’s labour migration in the ASEAN region.<sup>74</sup> A total of 70 translations were also completed, and some of the studies were referenced by over 30 media outlets in 2022<sup>75</sup>. These products have been used to build capacity, to contribute toward policy and programme development, awareness raising during training, and generally addressing negative social norms and challenging negative attitudes related to WMWs and VAW.

The four research projects conducted jointly with ASEAN were reportedly produced and generated some discussion during the research process. The ASEAN official interviewed indicated that continued work in making use of the results in a workshop setting where they can be more fully discussed among ASEAN colleagues was yet to occur. The pandemic had caused some delay in their process, and the research was not fully used by the end of the programme.

As explained in Finding #1, the SAF Programme worked to sensitize its government representative partners, service providers (including MRCs), and CSO implementing partners around gender equality concepts and the need to focus programming on the unique needs, priorities, and vulnerabilities of WMWs. This dialogue between the programme staff and its partners contributed towards social norms change across programme stakeholders. In addition, in some migrant worker communities, the SAF Programme’s implementing partners used community information sessions on safe labour migration to engage men and women in discussion around gender equality principles and ending intimate partner violence (IPV). Stress incurred throughout the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated IPV across migrant worker communities, creating an urgent need to address the rising levels of domestic violence. Women from these communities expressed an overall sense that IPV had somewhat decreased after the dialogue sessions that focused on social norms change. While this is a promising practice, it was not intentionally included as a strategy to reduce IPV throughout the programme’s community-based information sessions. This suggests that there are opportunities for future programming to leverage community information sessions on labour migration as entry points to advance social norms work to tackle the root causes of VAW.

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<sup>74</sup> SAF Final Cumulative Report, 2023.

<sup>75</sup> SAF 2022 Annual Report.

#### 5.4. Efficiency

This section provides an assessment of the extent to which the Programme has delivered results in an economic and timely way, using efficient results-based governance, management, and implementation structures.

***Finding #13: The Safe and Fair Programme was able to overcome substantial delays and operational challenges. However, in some cases, the delays affected its ability to implement programming and generate momentum towards higher level results.***

The SAF Programme was a complex initiative that operated in a multi-layered highly challenging context. As explained in the Midterm Evaluation, the programme used an extended nine-month inception phase (as opposed to six months) in 2018 due to the complexities involved in setting up such a multifaceted undertaking. The extended inception phase was necessary to set up the programme's complex governance structure and to hire staff including NPCs across programming countries. The inception phase also included extensive stakeholder consultation, the execution of several baseline studies, as well as the retrofitting of the programme design and results framework to align with the Spotlight Initiative. In addition, it took time for the programme to secure the necessary stakeholder buy-in and engagement which, as discussed in Finding #1, was challenging due to pre-existing discriminatory attitudes and poor understanding of the unique vulnerabilities of WMWs. There were also some delays in required government clearances to operate in some of the programming countries such as Lao PDR and Brunei Darussalam. Indeed, approval was never fully granted by the Brunei Darussalam Government for SAF to conduct full-scale programming in the country. While the extended inception phase was certainly necessary, it reduced the programme implementation phase by three months.

The SAF Programme was implemented throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. While it was able to execute in-person activities during the Inception Phase, activities had to be moved online and were severely hampered from early 2020 until the end of 2022 by government-mandated lockdowns, restrictions around in-person gatherings, and the diverted focus among partners and stakeholders away from SAF programming priorities towards a COVID-19 crisis response, as explained in Finding #4.

Survey results indicate that a large majority (75 per cent) of current and former NPCs as well as 75 per cent of current and former regional level SAF staff felt that the programme experienced delays. While many NPCs attributed delays to the Covid-19 pandemic, other reasons noted were change of staff; difficult handovers and training of new staff, particularly in the case where the previous NPC left; excessive documentation required for implementing agreements; delay of international transfer of funds from Bangkok to country offices; and approval needed for any deviation from budgets. SAF staff based at the regional level attributed delays to the Covid-19 pandemic, challenging political environments, and delays at national level in implementing activities. The differing perspectives provide insight into the stakeholder experiences, with more nuanced and detailed insight from the national level pointing to challenges of a centralized programme.

As outlined in Figure 11 below, an analysis of programme spending reflects challenges in achieving a high delivery rate. Between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2022, the programme consistently improved its delivery rate from an initial 39.79% in 2018 to 90.56% in 2022 as the programme gradually generated momentum. Indeed, in 2022 once pandemic-era restrictions had been eased, the programme achieved a near full delivery rate. However, because of challenges to fully spend the allocated annual budgets due largely to delays caused by the inception phase and the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU provided a one-year extension until 31 December 2023 to further implement programming and spend the remaining USD 3,947,346. This extension was highly needed and helped to facilitate the achievement of results.

**Figure 11. Programme spending from 2018 year to 2023.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Annual Budget</b>	<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>Balance</b>	<b>Delivery Rate</b>
2018	\$3,715,138	\$1,478,098	\$2,237,040	39.79%
2019	\$6,597,855	\$4,190,707	\$2,407,148	63.52%
2020	\$6,462,673	\$4,642,873	\$1,819,800	71.84%
2021	\$6,212,514	\$5,165,992	\$1,046,522	83.15%
2022	\$6,382,407	\$5,779,811	\$602,596	90.56%
2023*	\$3,947,346	-	-	-

Source: <https://mptf.undp.org/fund/sif00>

\* Data on expenditures is not yet ready for the 2023 year.

Over the course of the programme, SAF experienced high levels of staff turnover at both the regional and national levels which also created delays and negatively impacted the programme’s ability to deliver on results. For instance, over the course of the programme, three different people filled the ILO NPC position in Malaysia as well as Myanmar while two people filled the ILO NPC position in both Lao PDR and Thailand. The only ILO NPCs that remained in their position throughout the entire SAF Programme were in the Philippines and Indonesia. UN Women also experienced high turnover among programming staff where three different people filled the UN Women NPC position in Cambodia while two different people filled the UN Women NPC position in Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

While it is impossible to know the exact reasons for staff turnover, NPCs mentioned during the Midterm Evaluation that they were suffering from exceptionally high workloads, especially in those in countries where there was only one NPC to represent both ILO and UN Women. Some current and/or former NPCs interviewed as part of the Final Evaluation also expressed frustration at a lack of autonomy given to NPCs by the regional SAF team to lead and execute national-level initiatives. This is in line with complaints made by some CSOs who felt the programming was sometimes top down and overly managed by the regional-level SAF team, as explained in Finding #2. There was also high turnover closer to the end of the programme when it was scheduled to end, suggesting that some staff may have left in pursuit of more stable longer-term contracts.

This high turnover caused gaps between NPCs and slowed in-country programming momentum as new NPCs had to be trained and brought up to speed on the programme. They also required

time to establish personal relationships with programme stakeholders and create the trust that is needed when working with WMWs. In several programming countries, both government and CSO stakeholders complained that the programme had experienced such frequent staff turnover among NPCs that they didn't know who to contact any more from SAF to advance their work.

There were naturally some gaps between the hiring of NPCs. These gaps were caused by slow UN hiring practices as well as challenges in finding qualified individuals who could fill the complex NPC job description. NPCs played a multi-faced role that required strong technical expertise, excellent understanding of the national and local contexts, good leadership skills, and the ability to engage a wide range of stakeholders across government levels, throughout civil society, and with WMWs.

To keep the programming operational during these national level staffing gaps and to support newly appointed NPCs, the programme hired consultants and UN volunteers and relied on other UN Women and ILO colleagues at the national level. In addition, the regional programming team stepped in by facilitating national-level engagement with stakeholders and supporting the execution of important activities. Even though the regional level staff provided extensive support to NPCs, this support was still not seen as sufficient by the majority of current and past NPCs, with 63 per cent of NPC survey respondents indicating that “the [regional level] support I received was mostly sufficient but was also lacking at times”. While this regional level support kept the programme afloat during these challenging times, it also diverted some of the time, resources, and attention of regional level staff away from important regional level functions that include generating synergies across programming elements and countries, as further explained in Finding #6. It also put significant strain on the regional staff while they were also facing their own challenges with staff turnover. For instance, the UN Women Programme Specialist post that led SAF's UN Women programming was vacant from 4 November 2022 to 28 December 2022 and again from 1 July 2023 until the end of the programme on 31 December 2023. While colleagues, including the UN Women Regional Programme Specialist, have provided part-time support in an effort to fill this gap, the missing full-time position can still be felt across the workload of other programming staff.

The case studies identified some other factors that caused delays but that were more in the control of the programme staff. SAF staff at the regional level have emphasized the high UN-wide fiscal and reporting standards that programme partners, including implementing partners and grantees, must meet in order to execute UN programming. While these standards are important to ensure accountability, they limit the variety of implementing partners that UN agencies can engage with and sometimes result in delays. For instance, to ensure that projects executed by grantees were comprehensive and of good quality, grantees were required to submit detailed proposals to the SAF team outlining planned activities and results. While this is common practice, grantees complained that the feedback provided by the SAF team was often delayed and excessively detailed and would regularly include contradictory advice from different SAF programme staff or regional thematic specialists. For instance, a CSO working with WMWs at the grassroots level explained that after receiving funding for one year, it submitted a proposal for an extension. However, the feedback provided by the SAF team was so detailed and delayed that

even though the CSO revised the proposal accordingly, there wasn't enough time left to execute the programming and the extension was therefore denied.

