UN80 INITIATIVE | UNITED TO DELIVER

Executive Board Requests under the UN80 Initiative

Further evidence and analysis on both the merger scenario and on alternative options to enhance alignment, impact and efficiency

Deliverable – Operational Model

August 14, 2026

United Nations Population Fund

Supported by EY

Outline

Executive Summary

Purpose of this deliverable

As part of the UN80 Initiative, and building on the Strategic Merger Assessment, the Executive Boards requested further evidence on the operating-model implications of both the potential structural merger and the alternative options: This deliverable examines how each scenario would affect governance, decision-making, accountability, as well as operational support functions, with a focus on operational impact, organizational effectiveness, efficiency and implementation risks.

Key messages

The analysis suggests that the merger pathway may offer greater opportunities for integration, standardization and end-to-end accountability, but with higher transition complexity and implementation requirements. The alternative options provide a more incremental and lower-risk pathway, while preserving existing mandates, but with more limited institutional change and potentially lower impact.

1

Merging governance structures could generate greater institutional scale and coherence, but faces significant implementation risks:

- A merger could increase institutional scale, political influence and coherence from global commitments to field delivery but also presents a risk of mandate negotiations.
- Non-structural joint governance arrangements could support progressive strengthening of coordination at operational level while managing transition risks, but informal governance coordination may, ultimately, have limited impact for beneficiaries.

2

Aligning decision-making and results framework offer opportunities for greater accountability, transparency and impact, but risks vary across scenarios:

- A unified leadership and HQ–field chain, single results framework and reporting system could clarify authority, strengthen accountability and improve transparency. However, transition towards a merged decision-making and results framework could dilute some results indicators specific to each entity's core mandate.
- Alternative options focused on common results and reporting frameworks in the areas of EVAW/GBV and data, while maintaining current organizational structures, could also improve impact for beneficiaries, accountability and visibility of results for Member States, although to a lesser extent. Added administrative costs and coordination efforts are also expected in this scenario.

3

Both scenarios offer opportunities to strengthen delivery, but involve different trade-offs:

- A merger could strengthen procurement governance, supplier management and coordination across commodity, programme and corporate procurement activities, while requiring the integration of distinct procurement models and maintaining continuity of critical supply-chain functions.
- Alternative options could build on existing procurement capabilities, service arrangements and supplier relationships, enabling targeted efficiencies and continuity benefits in selected categories, while relying on sustained coordination and offering more limited scope for structural integration.

4

Workforce integration and interoperability provide different approaches to workforce effectiveness:

- A merger could strengthen workforce planning, talent management and organization-wide workforce governance, while generating efficiencies through more integrated workforce management and streamlined HR service delivery; however, workforce-transition, retention and cultural-integration risks would require active management.
- Alternative options could improve access to complementary expertise, talent-sharing and workforce interoperability while preserving existing organizational arrangements, although benefits would depend on sustained leadership commitment, workforce planning and governance mechanisms, and would remain more limited than full workforce integration.

5

ICT, data and analytics present different pathways to digital transformation and interoperability:

- A merger could strengthen ICT governance, business continuity, cybersecurity, enterprise architecture and data governance under a single institutional framework, while requiring significant investment, transition effort and systems harmonization.
- Alternative options could enhance digital collaboration, interoperability and the sharing of ICT capabilities through coordinated governance, shared tools and common platforms, although benefits would depend on sustained investment, cybersecurity safeguards and effective implementation, and would remain more targeted than full systems integration.

6

Legal and risk support illustrate the balance between integration and continuity:

- A merger could strengthen coherence across legal, compliance, safeguarding and risk-management functions through a unified framework and governance architecture, while requiring careful management of legal continuity, contractual obligations and mandate-protection safeguards.
- No dedicated alternative option was identified for Legal & Risk Support; consequently, the non-merger comparator is the continuation of existing institutional arrangements, preserving existing legal authorities and accountability structures while maintaining reliance on coordination across separate functions.