Grantees were also required to submit revised proposals if they needed to modify their projects in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While this is also standard practice, grantees expressed frustration at the extensive amount of time required for the SAF programme to approve revised proposals and, again, the amount of feedback provided on proposal revisions. While substantial feedback can often strengthen the quality of a product, the level of feedback needs to be reasonable, consolidated, and provided in a timely fashion in order to avoid programming delays. There also needs to be greater flexibility built into processes to revise existing initiatives that are less burdensome on grantees. In addition, some grantees at the grassroots level also explained that SAF funds for community-level programmes were often slow to be disbursed and could only be provided after activities had been completed. This was challenging for small CSOs who often do not have the financial means to assume the costs of programming before being reimbursed at the end. While UN programming such as the Safe and Fair Programme must follow both corporate and donor rules and regulations, grantees interviewed through the case studies suggested that these rules and regulations should be modified that so future UN programming can provide more financial resources up front to support the costs of activities. This kind of flexible financial support could also increase the number of small CSOs that could potentially work with the UN on future initiatives.

The delays outlined above resulted in somewhat of a fragmented programme implementation that hindered programming depth across grantees and implementing partners which limited the potential to generate synergies across programming elements. An analysis conducted by the evaluation team of contracts issued by SAF to its implementing partners revealed that the average length of a contract to a CSO implementing partner was 21 months (nearly 2 years)<sup>76</sup>. This is quite a short period for CSO implementing partners to achieve meaningful results. In addition, only five out of 22 CSO implementing partners were given a second contract that could build on previous results. Most grantees interviewed as part of case study interviews also complained of short contracts and limited time to implement programming and achieve meaningful results. Longer contracts to implementing partners provide an opportunity for programming to be deepened and scaled-up and for results to achieve synergies with other programming initiatives. While the SAF Programme has supported many promising initiatives, delays experienced by the SAF Programme and the short timeframe of several grants and implementing partner contracts have left many of these initiatives in need of support for further implementation, roll-out, and scale-up to generate the wide-spread impact that stakeholders are expecting from a well-resourced Spotlight Initiative programme.

***Finding #14: The Safe and Fair Programme invested considerably into its M&E system and regularly shared monitoring data with stakeholders. However, this required significant time and resources from implementing partners and NPCs, and disseminated monitoring data***

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<sup>76</sup> The evaluation team conducted an analysis of contract duration to CSO implementing partners based on available data. The analysis was based on information available for 22 out of 26 CSO implementing partners. All of these partners were contracted by the ILO. UN Women contracted CSO partners through grants. However, information on grants and grantee contracts was not available to inform the analysis.

***was most often at the activity and output level which limited its usefulness to key partners and decision-makers.***

As outlined in the Midterm Evaluation, the programme's M&E system generated a large amount of output-level data and was generally well designed, drawing on a results framework that includes baselines, targets, and progress indicators. Baseline and endline studies were also conducted along with an evaluability assessment during the Inception Phase that helped to strengthen the system. Recommendations made during the Midterm Evaluation to modify certain results indicators to better report on results have been implemented by the programme, thus contributing to its further strengthening. Indeed, survey results indicate that a large majority of current and former NPCs (75 per cent) felt the programme's M&E system was "good" or "excellent" with all NPCs agreeing that it was "adequate" or better. The programme has also been effective at regularly sharing monitoring data with stakeholders. This has been done through detailed and comprehensive annual reports shared with the Spotlight Initiative and European Union representatives as well as regular flash reports requested by the European Union that provide stakeholders with programme updates throughout the year.

As also explained in the Midterm Evaluation, a major weakness of the programme's results management and monitoring system is that it collects data largely at the activity and output level and does not have the necessary tools in place to track contributions towards higher-level outcome and impact results. The effects of this can be seen in the programme's annual reporting and flash reports which provide extensive detail on outputs and activities but that fail to communicate progress made towards higher-level results. Even though the annual reports include a section on capturing broader transformation across outcomes, as explained in the Midterm Evaluation, the programme's results framework lacks useful impact and outcome indicators that can demonstrate the programme's contributions towards higher-level results. While many programme stakeholders such as Resident Coordinators (RCs), EU country representatives, and government partners have expressed appreciation for the flash reports and have found them useful, some others have commented on how they find them to be too granular to understand the programme's overall successes, added-value, and contributions towards outcome and impact-level change. This suggests that the regular communication of results needs may need to be pitched at a higher level and further tailored to the specific needs and interests of programme stakeholders with the intention of communicating the progress being made towards outcome and impact-level change and towards informing decision-making.

As also explained in the Midterm Evaluation, most programme stakeholders and especially CSO implementing partners and grantees found the reporting requirements for the SAF Programme to be excessive and extremely time consuming. Through interviews as part of the Final Evaluation, CSO implementing partners and grantees explained that they were not only required to complete reporting templates every quarter but that they were also required to complete activity reports every month to inform the Flash Reports. This created a deep sense of fatigue and frustration across CSO partners.

In many cases, CSO partners didn't have the resources or capacities to engage in this level of reporting and often struggled to understand how to report in line with the programme



requirements. NPCs were then required to spend a considerable amount of their time and energy to support CSO partners and to build their capacities to report on results. This was particularly resource intensive since many CSO implementing partners had short contracts of less than a year in duration, as mentioned in Finding #13, which meant that frequent training and support was required from the NPCs to support new CSOs on how to report on results in line with the programme requirements.

### *5.5. Cross-Cutting Issues*

This section provides an assessment of the extent to which the Programme integrated the UN Women and ILO cross-cutting priorities of gender equality, equity, human rights, disability-inclusion and non-discrimination, social transformation (tripartism and social dialogue), and environmental sustainability throughout its programming.

***Finding #15: The Safe and Fair Programme integrated a strong women’s empowerment and survivor-centered approach throughout its initiatives, putting women at the center of programming and giving WMWs opportunities to strengthen their networks and use their voices to share their experiences and advocate for their interests.***

The Safe and Fair Programme developed knowledge products and provided technical assistance and capacity development support to duty-bearers to strengthen the integration of survivor-centered approaches throughout VAW prevention and response initiatives. This includes the integration of survivor-centered principles throughout SAF’s support for legislative and policy-level changes across programming countries as well as its technical and capacity development support to strengthen VAW services provision and referral systems. Integrating these principles has strengthened the quality of VAW prevention and responses by ensuring that women’s needs and priorities are front and center.

As highlighted in the Midterm Evaluation as a promising practice, the SAF Programme included numerous programming elements that empowered WMWs to engage in their own advocacy to advance their interests and priorities. This included facilitating dialogue between organisations that represent WMWs and government entities to give WMWs an opportunity to express their needs and concerns and to propose actions that could benefit them and advance the fulfillment of their rights. This can be seen in Malaysia where the programme supported the CSO Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor (PSWS) to organize dialogues between migrant worker representatives, the Malaysian Government, and relevant embassies to discuss issues ranging from labour rights to the challenges that migrant workers have faced as a result of COVID-19. These dialogues have helped the PSWS to file formal complaints and access redress and have improved labour attachés’ understanding of the need for consular and other forms of support provided by the embassies of countries of origin. Another example is in Thailand where the programme organized FGDs with Thai and Myanmar migrant women to discuss the challenges experienced by survivors of violence in accessing essential services. This information was then shared with the Department of Women’s Affairs and Family Development, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security as key inputs as part of considerations to draft an updated domestic violence law that

incorporates international human rights standards for survivor safety and perpetrator accountability for violence, and that centralizes the needs and experiences of survivors in Thailand.

The programme also offered opportunities for WMWs to document and share their experiences working abroad to raise community awareness of the challenges that they face and the important contributions that they make both in countries of destination and origin. For instance, the programme designed and implemented a Participatory Photography initiative in Cambodia where WMWs were encouraged to take pictures to document their migration experience, which were then shared with the wider community through an empowering photo exhibition.

WMWs who participated in peer support networks across migrant worker communities in countries of origin who were interviewed through case studies explained that they felt as though their personal empowerment and self-confidence were also increased. Peer support networks were established through SAF-supported projects where WMWs who had returned to their communities of origin as well as other female community members were engaged to facilitate safe labour migration information-sessions across migrant worker communities. Engaging women to become peer educators was not only an effective strategy to increase the quantity of information-sessions that could be provided but also gave women an opportunity to speak in public, work together, and contribute towards something meaningful that will serve their communities. WMWs interviewed as part of the case studies explained how working with the peer support networks increased their self-confidence and gave them a strong sense of empowerment.

The SAF Programme also invested in supporting WMW organizing through informal WMW unions and associations across programming countries as a key strategy to reduce violence and harassment faced by women and achieve gender equality and empowerment. As explained in the Midterm Evaluation, at the end of 2019, as an unexpected result of trainings, outreach and meetings supported by SAF, a core group of Indonesian migrant domestic workers in Malaysia established an Indonesian migrant domestic workers' network to address specific problems, including violence, that result due to their intersecting identities as migrants, domestic workers, and women. After a year of operation, the domestic workers network became an organization in December 2020 with 90 members called Persatuan Pekerja Rumah Tangga Indonesia Migran (PERTIMIG) and was recognized as a good practice by the UN Network on Migration in 2022. In 2021, the Indonesian domestic workers group IPPMI was established in Singapore with support from SAF. Since then, the SAF programme has supported PERTIMIG and IPPMI to improve their institutional capacity to carry out activities and advocacy, build their membership bases, and to achieve long-term sustainability. Support provided by SAF to facilitate WMW organizing led to the establishment of PINAY, a transnational trade union for Filipino domestic and care workers in the Philippines; five local trade unions (under KSBSI) and nine trade union-supported local associations for women migrant workers in Indonesia; and a local network group for returnee women migrant workers in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The programme also supported the International Domestic Workers' Federation (IDWF) to develop the leadership capacity of migrant domestic workers to reach out to, build support among, and organize their peer groups.

***Finding #16: The Safe and Fair Programme made some important progress in advancing the rights of particularly vulnerable groups of WMWs including undocumented WMWs, domestic workers, LGBTIQ+ migrant workers. At the same time, the needs of other vulnerable sub-groups of migrant workers including those facing climate change crises and those with disabilities were not directly addressed within the programme design.***

The Safe and Fair Programme integrated a strong human rights approach into its programming by advocating for the inclusion of all migrant workers despite their legal migratory status to be protected by government legislation and policies and to receive full and equitable access to services. Examples of this include in Thailand where, with technical support from SAF, the Ministry of Justice amended the policy and regulation under the Damages for the Injured Person and Compensations and Expenses for the Accused in the Criminal Case Act B.E 2544 (2001) to ensure that compensation could be provided to any migrant worker regardless of their migration status. SAF also worked with its civil society partners in Thailand in advocating for the rights of all WMWs who have experienced violence, regardless of their immigration status. This has resulted in an improved understanding among officials of the need to compensate migrant workers subjected to violence regardless of their immigration status, and also paved the way for new cooperation opportunities with the Royal Thai Police, the National Human Rights Commission, and relevant line departments related to child and women protection, anti-human trafficking, and fisheries on ending violence against WMWs and gender-responsive police services for WMWs. In fact, increased collaboration between stakeholders led to the signing of an MOU between CSOs, the police and justice services, and health services providers in Mae Sot to strengthen GBV responses and services to all women, including undocumented WMWs.

As explained in Finding #15, the SAF programme made a concerted effort to support domestic workers due to their particularly precarious working conditions. Domestic work is often not viewed as a profession and therefore domestic workers are typically excluded from labour laws that protect migrant workers. They also lack access to formal workers' rights protections and are often prohibited from joining official unions. The SAF programme supported domestic workers by advocating for their inclusion across labour migration and ERAW policies and legislation. In Malaysia and the Philippines, the programme also supported women migrant domestic workers to engage in policy advocacy for labour reform. In addition, the programme provided technical support for policy initiatives that specifically targeted the protection of the rights of domestic workers such as the Quezon City Draft Memorandum of Agreement with the United Domestic Workers of the Philippines to deepen the MOA provisions on gender, ERAW, WMW's rights and representation, and social dialogue with domestic workers.

The programme also partnered with the ASEAN Trade Unions Council (ATUC) to utilize the publication *Organizing Women Migrant Workers: Manual for Trade Unionists in ASEAN* to further build the capacity of ATUC affiliates, including to identify strategies to further organize migrant domestic workers. See Finding #15 for information on how the programme supported the establishment and capacity development of migrant worker networks across Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Lao PDR. The programme also supported the strengthening of leadership capacities of migrant domestic worker leaders to improve their skills in conducting outreach,

organizing other migrant workers, and building their understanding of the policy frameworks governing migrant domestic workers' lives and work in countries of destination such as Malaysia and Singapore. In addition, some migrant domestic worker leaders learned valuable skills on how to carry out case-management, manage their organizations, and develop digital literacy to engage with the public.

While LGBTIQ+ migrant workers are particularly vulnerable groups of migrant workers, very few studies have been conducted to understand their unique vulnerabilities, needs, and priorities. To fill this gap and support LGBTIQ+ migrant workers, the SAF Programme commissioned a research piece on the experiences and needs of LGBTIQ+ migrant workers across ASEAN countries. The piece entitled *A Beautiful but Very Heavy Jacket: The Experiences of Migrant Workers with Diverse SOGIE in ASEAN* created new evidence on the experiences of these migrant workers, which was widely appreciated by staff from other UN labour migration initiatives and will contribute towards more targeted support to this vulnerable sub-group in future programming. One of the recommendations from the study, which is now being implemented by the SAF programme in 2023, is to ensure that MRCs and migrant NGOs provide SOGIE-sensitive services to migrant workers.

As outlined above, the SAF Programme reflected strong integration of the leave no one behind (LNOB) principle by targeting the needs of undocumented migrant workers, domestic workers, and LGBTIQ+ migrant workers. However, its programme design did not include any work to specifically address the needs of vulnerable sub-groups of migrant workers who are experiencing climate change crises as well as those with physical and/or mental disabilities. While it is understandable that one programme may not be able to meet the needs of all sub-groups of vulnerable WMWs, mainstreaming climate change and disability inclusion principles throughout programming are priorities for both ILO and UN Women<sup>77</sup>.

The ASEAN region is one of the most vulnerable regions in the world to environmental degradation and climate change, which are increasingly becoming push factors that encourage outward labour migration. Migrant workers from communities affected by climate change are particularly vulnerable groups of migrant workers and require targeted support. However, very little is currently known about the labour migration and climate change nexus, especially the gendered dimension and how this affects WMWs. While SAF did some programming in migrant worker communities, there was no intentional targeting of migrant worker communities that are particularly vulnerable to climate change or interventions designed to support those WMWs migrating for environmental or climate change reasons.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities calls for the full and effective participation and inclusion of people with disabilities in society. This includes women

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<sup>77</sup> Environmental sustainability and disability inclusion are priorities for both ILO and UN Women based on the Agenda 2030 and the 2019 UN Disability Inclusion Strategy. In addition, the ILO Strategic Plan for 2018-2021 introduced environmental and climate sustainability as a cross-cutting priority. ILO's Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2020 – 2023 also requires all ILO programming to mainstream disability inclusion throughout its work. Even though some of these frameworks were implemented after the SAF Programme had been designed, the core principles still made part of the Agenda 2030.

who are currently excluded from labour migration opportunities. There are also women with disabilities who engage in labour migration but data on these women is nearly non-existent meaning that very little is known about their experiences, unique vulnerabilities, needs, and priorities. What is known is that women with disabilities are at a higher risk of experiencing violence than women without disabilities<sup>78</sup>, suggesting that this is an important sub-group for future EVAW labour migration programming to target.

***Finding #17: The Safe and Fair Programme has generated significant research and knowledge products and has increased the capacity of government and CSO partners to collect and use disaggregated data to better support the prevention and response of violence against WMWs.***

Under *Outcome 3: Data, knowledge and attitudes on the rights and contributions of WMWs are improved*, the Safe and Fair Programme made important contributions towards generating knowledge and disaggregated data on WMWs and the kinds of violence that they often experience. Prior to the SAF Programme, very few studies had been conducted to examine the issue of violence against WMWs and national data on violence against women migrant workers was largely patchy, unreliable, and/or non-existent. The programme contributed to filling this information gap by producing research studies and knowledge materials that included hands-on practical products as well as strengthening the capacity of government and CSO partners to better collect and use disaggregated data on violence against WMWs to support strengthened policy making and service provision.

The SAF Programme contributed substantially towards strengthening knowledge on WMWs and violence committed against them by producing 140 research studies and knowledge materials against a target of 50 as of 20 September 2023 (under output 3.1)<sup>79</sup>. ILO and UN Women effectively leveraged their technical expertise to produce several significant and well-received research pieces that include the *Study on Women Migrant Workers in Laws and Policies of ASEAN Member States*, the *Background Paper: Prevention of Gender-Based Violence and Harassment Against Women Migrant Workers in South and Southeast Asia*, and *Safe Technology for the Provision of Services to Women Migrant Workers at Risk of or Subject to Violence*, among others. Knowledge products generated by the programme were disseminated through meetings, conferences, and events as well as through the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative's knowledge management structure that includes a database, webinars, knowledge exchanges, and a mailing list, among others. Several of the knowledge products generated by the programme were translated into local languages to facilitate further dissemination and usage. There of course remains room to further disseminate these important products through future programming.

The programme also produced extensive practical knowledge products and hands-on materials to support its partners to better respond to the needs of WMWs. These include technical briefs,

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<sup>78</sup> Studies indicate that women with disabilities are sexually assaulted at a rate at least twice that of the general population of women. The Roeher Institute. 2004. "Violence against Women with Disabilities." Ottawa, Public Health Agency of Canada.

<sup>79</sup> SAF Cumulative Interim Results Report.

Many of these studies were translated by the SAF Programme into local languages to facilitate stakeholder usage.

such as the *Technical Brief on Coordination and Referral Mechanism for VAW and Migration in the Philippines*; protocols, such as the *Gender-responsive and Inclusive Protocols and Programming to Address the Gender- Differentiated Needs of Women During COVID-19*; practical guides such as *A Practical Guide: Developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for a Coordinated Response to Violence against Women, including women migrant workers*; and training tools such as the *Training Tool on the ILO-UN Women “Handbook: Addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work”*. The programme also produced media-friendly glossaries, posters, leaflets, and videos to transmit important messaging to its partners and stakeholders. These user-friendly tailored research products and communications tools helped stakeholders to effectively digest new information and use it to strengthen their service provision and support to WMWs.