Outline

Scope and methodology

Scope	• Further elaborate and compare the operating models associated with the potential structural merger and the alternative options. • Assess implications for governance, intergovernmental oversight, accountability, coordination and decision-making arrangements. • Assess implications for key operational support functions, including procurement and supply chains, HR/workforce, ICT, data and analytics, and legal and risk support. • Identify potential benefits, implementation requirements, risks and sequencing considerations associated with each scenario.		
Data collection tools	***Documentary review:*** • Organizational structures and governance arrangements • Operating model documentation • HR, procurement, legal and risk documentation • Existing merger assessment and alternative options analysis • Relevant UN80 and institutional reform documentation • Review of written CSO submissions, and prior consultation inputs addressing the merger and alternative options	***Targeted interviews (52):*** • HR, Procurement, Legal, Risk and Operations divisions • Corporate services and interoperability leads • Senior executives and Secretary of Executive Board • Regional Directors and selected Country Representatives (jointly with D4) • Working session with CSO representatives	***Country focus consultations*** • Survey targeting UNFPA and UN Women representatives in a sample of 26 countries • Interviews with Regional Directors and selected Country Representatives (jointly with D4)
Methodo-logical approach	• Analyse current-state operating arrangements across both organizations. • Assess benefits, feasibility, risks and implementation implications of each scenario. • Compare scenarios against common assessment criteria and identify conditions for successful implementation. • This deliverable focuses on high-level arrangements at the global level. Regional and country-level arrangements are presented in greater detail in Deliverable "Country, Regional & Programmatic Implications Assessment". • This deliverable treats the merger as a single reference scenario and does not differentiate between specific merger modalities (e.g., absorption versus creation of a new entity), which could entail different benefits, risks and implementation considerations. These distinctions were outside the agreed scope of the assessment.		

Considerations

The analysis should be interpreted in light of the following considerations:

Considerations	• First, the assessment was conducted within a compressed timeframe (approximately 2.5 weeks), limiting the extent to which all options could be explored, and compared systematically across all dimensions. • Second, the analysis relied on available evidence, stakeholder inputs and existing documentation, and did not benefit from full access to all potentially relevant operational, financial and country-level data. • Third, the assessment builds on existing analytical material (especially, the Strategic Merger Assessment and the jointly developed alternative options) and does not develop or evaluate additional institutional reform scenarios beyond those already identified: • Consequently, comparisons across options are not always based on fully equivalent alternatives. In particular, no dedicated alternative option was identified for the Legal & Risk Support function within the agreed alternative-options framework. The non-merger comparator for this function is therefore the continuation of existing institutional arrangements (status quo), supplemented where relevant by broader governance-coordination and operational-interoperability measures assessed elsewhere in the report. • Because the scenarios are not fully equivalent, it does not support a single overall ranking of the pathways by implementation risk, speed or impact.

CSO perspectives on the deliverable's themes

Review of written CSO submissions and discussions with CSO representatives revealed the following perspectives on operational models:

CSO perspectives	• Participants emphasized the importance of preserving mandates, governance arrangements and institutional independence across any reform scenario. • Civil society consultations supported stronger, accountable collaboration in areas of demonstrated complementarity and emphasized the importance of clearer evidence of added value before pursuing more extensive structural change. • Many stakeholders identified GBV/EVAWG, gender data and selected cross-cutting functions as areas where stronger joint approaches could add value. • Consultations reflected the view that operational effectiveness depends not only on organizational arrangements, but also on financing sustainability, political support and stakeholder engagement. • Several participants highlighted the potential role of existing UN coordination mechanisms and expertise-sharing arrangements in supporting closer collaboration. • The FCC also emphasizes that such efforts should be considered within the broader UN80 and wider UN reform agenda.