The programme also strengthened the capacity of relevant ministries and national statistic offices to produce and apply policy-relevant official data and analysis on women’s labour migration and violence against women migrant workers. As of 30 September 2023, the programme had supported a 13 per cent increase in complete sex-disaggregated datasets produced by governments of labour migration statistics from 41 per cent to 54 per cent under output 3.2. While this was against a target of 61 per cent with no improvements made since 2020, as explained in the Midterm Evaluation, the programme faced challenges with respect to political will in certain programming countries to collect sex disaggregated labour data as well as Covid-19-related challenges that caused data collection activities in some countries to be stalled, further exacerbating challenges around collecting sex disaggregated data.

As a positive development, in 2019 the International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) was revised so that all tables require sex-disaggregation. Sex-disaggregated international labour migration statistics (ILMS) are a key source of information for evidence-based labour migration policy design and implementation. Every year, ASEAN Member States contribute national-level labour migration data to the ILOSTAT database on ILMS. To improve the collection, submission, and use of sex-disaggregated labour migration data, SAF supported national-level capacity-building on ILMS across ASEAN countries. For instance, through individual trainings in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, the Philippines and Viet Nam in 2022, SAF built the capacity of over 190 government officials and statisticians on aligning national definitions and methodologies with international ILMS standards and practices; on coordinating with other agencies that collect information about migrant workers; and on the collection and use of administrative data to develop a better analysis of national and migrant workers leaving and/or entering the country. The workshop in Brunei Darussalam was the first-ever ILMS-related training held for the country, and the Department of Economic Planning and Statistics used their new capacity to develop a detailed plan for coordinating their collection and submission of ILMS data. The programme also established a partnership with the General Statistics Office (GSO) in Vietnam to support the collection of labour migration statistical data that will be used to generate evidence for policy making.

The programme also supported strengthened disaggregated data collection and usage among CSOs and service providers across programming countries to better prevent and respond to violence against WMWs. In 2022, the programme provided capacity development support to 81 government officials (63 women) and 19 CSO representatives (17 women) to collect VAW

administrative data in a manner that would better facilitate data analysis with the aim of improving service provision. It also supported helplines such as the Child Helpline in Cambodia and the Women's Aid Organization (WAO) hotline in Malaysia to collect data on different kinds of violence committed against WMWs. In addition, the programme facilitated collaboration on disaggregated labour migration data collection and usage between CSOs and government officials. For instance, in Indonesia, the programme brought together 20 data specialists and VAW specialists from various government ministries (19 women) and four CSO representatives (2 women) to map existing data related to VAW, including WMWs, and identify opportunities and challenges in managing administrative data that are segregated across ministries.

### *5.6. Potential Impact*

This section provides an assessment of the extent to which results will likely contribute towards the Programme Goal of achieving safe and fair labour migration for all women in the ASEAN region.

***Finding #18: The Safe and Fair Programme has contributed towards making the labour migration journey of WMWs safer and fairer by advancing the integration of EAW into labour migration governance frameworks, increasing levels of understanding about WMWs among select stakeholders and improving access to services, and supporting WMWs as change agents. While the programme's focus on addressing structural and cultural barriers that hinder GEEW is aligned with gender transformative programming, transformative change that addresses the root causes of violence against WMWs requires greater investment to change social norms within migrant worker communities and across a woman's labour migration journey.***

The Midterm Evaluation discusses at great length the nature of the SAF Programme as gender transformative in its efforts to address structural barriers and social norms and attitudes that hinder gender equality by promoting fundamental change in attitudes, awareness, and policy across a complex grouping of ten countries. The Final Evaluation's Inception Report offers a definition of gender transformative change in the context of SAF's overall objective to achieve safe and fair migration for all women, as follows:

*The SAF Programme aims to influence societal attitudes, policies and practices at multiple levels within society and across ASEAN countries specific to women's labour migration experiences. This includes strengthened policies and laws that protect the rights of WMWs, improved access to services for WMWs, and more positive attitudes among a range of actors toward the positive contributions made by WMWs to both countries of origin and destination, while addressing ingrained and traditional norms around gender and women's roles in society. Going beyond a gender responsive approach, the SAF Programme aims for systems change across ten countries that transforms thinking, attitudes, and action among individuals and organizations, intending to ultimately challenge unequal power dynamics between women and men and result in a safe and fair labour experience for women migrant workers.*

There are multiple outcomes realized by SAF that contribute towards gender transformative change. The following outcomes realized by the programme to varying degrees are identified as contributing factors towards the programme's overall objective of safe and fair migration for all women.

### **Increased understanding and strengthened interconnections among people, networks, institutions, ideas, and movements as a result of programming efforts**

SAF successfully built capacity and empowered a range of stakeholders, including service providers, government officials, women's networks and CSOs. These partners all have furthered their understanding and capacity to address the needs of WMWs and many have expressed their interest and commitment to continue doing so. SAFs support of a diverse approach to outreach to WMWs through multiple types of venues and means has successfully given partners the opportunity to experiment and gain experience engaging with WMWs. Many SAF partners reflected on their learning during interviews, indicating increased awareness about women's labour migration and VAW through participating in SAF.

Further, the relationships between service providers have been strengthened through the development of SOPs that have assisted in coordinating efforts to respond to WMW's needs and provide assistance. The endline study addressed the profound and far-reaching impacts of developing and promoting SOPs with a strong focus on coordination. While immediate results may not always be visible, these initiatives effectively redirected efforts and discussions towards a more efficient coordination approach in the field. For instance, SOPs played a pivotal role in facilitating smoother interactions among government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and service providers. This streamlined communication and collaboration improved the processes for identifying and addressing issues related to violence against women, ultimately leading to enhanced support and protection mechanisms for women facing these challenges.<sup>80</sup>

The Programme had also had a direct positive impact in the lives of most WMWs who were interviewed due to their increased understanding of safe migration practices. The evaluation found evidence of those WMWs' experience and continued intent to share their learning with others, either with family and peers within their communities of origin or as part of a network advocating for change at the policy and influencing public opinion, particularly in support of domestic workers in the case of Malaysia. Those WMWs interviewed talked about and demonstrated their growing levels of awareness and understanding through their participation in networks with other WMWs and engagement in policy advocacy and campaign activities.

### **Degree to which WMW rights are institutionalized into revised or newly developed policies**

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<sup>80</sup> Violence against Women Migrant Workers in ASEAN: Endline Study of Quality Service Provision for Women Migrant Workers in ASEAN. Revised endline study report (draft), dated 10 October 2023.



The endline report, as discussed under Finding 11, identified SAF's support to 55 laws, policies and regulations on gender-sensitive labour migration governance in 8 countries across ASEAN. The greatest result was realized in those labour migration frameworks that were fully oriented to normative frameworks, from approximately 7 at baseline to 16 at endline. A slight decrease in those frameworks not oriented at all is significant, from 9 at baseline to 3 at endline, while less progress was made in addressing those frameworks partially oriented at baseline, with fewer slightly fewer at endline. The change represents progress toward the institutionalization of WMW rights in policies across ASEAN.

### **Degree to which WMWs are promoted as active change agents**

SAF has invested in building capacity of WMWs for multiple roles and purposes, including building organizing capacity, understanding how to serve as a member of an advocacy organization and participate in a campaign, learning public speaking skills and taking opportunities to speak out on their behalf, and learning about safe and fair migration and training peers. The support to existing networks of WMWs and the development of new ones across the ASEAN region has been effective in supporting WMWs as agents of change.

These outcomes achieved contribute toward greater levels of impact across the region in achieving gender transformative change. Continued work in furthering these outcomes would enable greater impact across the region. The evaluation identifies particular gaps in the SAF Programme's outcomes achieved that challenges a more cohesive and impactful approach toward gender transformative change. These include:

### **Degree to which the root causes of violence against WMWs and gender discrimination, including institutional and cultural barriers are addressed**

As explained in Finding #12, while the SAF Programme was generally successful at improving social norms regarding gender equality and women's empowerment across its programming partners, there was considerable room to further advance positive social norms change across migrant worker communities. This could have been done by consistently conducting dialogue sessions between women and men on gender equality principles and ending IPV when executing safe labour migration information sessions. The programme also invested only a limited amount of its budget under output 3.3 to changing cultural attitudes towards women migrant workers through public campaigns. Indeed, the programme did not include any results targets or budget lines that directly supported improving social norms on gender equality and women's rights at the community level and across a WMWs' labour migration journey. While addressing social norms can be a complex and costly endeavor, gender specialists interviewed as part of this evaluation confirmed that social norms work is essential to successfully address the root causes of VAW which are based on misconceptions that women are inferior to men.

### **Degree to which public attitudes have changed**

Component 3 was designed to address the generation and use of data and research studies as a means to raise awareness and support decision-making. Activities varied from supporting WMWs

as change agents to participate in regional and international forums on gender, and writing about their experience for online publication; bringing governmental and non-governmental actors together to share and build knowledge on the conditions of women's labour migration in ASEAN; and promoting the collection of sex-disaggregated statistics on labour migration and data on VAW.

Supporting WMW voice and involving them in speaking about their own life experiences was a valuable element of contributing toward changed attitudes among a range of actors. The emphasis on collecting accurate data was also an important element to the strategy. The generation of research projects was well received, although uneven with regard to their dissemination and use by the end of the programme's implementation period. Supporting sex disaggregation of national labour migration statistics was also supported among interested ministries in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. In Brunei, while capacity building in this area was very much appreciated, they were not yet prioritizing implementation of their learning at the time of the evaluation. By the end of 2022, 54 per cent of ASEAN countries submitted sex-disaggregated data to the ILOs ILMS Database, compared to 40 per cent in 2017 when SAF was designed.<sup>81</sup>

Finally, media partners were engaged across the region to implement both online and in person campaigns, aiming to change attitudes and behaviors towards WMWs, particularly among employers, recruiters, duty-bearers and youth groups. SAF estimates a total of 28,794,652 members of the public across ASEAN were contacted or interacted with information about VAW, trafficking and gender-based discrimination of WMWs through these campaigns. Other partners conducted such awareness-raising campaigns, including MRCs.

A baseline study was conducted by SAF in 2019 on public attitudes toward migrant workers in Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. The study aimed to assess changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices over time, with longitudinal comparison to a 2010 study. The researchers reported, based on a composite of answers to a survey of 15 questions on a 0-100 scale, a modest decline for migrant workers in all three countries. Despite the drop, Singapore in 2019 was the highest scoring country, an indication that support for migrant workers remained relatively stronger there than in Malaysia and Thailand. However, the results suggest that most people in all 3 countries have limited knowledge about migrant workers, hold many negative attitudes towards them, and are unwilling to engage in behaviour that would support migrants.<sup>82</sup>

The 2023 endline study used 15 questions from the 2019 survey, and found overall an improvement in knowledge, attitudes and practices in 9 questions among Thai respondents; a positive improvement in 7 statements among Singaporean respondents; and a positive improvement among Malaysian respondents in 8 statements as compared to the 2019 survey results. While the conclusion of positive improvement may be drawn, there is a lack of information on methods, including approach to sampling and margin of error. And, more importantly, from a gender transformative perspective, there was no reference to gender in the

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<sup>81</sup> SAF 2022 Annual Report

<sup>82</sup> UN Women (2019). Public attitudes towards migrant workers in Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.

questionnaire. Questions only referenced migrant workers. The first question may be the exception, “Domestic workers do not have the same work benefits as other workers”, given the vast majority of domestic workers are women. There was a slight increase in agreement with this statement among respondents from Thailand and from Malaysia, with a decrease among respondents from Singapore.<sup>83</sup>

The outcomes of Component 3 relay progress in working toward improved public attitudes and improved use of data and research, as well as the important support to WMW in sharing their experience through participating in programming events. Overall investments in this area of work by SAF are well intended as part of the overall design, but the amount of investment is limited in working toward gender transformative change.

### **Engagement of CSOs in networking and movement building, as a means of supporting greater change, either through their own advocacy activities or in support to WMWs as change agents**

The Safe and Fair Programme brought EVAW and labour migration actors together, yet due to programme design and planning occurring at the beginning only with little room to reflect and revise during the programme, only partners who were engaged with SAF in the first several years were able to participate and contribute. Partners who came onboard later in the programme were not fully aware of the SAF Programme as an overarching structure involving others with the potential for collaboration. While the SAF programme design focused on supporting movement building among WMW networks, and ways to support their empowerment and voice in various fora, including speaking events and blogs both nationally and regionally, there was not ongoing emphasis in supporting all SAF partners, CSOs in particular, to participate and support this movement building, beyond what the partnership agreement specified. In addition to programme design, the turnover in NPCs was a contributing factor to this missed opportunity of generating greater momentum toward transformative change.

#### *5.7. Potential for Sustainability*

This section provides an assessment of the extent to which the programme results are likely to be sustainable into the future.

***Finding #19: Of the major outcomes achieved by the Safe and Fair Programme in enabling safer and fairer migration for WMWs across ASEAN, elements of sustainability include government buy-in and institutional strengthening as part of the systems level work in advancing policy change and supporting partners on their operationalization. Challenges to sustainability include the fragmented nature of programming and the inability to further develop many initiatives that are still in their infancy, as well as the limited investment in work on changing attitudes under Outcome 3.***

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<sup>83</sup> SAF Cumulative Report

Several aspects of SAF's programmatic approach supports the sustainability of outcomes achieved. These include:

### **Institutional strengthening as an approach and government buy-in achieved**

Overall, SAF's objectives were in alignment with ASEAN priorities as well as with the policies of governments across the region. SAF's advocacy and capacity building support to governments resulted in greater numbers of policies further adapted and revised to reflect normative frameworks in support of safe and fair migration for WMWs. The use of SOPs was extensive, in support of enabling improved access to services for WMWs, which has a high probability of being sustained due to their development and operationalization in a participatory manner. Further, the development and adoption of guidelines and operation manuals by government partners and other service providers, including MRCs across the region, promoted greater levels of sustainability, particularly when based on SAF research and evidence generated, as demonstrated in the case of SAF partner Thailand Development Research Institute's (TDRI) support to the Ministry of Labor in Thailand.

***Box 2: Well-targeted capacity building informed by evidence in Thailand:***

*Support to institutional strengthening by SAF was also well targeted in meeting needs, as in the case of support to the Ministry of Labor in Thailand. SAF CSO partner Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) revised the Ministry of Labor's labor inspection manual, based on findings of their 2019 research on sexual harassment against WMWs in the workplace, entitled "Who's going to believe us?". This evidence-based support to revision of their manual led to training staff on its use at the MOL's Department of Labor Protection and Welfare. Another finding of the study identified the high level of risk for WMWs during recruitment and obtaining paperwork. The research again informed TDRI's training the officer at the Department of Employment who has the opportunity to see employers together with migrant workers in their offices and ensure that documents are in compliance with the law. Officers were trained on identifying any discomfort by WMWs in their offices.*

SAF's achievement at the policy level in advancing integration of EAW into labour migration governance frameworks and migration in VAW frameworks conveys political commitment and ownership by government partners. The institutional strengthening accompanying this work promotes sustainable outcomes.

### **The use of a training of trainers approach and the engagement of WMW in programming**

SAF's approach to building capacity through training of trainers enabled reach across the community level, as well as promoted self-reliance among civil society and workers' organizations in furthering their capacity to continue supporting WMWs and other stakeholders within their communities. SAF's partnership with the NGO Atikha was effective in promoting the capacity of 154 personnel from 20 frontline service providers in Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore on financial literacy, who then trained WMWs and their families with their new knowledge.

The training of trainers approach also was significant for Myanmar, particularly during the political crisis, as it enabled CSO partners to come together to learn and receive information, as well as network in a difficult political environment. The SAF Programme, together with other ILO migration projects in Myanmar, built the capacity of 20 civil society partners to provide direct services to migrant workers and their families in communities of origin. Other CSO partners were also trained in migration policies and departure processes, who then trained women and community members within origin communities. The approach in Myanmar contributed to a momentum of civil society engagement and learning through supporting the furthering of greater capacity levels. Building capacity of WMWs as trainers and information providers was a particularly sustainable approach. Enhancing their knowledge and skills to train others, providing them with a role within their community, and enabling the application of their new learning not only helped build understanding among their peers but built the capacity of the trained peer migrant.

At the same time, there were several aspects of SAF programming that challenged sustained outcomes. These include:

### **Fragmented nature of programming at the national level**

Many initiatives began late under SAF, and as a result the partnership and engagement involving partners from the start to planning and coordinate a cohesive area of work at the national level was not in place. The result was some partners who did not understand the possible connections and synergies they could have been a part of in maximizing their own impact under SAF. This fragmentation at the national level was also due to significant turnover in NPCs and the uneven coordination effort with partners in countries such as Malaysia, particularly after the departure of the first NPC. Further, as these partners began late, more time and investment would assist in making the outcomes of their work more sustained. An example of such partnerships is AIBD in Malaysia.

### **The limited investment in changing attitudes under Outcome 3 did not promote sustainable programming**

The ambitious objective of influencing societal attitudes toward migrants, particularly WMWs, is a long-term goal requiring significant investment. While the KAP longitudinal study indicates a small positive change in societal attitudes has occurred, it would be inappropriate to conclude this is conclusive evidence until more studies are done. SAF's focus on supporting the collection of sex-disaggregated data, its generation of research studies, and its support to media all are essential elements in working toward this objective, yet more significant and ongoing investment is needed to bring out sustained change.

### **Overall weak institutional capacity and lack of resources**

The SAF Programme successfully addressed the institutional level through support to policy revision and capacity building, yet a far greater need exists beyond enabling capacity and

supporting policy, which impacts both quality and access of services. Healthcare professionals interviewed in Thailand, for example, explained that they are very overworked and cannot provide enough psychosocial services to meet the needs of women, including WMWs. They explained that while they were appreciative of receiving SAF support for executing specific activities, the actual healthcare team needs to receive more support for human resources capacity to have the necessary personnel in place to actually execute the activities that receive donor funding. Donors do not want to fund staff positions since it creates a reliance on donor funding, but it is not possible for service providers to implement donor-funded activities without additional capacity support in terms for more human resources.

Another example of this is SAF's support to a revised manual and training of officials at the Thai Ministry of Labor's Department of Labor Protection and Welfare and Department of Employment described above. While the labor inspectorate manual was revised and training of labor officers informed by evidence was implemented successfully and was well received by the Ministry of Labor, challenges with institutional investment and the sustainability of capacity building implemented under SAF remain. There is serious underinvestment by the government, demonstrated by the limited numbers of labor inspectorates on staff to cover the country. Further, there is frequent movement of staff into other positions, which demonstrates a need for ongoing training of officials. In this instance, there was not agreement to train at a more senior level to support greater capacity within the departments. Due to transitions, the continuation of the initiative was reportedly delayed.