Outline

3.1 Governance and intergovernmental oversight: **As-is situation**

United Nations Population Fund

- **Responsibilities of the Executive Board**: UNFPA shares its Executive Board with UNDP and UNOPS. The Board provides intergovernmental support and supervision to the activities of the funds and programmes. Its key functions include implementing policies formulated by the UNGA, providing guidance to the heads of each fund or programme, monitoring performance, approving programmes (including country programmes), and deciding on administrative and financial plans and budgets (UNGA res. 48/162).
- **Membership of the Executive Board**: UNFPA's Executive Board has 36 members: 8 from African States, 7 from Asian States, 4 from Eastern European States, 5 from Latin American and Caribbean States, and 12 from Western European and other States. Members are elected by the Economic and Social Council for three-year terms, with the exception of the Western European and other States group, which follows a specific rotation schedule.
- **Decision-making of the Executive Board**: while the practice of striving for consensus is encouraged, the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council apply in the event of a vote. Only the 36 Executive Board members have voting rights.
- **Formal and informal sessions**: official decisions are approved during formal sessions, which are held three times per year. Informal sessions are also held periodically to provide space for more in-depth dialogue.

UN WOMEN

- **Responsibilities of the Executive Board**: UN Women has its own Executive Board. Similar to UNFPA's Executive Board, it provides intergovernmental support and supervision to UN Women's activities. Its key functions include implementing policies formulated by the UNGA, providing guidance to the Executive Director, monitoring performance, approving programmes (including country programmes), and deciding on administrative and financial plans and budgets (UNGA res. 48/162).
- **Membership of the Executive Board**: UN Women's Executive Board has 41 members: 10 from African States, 10 from Asian States, 4 from Eastern European States, 6 from Latin American and Caribbean States, 5 from Western European and other States, and 6 from top contributing countries. Members are elected by the Economic and Social Council for three-year terms, with the exception of the Western European and other States group.
- **Decision-making of the Executive Board**: while the practice of striving for consensus is encouraged, the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council apply in the event of a vote. Only the 41 Executive Board members have voting rights.
- **Formal and informal sessions**: official decisions are approved during formal sessions, which are held three times per year. Informal sessions are also held periodically to provide space for more in-depth dialogue.

- **Partial common membership across both EBs**: 14 Member States currently serve on both boards, including major donors. In total, these countries account for approximately 54% of UNFPA's total contributions and 53% of UN Women's funding.
- **Joint activities between Executive Boards**: The Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN Women and WFP convene once a year through the Joint Informal Meeting of the Boards, which brings together the four Boards to discuss overarching themes of relevance to all participating agencies. They also participate in joint field visits.

3.1 Governance and intergovernmental oversight: **Implications under the potential structural merger**

High Medium Low

New arrangements

A merger resulting in a single institutional entity would require a unified governance and oversight framework. Key features could include:

- **Unified governing body:** single Executive Board (EB) operating under the UN General Assembly (UNGA) authority, with membership and regional representation determined through intergovernmental decision.
- **Strengthened governance and assurance functions**: dedicated capacity for Executive Board support, mandate stewardship, enterprise risk oversight and institutional coordination across the integrated mandate.
- **Integrated mandate:** combines both mandates across SRHR and population (ICPD), with gender equality, women's rights and UN-system coordination (GA 64/289). Brings UNFPA's mandate areas -including SRHR, population and development, and humanitarian GBV- together with UN Women's integrated normative, UN-system coordination and operational mandate across the full spectrum of gender equality and the empowerment and rights of women and girls. This includes, among other areas, EVAWG, women, peace and security, women's leadership and participation, women's economic empowerment and gender-responsive humanitarian action
- **Intergovernmental accountability**: regular reporting to the GA and the unified Executive Board to provide Member States with a consolidated view of performance, risks, resource use and results across the full integrated mandate.
- **Interim governance arrangements:** maintaining oversight continuity during transition while protecting ongoing programmes, funding commitments, and existing agreements.