## Section VI: Good Practices and Lessons Learned

Good practices are successful approaches that have facilitated the achievement of results while lessons learned are insights that contribute to institutional knowledge and that can be applied to similar initiatives in other contexts. The evaluation has identified the following good practices and lessons learned derived from the evaluation findings that can inform future labour migration and EAW programming.

### **Good Practices:**

1. ***Providing information and establishing connections with WMWs before violence occurs:*** The second half of the SAF Programme included additional programming at the community level to provide WMWs who may be interested in migrating with information on safe labour migration practices and VAW services. It is easier and more effective to provide this information before a woman engages in labour migration so that she can make informed choices about how to do so safely. It is also much easier to reach WMWs with information on VAW services before they depart than once they are working abroad and may have already experienced forms of violence. This investment at the community level shows great potential and warrants further scale-up. *(Derived from findings 3, 9, and 10)*
2. ***Supporting WMW peer networks:*** The SAF Programme developed and effectively used peer networks of WMWs to share information on safe labour migration practices and access to VAW services across migrant worker communities in countries of origin. Forming peer networks of WMWs increased the programme's capacity to reach more migrant worker communities while also providing an opportunity for WMWs to develop their self-confidence and an outlet to engage in meaningful work that promotes the sustainable development of their communities and the safety of their community members. *(Derived from finding 3)*
3. ***Fostering institutional capacity strengthening:*** The SAF Programme invested heavily on building institutional capacity across governments and service providers by strengthening policies and procedures to better protect the rights of WMWs and increase their access to VAW services. This includes the development of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between duty-bearers who were not used to working together as well as standard operating procedures (SOPs) to provide concrete steps to guide future institutional work. Focusing its work at the institutional level as opposed to the individual level has helped to promote the sustainability of results while also mitigating the challenges faced by high government staff turnover. *(Derived from findings 3, 9, 11, and 19)*
4. ***Encouraging equality in cross-ministerial collaboration:*** Through the NPACs, the SAF Programme successfully brought together national-level ministries working on labour rights as well as those working on women's rights to collaboratively advance the rights of WMWs and reduce their exposure to exploitation and violence. In many cases,

these ministries co-led the NPAC, which was a unique opportunity for both ministries to work together as equal partners. Most often, the ministries of labour are better financed and have more influence. Therefore, the equal working relationship fostered by the SAF Programme helped to elevate the status of the ministries working on women's rights, which provided these ministries with important opportunities to advance their priorities and objectives. *(Derived from finding 1)*

5. ***Integrating women's empowerment principles into the programme design:*** The SAF Programme deliberately encouraged the empowerment of WMWs by providing opportunities for them to express themselves, organize, and advocate for their rights. Indeed, the programme facilitated opportunities for WMWs and organisations that represent them to engage in dialogue with duty-bearers including government representatives and service providers to express their needs, priorities, and future visions and to influence policies and actions that affect them. In addition, the programme developed specific initiatives such as the photography exhibition in Cambodia where WMWs could share their experiences working abroad and feel valued for their hard work. The programme also supported WMWs to organize by providing capacity development support to informal WMW networks and unions. These programming initiatives were empowering for WMWs and helped them to become more central players in the promotion of their rights. *(Derived from finding 15)*
6. ***Harnessing technology to advance WMW rights:*** The SAF Programme made good use of technological opportunities to engage with WMWs through initiatives such as the My Journey App in Cambodia where WMWs could access information on safe labour migration practices and VAW services, as well as directly reach out for support when needed. The app has the potential for continued roll-out, scale-up, and replication in other countries. *(Derived from findings 3 and 9)*
7. ***Supporting integrated service provision:*** The SAF programme supported the integration of the Gender Responsive Migrant Worker Resources Center (MRC) and the One- Roof Integrated Services (LTSA) in Indonesia, which provided migrant workers with ease of access, all under one roof, to comprehensive gender-responsive services, including information, pre-employment consultations, trainings for prospective migrants, psycho-social counselling service, case handling, and legal aid. For WMWs who have experienced violence and abuse, the integration of the women's crisis centre under the One-Roof service means that they can access services and counselling without delay. *(Derived from finding 9)*
8. ***Supporting MRCs that promote the sustainable development of migrant worker communities:*** The SAF Programme provided extensive support to MRCs across programming countries to strengthen gender-responsive service provision. In some cases, the programme supported MRCs who use a full migration paradigm that includes support for both migrant workers as well as the families and community members left behind. This was the case with the Quezon City Public Employment Services Office (PESO) who administers an MRC in the Philippines where the SAF Programme supported the development of its five-year strategic plan that integrates support for WMW family members and community members so that the benefits of migration are



better used to support the community's long-term sustainable development. *(Derived from finding 3)*

### **Lessons Learned:**

- 1. *Development programmes need support from donors to adjust their design and results frameworks to more flexibility respond to the needs of rights holders when faced with large-scale crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.*** While the SAF Programme adjusted its programming approaches to respond to emerging needs of WMWs and challenges raised by the pandemic, its response was limited by a lack of flexibility to modify the programme design and results framework. The programme likely could have provided a more comprehensive response had new outputs or even outcomes been created to respond to a crisis of this magnitude. However, doing so would have required greater flexibility on the part of the programme donor. *(Derived from finding 4)*
- 2. *Information sessions on safe labour migration practices in migrant worker communities are excellent opportunities to bring together community members, including women and men, to engage in dialogue on gender equality and social norms change, including intimate partner violence (IPV).*** In some migrant worker communities, the SAF Programme brought together both women and men to learn about safe labour migration practices and access to VAW services. Some of these sessions also touched upon social norms surrounding gender equality and VAW, including IPV. Interviews with WMWs suggest that these sessions positively contributed to notable decreases in IPV within the community. This indicates that community discussion forums can be an excellent entry point to improve social norms regarding gender equality and VAW. *(Derived from findings 3 and 12)*
- 3. *Family members of WMWs, community members, and local authorities require capacity support to understand the unique vulnerabilities facing WMWs and how to best support a WMW in need if they are to be effective first-responders and if the linkage between migrant worker communities and access to support services is to be strengthened.*** During its second half, the SAF Programme provided increased information to the families and communities of WMWs as well as local authorities on safe migration practices and how to help a WMW to receive support and services if she experiences exploitation or violence while working in a destination country. This was very useful and warrants future scale-up since it strengthened the capacities of families and communities of WMWs as first responders as well as the link between communities and access to services that can help a WMW when in need. *(Derived from finding 3)*
- 4. *Development programming that promotes gender equality can achieve greater impact when it intentionally includes support to further integrate GE principles into the work of other UN entities who are executing similar programming.*** The SAF Programme could have achieved greater and more wide-spread impact had it dedicated more financial resources and staff time to intentionally integrate its information products and messaging into other UN programming working on safe labour migration in the region. This includes integrating information on the unique

needs and priorities of WMWs, including access to VAW services, into the pre-departure orientation (PDO) sessions and post arrival orientation (PAO) sessions supported by other UN agencies, such as the IOM across the region. Over the course of the SAF Programme, other UN agencies were providing PDO and PAO sessions to migrant workers with limited tools and information focused on WMWs. While it can be challenging to collaborate with other UN programmes and it requires willingness from both parties to work together, there were missed opportunities to integrate SAF's products and expertise into these existing initiatives which could have generated more wide-scale impact. *(Derived from finding 5)*

5. ***WMWs require support to continue working legally in destination countries or to re-migrate through regular channels when their employment contracts (and corresponding work visas) are about to expire. Without this support, they risk losing their legal status and becoming more vulnerable to exploitation and violence.*** There are significant opportunity costs, expenses, and inconvenience involved for WMWs to return to their countries of origin to re-migrate through regular channels once their employment contracts and work visas have come to an end. Because of this, many WMWs choose to stay working in the country of destination past the contract expiration date. This results in a loss of legal status which makes them more vulnerable to exploitation and violence. WMWs require support to save enough money to return to their country of origin to re-migrate through regular migration channels as well as advocacy on the part of the UN and its partners to make reapplications easier, faster, and less costly. *(Derived from finding 3)*
  
6. ***Communications and advocacy messaging that call for service provision to all women is an effective strategy to gain support for the inclusion of undocumented WMWs into policies and service provision.*** The SAF Programme effectively drew on international human rights standards that require the protection of all people regardless of their legal status when it supported the strengthening of government laws, policies, and service provision to WMWs. By focusing on the need to include all women regardless of their legal status, the programme was able to support government partners to increase legal protections and access to services for irregular and undocumented WMWs. Drawing on international human rights standards and focusing on the inclusion of all women is an effective strategy<sup>69</sup> to advance the rights of undocumented workers that could be applied to programming in other contexts. *(Derived from finding 16)*
  
7. ***To ensure a reasonable workload and to facilitate the sharing of partners, a joint programme the size and magnitude of the SAF Programme requires national staff members from both UN agencies to implement programming in each programming country.*** The SAF Programme demonstrated that the workload was overly demanding when there was only one NPC in a programming country representing both UN agencies. In particular, it was difficult for the NPC to learn the operating requirements of the other UN agency and to engage with partners from across both agencies. Having only one NPC to represent both UN agencies also made it more difficult for partners to understand how each agency was involved in the

programme, thus limiting the potential to share partners and expand each agency's partnership base through the joint programme. *(Derived from findings 7 and 13)*

- 8. *Engaging stakeholders through ongoing consultative processes like the Safe and Fair Programme's RPAC, NPACs, and CSO Reference Group throughout the course of programme implementation is helpful to promote stakeholder ownership and buy-in. However, flexible programming mechanisms must be in place to use stakeholder feedback to make improvements to the programme design and implementation approaches for these processes to be truly meaningful for stakeholders.*** The SAF and Fair Programme effectively used the RPAC, NPACs, and CSO Reference Group to keep stakeholders engaged in the programme throughout its implementation. However, this engagement would have been more meaningful to stakeholders and could have had a more positive impact on programming had the programme included more flexible programming mechanisms to use stakeholder feedback to make improvements to the programme design and implementation approaches. *(Derived from finding 2 and 7)*

## Section VII: Conclusions

- 1. *The SAF Programme has made considerable advancements in supporting the rights of WMWs while preventing and addressing multiple forms of violence that is often committed against them.*** The SAF Programme effectively brought together for the first time EAW and labour migration actors across the ASEAN region. Its main achievements include addressing both policy and service provision across the region, effectively supporting the coordination of service provider partners and their capacity to meet the needs of migrant women workers in both origin and destination countries. *(Derived from findings 1, 3, 9 and 11).*
- 2. *The SAF Programme has set a strong foundation for future EAW and labour migration programming where many of the programme's initiatives have the potential to be further rolled-out, scaled-up, or replicated to achieve more widespread impact.*** There was limited investment in activities under Component 3, for example, yet with the outputs achieved, there exist opportunities for greater impact, including support to the greater dissemination of knowledge products already produced. These products can be further used for both stakeholder learning and programme development under SAF. Another area of continued work is further experimenting to identify approaches to effectively target particularly vulnerable moments in the WMW migration journey, building on the extensive experience now gained by the programme in diverse country contexts. At an operational level, contracting partners over a longer time period would provide opportunity for programming to be deepened and scaled-up for greater results through achieving more synergy with other programming initiatives.

While the SAF Programme made effective and efficient use of funds to hire highly needed NPCs across programming countries, a programme of this size and complexity required NPC representatives from both UN agencies in each programming country.

Those countries that did not have a representative from each UN agency struggled to promote the sharing of partners across UN implementing agencies and to achieve sufficient capacity to fully implement programming. Sufficient investment in human resources to manage this kind of programming at the country and regional levels will be necessary regardless of the size of future EAW and labour migration programmes.

Future programmes that may not have access to the same degree of funding that was provided to the SAF Programme may be best placed to focus on further rolling-out, scaling-up, and replicating successful initiatives already developed under the SAF Programme as opposed to investing significant time, effort, and financial resources into developing new initiatives, expanding programming scope, and securing engagement and buy-in among new groups of stakeholders who may require significant sensitization efforts. In addition, smaller future EAW and labour migration programming may be able to increase its efficiency by providing larger and longer grants to a smaller number of implementing partners so as to reduce the amount of UN staff time required to train and support newly engaged implementing partners. *(Derived from findings 9, 12, 13, 18 and 19)*

3. ***There is significant opportunity for future labour migration and EAW programming to address the root causes of VAW through social norms change.*** While the SAF Programme was generally successful at improving social norms regarding gender equality and women's empowerment across its programming partners, there was less work done at the community level. There is considerable room to further advance positive social norms change across migrant worker communities, to include conducting dialogue sessions between women and men on gender equality principles and ending IPV when delivering safe labour migration information sessions. *(Derived from finding 12).*
4. ***While the programme focused on supporting a wide variety of labour migration and EAW stakeholders across a WMW's labour migration journey, more programming emphasis is needed to improve the quality and availability of VAW services, engage employers, facilitate safe re-migration, and support reintegration and the sustainable development of migrant worker communities.*** The SAF Programme successfully supported partners in outreach to WMWs across the labour migration journey, ensuring gender sensitive programming and supporting their efforts in developing sound referral systems. SAF was also particularly effective in building awareness and understanding about safe and fair migration among WMWs. The programme was less effective in targeting several more challenging and vulnerable moments during a WMW's migration journey, including loss of regular migration status in countries of destination, and during the reintegration process. *(Derived from findings 9 and 11).*
5. ***The SAF Programme made notable advancements in supporting the rights of undocumented WMWs and domestic workers. To advance the SDGs and fully align with the leave no one behind principle, future labour migration and EAW programming will need to be designed to address the unique need, priorities, and***

***vulnerabilities of other sub-groups of particularly vulnerable WMWs, including LGBTIQ+ migrant workers, WMWs with disabilities, and WMWs from climate-affected communities.*** The SAF Programme effectively supported domestic workers at both the individual and organizational level through support for their advocacy efforts. The programme's integration of a strong women's empowerment approach throughout its initiatives was evident in its work with domestic workers. SAF support to their advocacy campaigns, opportunities for speaking publicly about their experience, and writing blogs were evident of the value SAF placed on their voices to be heard. Progress at the policy level in Thailand regarding undocumented WMWs was also a significant gain. SAF worked with civil society partners in Thailand to advocate for the rights of all WMWs who have experienced violence, regardless of their immigration status, resulting in improved understanding among officials of the need to compensate all migrant workers subject to violence. In furthering programming for other vulnerable sub-groups of WMWs, to more fully align the programme with the leave no one behind principle, SAF can build upon some of the evidence generated through research completed under SAF. *(Derived from findings 16 and 17).*

- 6. Future regional joint programming requires a more cohesive design that further encourages joint work and the sharing of partners; that can be flexibly modified to respond to contextual changes and stakeholder feedback; that empowers national stakeholders to take leadership roles; that fosters regional synergies and cross-border work including that with other UN entities; and that uses MEL systems that are responsive to the needs and priorities of programming stakeholders.*** While SAF was effectively aligned with other labour migration programming and was cohesive in its approach at the regional level in cooperation with ASEAN, there were some missed opportunities for SAF to further mainstream EAW into regional fora and other UN programming to develop a stronger cohesive approach. The SAF Programme adjusted its programming approaches in response to the Covid-19 pandemic through provision of increased service provision, information and shifting activities online where feasible. Yet again, there was room for modification of the programme design and results framework to more fully respond to the most pressing needs of WMWs. Similarly, through greater flexibility in the programme design, stakeholders could have more actively participated in national and regional meetings to influence programme development and take on greater leadership in the programme. Another example is the programme's MEL system, which proved to be difficult for partners to participate in. At the operational level, there were also challenges with regard to staffing and coordination that challenged programme cohesion, often taking significant time away from regional level work by regional staff members to focus on national level work. A more cohesive One UN programmatic approach could help strengthen programming at the regional level by bringing in senior UN leadership at the country level to better support the regional team in engaging in cross-border and regional advocacy initiatives. The stronger senior UN leadership at the country level should also enable more cohesive national level programming. *(Derived from findings 6 and 7).*

## Section VIII: Recommendations

The following eight (8) recommendations stem from the evaluation findings and conclusions and are designed to strengthen future EAW and labour migration programming. Each one includes an overall strategic recommendation followed by operational recommendations. They are presented in order of priority, although many can be implemented simultaneously.

***Recommendation #1: Further invest time, resources, and strategic thinking to continue promoting the rights of WMWs and integrating EAW into labour migration laws, policies, programming, and training by further rolling-out, scaling-up, and replicating the successful programming elements that have been initiated under the Safe and Fair Programme.***

- Aligned with Conclusion #2
- Recommended timeline: 1 January 2024 – no end date
- High urgency, medium difficulty, high impact
- Directed to ILO, UN Women, and UNODC senior staff

*Rationale:* The SAF Programme had a short implementation period considering that it took time to set up such a large and complex initiative, engage stakeholders and secure stakeholder buy-in around a relatively new topic that addresses the intersection of VAW and labour migration, and overcome delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme has set a strong foundation for future programming in this area and has initiated many promising practices that require time and investment to further roll-out, scale-up, and replicate to achieve widespread impact.

### **To operationalize this recommendation:**

- Build on the relationships with government partners, employers' organisations, service providers, and CSOs established under the SAF Programme to continue supporting collaborative work across VAW and labour migration actors to strengthen policies and frameworks as well as VAW referral systems that protect the rights of and serve WMWs.
- Support the implementation of revised political frameworks, MOUs, and SOPs developed under the SAF Programme that protect the rights of WMWs and increase their access to services.
- Scale-up capacity development support to first responders so that they are equipped and capable to help WMWs who are experiencing exploitation or violence. This specifically includes family members of WMWs, community members, local leaders, embassies and consulates, and employers.
- Continue to support programming initiatives that directly empower WMWs and that support WMW organising as well as strengthen support for women's rights movement building.
- Continue to support governments and CSOs to collect and use disaggregated labour migration and EAW data (including data disaggregated by gender, type of violence, and sub-group of vulnerable WMW).

- Roll-out, scale-up, and replicate innovative initiatives developed under the Safe and Fair Programme such as the My Journey App in Cambodia.

***Recommendation #2: Advocate for increased investment among donors to support social norms work to end violence against women when designing labour migration and EAW programming to further address the root causes of violence against women.***

- Aligned with Conclusion #3
- Recommended timeline: 1 January 2024 – no end date
- High urgency, medium difficulty, high impact
- Directed to ILO and UN Women senior staff

*Rationale:* In order to address the root causes of VAW which stem from beliefs that women are inferior to men, future labour migration and EAW programming should include a stronger focus on changing social norms both at the community level and across actors who interact with WMWs throughout their labour migration journey.

**To operationalize this recommendation:**

- Share information with donors on the importance and potential benefits of including social norms work into EAW and labour migration programming as part of advocacy efforts to strengthen donor investment in social norms work that promotes GEEW. This investment should include sufficient financial resources as well as targeted efforts to design and implement strong social norms measurement tools.
- Use information-sharing sessions on safe labour migration practices in migrant worker communities as an entry point to bring women and men together to discuss gender equality concepts including ending IPV.
- Increase investment in changing attitudes towards WMWs and promoting gender equality concepts among government officials, first responders, service providers, youth groups, and potential perpetrators of violence. Greater investment may involve devoting more human resources at regional and national levels, as well as support to partners and investment in activities.

***Recommendation #3: Further promote the sustainable development<sup>74</sup> of migrant worker communities including the reintegration of WMWs as a strategy to end violence against women.***

- Aligned with Conclusion #4
- Recommended timeline: 1 January 2024 – no end date
- High urgency, medium difficulty, high impact
- Directed to ILO and UN Women senior staff

*Rationale:* For labour migration to contribute towards sustainable development in countries of origin, a greater focus is needed on supporting migrant worker communities as a whole and to helping WMWs effectively reintegrate into their communities upon return.

### **To operationalize this recommendation:**

- Provide financial literacy training and facilitate business generating opportunities to families and community members of WMWs to support the effective use of remittances in improving the sustainable development of migrant worker communities.
- Scale-up and further expand livelihoods support to WMWs, their families, and community members, which includes entrepreneurship training and opportunities as well as skills development.
- Continue to scale-up and further support skills recognition among WMWs so that the skills that they develop in destination countries can be recognized in their country of origin.
- Support MRCs to use a whole-of-community sustainable development approach that supports not only migrant workers but also their family and community members who are left behind.
- Implement community-based initiatives that challenge negative social views of WMWs who have left their communities to work abroad and provide accessible psychosocial support to help WMWs to socially reintegrate into their communities upon return.
- Support WMWs to care for their children when they are left behind in countries of origin or brought with them to countries of destination.

***Recommendation #4: Continue to strengthen holistic support to WMWs across their labour migration journey to protect and respond to VAW while investing in improvements in the quality and reach of services for WMWs including those who have experienced violence.***

- Aligned with Conclusion #4
- Recommended timeline: 1 January 2024 – no end date
- High urgency, medium difficulty, high impact
- Directed to ILO and UN Women senior staff

*Rationale:* Holistic programming is necessary to support WMWs across their labour migration journey from pre-migration to post-integration. While the SAF<sub>75</sub> Programme used a holistic approach, there are a number of areas where this programming requires strengthening. This includes ensuring that services for WMWs are of good quality, widely available, and easily accessible.

### **To operationalize this recommendation:**

- Continue to address incentives that WMWs face to migrate through irregular channels. This includes advocating among governments and recruitment agencies for faster processing times and reduced fees of visas and other paperwork.
- Partner with other UN agencies such as the WHO, UNFPA, and UNDP to increase the quality and availability of legal and health services available to women, including WMWs.



- Further engage employers to strengthen their capacities as first responders and improve the safety of work environments for WMWs.
- Provide financial savings and planning support to WMWs before their employment contract ends to facilitate a safe return to their country of origin to re-migrate through regular channels. In addition, advocate among governments to simplify the application process to re-migrate through regular channels.

***Recommendation #5: Continue to support the rights of undocumented WMWs and domestic workers while increasing programmatic focus on LGBTIQ+ migrant workers, WMWs with disabilities, and WMWs from climate-affected communities when designing and implementing EAW and labour migration programming.***

- Aligned with Conclusion #5
- Recommended timeline: 1 January 2024 – no end date
- High urgency, medium difficulty, high impact
- Directed to ILO and UN Women

*Rationale:* To advance the SDGs and leave no one behind, future EAW and labour migration programming must be designed to respond to the unique needs and vulnerabilities of particularly vulnerable sub-groups of WMWs. This includes but is not limited to undocumented WMWs, domestic workers, LGBTIQ+ migrant workers, WMWs with disabilities, and WMWs from climate-affected communities.

#### **To operationalize this recommendation:**

- Continue to use human rights frameworks and calls to support all women regardless of legal status as strategies to increase legal protections and service provision to undocumented WMWs.
- Continue initiatives to support the rights of domestic workers, including their organising.
- Draw on the Safe and Fair produced study *A Beautiful but Very Heavy Jacket: The Experiences of Migrant Workers with Diverse SOGIE in ASEAN* to design programming that targets the specific needs of LGBTIQ+ migrant workers.
- Collaborate with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and IOM who are working on the nexus between climate change and migration to design targeted programming to support WMWs affected by environmental issues and climate change.
- Include initiatives into future programming that support women with disabilities to engage in labour migration and that support the unique needs and vulnerabilities of WMWs with disabilities (both physical and cognitive).

***Recommendation #6: Include mechanisms that allow for more flexibility to modify the programme design and implementation approaches throughout EAW and labour migration programme implementation in response to stakeholder feedback and changes in operating context.***

- Aligned with Conclusion #6
- Recommended timeline: 1 January 2024 – no end date
- High urgency, low difficulty, medium impact
- Directed to ILO, UN Women, and UNODC senior staff

*Rationale:* To ensure that development programming remains responsive to stakeholder feedback and to important changes across the operating context, programmes require mechanisms to adjust the programme design and implementation approaches throughout the programme’s implementation.

**To operationalize this recommendation:**

- Work with donors during the programme proposal and design phases to build in flexibility to make modifications during implementation based on stakeholder feedback and important changes to the operating context. This will help to ensure that programming continues to be aligned with the changing needs and priorities of rights holders such as WMWs.
- Use stakeholder engagement platforms such as the Safe and Fair Programme’s RPAC, NPACs, and CSO Reference Group as opportunities to receive stakeholder feedback and implement suggested changes regarding programme design and implementation approaches. This will help to ensure that stakeholders, including women’s civil society, remain engaged throughout programme design and implementation.

***Recommendation #7: Ensure that future regional joint programming on EAW and labour migration is designed cohesively, empowers national-level leadership, encourages regional level cross-border work, and leverages potential synergies with other UN programming.***

- Aligned with Conclusion #6
- Recommended timeline: 1 January 2024 – no end date
- High urgency, high difficulty, high impact
- Directed to ILO, UN Women, and UNODC senior staff. 77

*Rationale:* To fully align with UN Reform principles and promote cohesive programming, joint programming should be designed holistically with UN agencies fully engaged across programming elements. It should also empower national-level leadership and generate synergies with other UN programming. The regional element of a regional programme particularly requires investment to generate regional synergies and promote cross-border work.

**To operationalize this recommendation:**

- Design future programming holistically with UN agencies fully engaged across programming elements. This includes ensuring that all UN agencies are accountable for promoting GEEW. UN agencies should jointly plan, report, and have ownership

over all programming results regardless of which agency is leading certain programming elements.

- Hire sufficient staff (ideally one representative from each UN agency) to support programming at the national level.
- Further engage and empower Country Office Representatives across programming countries to take a leadership role in fostering national-level stakeholder engagement and buy-in among programme stakeholders.
- Strengthen the strategic engagement of RCs as programming partners to facilitate greater programming collaboration with other UN agencies working across the region and to generate strengthened cross-border collaboration.
- Harness opportunities to expand each agency's partnership base by effectively sharing partners and directly engaging with the other agency's traditional partners.
- Further invest in the capacity of staff working at the regional level to develop regional-level synergies and foster cross-border collaboration among governments, service providers, and CSOs.
- Increase and scale-up opportunities for stakeholders from across countries to meet both virtually and in-person to strengthen their working relationships with the aim of generating increased cross-border collaboration and synergies.
- Include outputs in programming frameworks that reflect collaboration with other UN agencies across the region in an attempt to increase collaboration and generate synergies across UN programming. Specifically, generate outputs that capture efforts to increase the gender responsiveness of other UN labour migration programming across the region.
- Strengthen the collaboration between UN Women, ILO, and the UNODC by further engaging the UNODC in future ERAW and labour migration work and by providing funding to UNODC to execute programming activities.

***Recommendation #8: Strengthen future MEL systems in ERAW and labour migration programming to be more responsive to the needs of programming stakeholders, including women's civil society, by simplifying the reporting processes for implementing partners and designing communications products that are tailored to the specific needs of different stakeholder groups.***

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- Aligned with Conclusion #6
- Recommended timeline: 1 January 2024 – ongoing
- Medium urgency, low difficulty, medium impact
- Directed to ILO, UN Women, and UNODC senior staff

*Rationale:* Since MEL is an activity that requires the engagement of and collaboration with stakeholders and programming partners, including women's civil society, future MEL systems need to be more tailored to their specific realities and needs.

**To operationalize this recommendation:**

- Simplify the results reporting processes for implementing partners, including women's networks and civil society, by requiring less complex and less regular activity reports.
- Advocate among ILO and UN Women HQ as well as donors for more flexible financial and reporting requirements, including the possibility of providing cash advances to small-scale women's civil society groups to facilitate the implementation of programming.
- Design communications products that are tailored to the specific needs of different stakeholder groups and that clearly articulate the value-added of the programme as well as progress towards achieving outcome and impact-level results.
- Develop tools and systems to more systematically collect monitoring data after awareness-raising sessions to understand what concepts WMWs and members of their community have learned and what additional challenges at the institutional level need to be overcome to ensure that women engage in safe labour migration practices.