Speed of implementation: Long Term (4+ years)

Potential benefits

Impact on operational results and delivery

- **Stronger political weight and institutional scale**: combined entity would rank among the largest UN actors in approximately three-quarters of programme countries (compared to two-third for UNFPA alone, based on 2024 expenditures), potentially strengthening UN Country Team positioning and political influence.
- **Improved coherence and end-to-end accountability**: a single governance framework would bring normative leadership, system-wide coordination, policy reform and operational delivery under unified accountability across the full results continuum (from global commitments and standards to regional and country-level programmes and frontline delivery) and should reduce structural friction and reliance on coordination across separate institutional boundaries.

Impact on organizational efficiency

- **Reduced coordination costs for organizations and Member States**: efficiency gains are expected from the elimination of costs associated with parallel governance structures and executive boards, as well as reduced coordination requirements for MS engaging with separate UNFPA and UNW focal points. These will be partly offset by transition cost associated with governance harmonization (EB redesign, governance transition office, etc.)*

Feasibility and risks

Feasibility

- Merging the governance structures would be **legally and technically feasible, but complex**, given the entities' distinct EB systems (different membership) and **contingent on UN GA approval,** dedicated transition financing, and a phased approach to preserve operational continuity and stakeholder confidence throughout the transition.

Implementation risks

- **Mandate reopening and political exposure (high likelihood)**: GA negotiation carries risk of reopening, narrowing, or reinterpreting Beijing, CEDAW, and ICPD commitments in current polarized environment. Mitigation requires explicit mandate safeguards in the merger resolution, protected performance tracking for mandate-specific areas, and structured Member State engagement before formal decisions.
- **Financial risks (high likelihood):** the need to finance upfront transition costs may be compounded by risks of donor funding instability, arising from expected efficiency gains and uncertainty regarding mandate balance and transition execution. Mitigation measures include securing dedicated upfront funding, proactive donor engagement, and realistic communication on cost trajectories and expected efficiencies.
- **Potential lack of political appetite for a joint Board (medium likelihood):** some Member States may be politically opposed to a joint Board, including where concerns relate to the scope of existing mandates. Mitigation requires early testing of Board design options, clear representation rules, mandate-specific reporting lines and transitional governance arrangements.

3.1 Governance and intergovernmental oversight: **Implications under the alternative options**

High Medium Low

New arrangements*

Key arrangements to enhance governance coordination within existing governance structures could include:

- One joint formal session per year (without decision-making): annual forum for both Executive Boards to jointly review shared priorities, complementarities, progress on agreed collaboration workstreams and issues requiring coordinated governance guidance, without creating a joint decision-making body.
- Joint Executive Board informal sessions: structured informal space to discuss matters of common interest of the UNFPA and UN Women EB, including shared priorities, sequencing, implementation issues and areas of complementarity or potential overlap.
- Regular Joint Bureaux engagements: exchanges for early coordination between the Bureaux of the two EB on agendas, documentation, timing of discussions and follow-up to Board guidance, without assigning any decision-making role to the Bureaux.
- Executive-level mechanism: senior-level platform to oversee implementation across headquarters and field, support alignment across leadership, strategic and corporate functions, and identify coordination bottlenecks requiring management attention.
- Joint technical task force: technical group to examine specific workstreams, clarify operational implications, assess feasibility and workload, and develop technical options for consideration by management and, where relevant, the Boards.
- Joint briefing and reporting: provide both Executive Boards with a shared evidence base on progress, risks, implementation challenges and lessons learned, while maintaining separate formal reporting lines where required.

These arrangements are presented in detail in separate deliverables including their purpose, output and workload implications.

Speed of implementation:
Timing dependent on agreement; Potentially Short-Term (i.e.. 1–2 years) for initial arrangements

Potential benefits

Impact on operational results and delivery

- **Strong governance anchor on alternative pathways:** the new arrangements would provide visible governance support for the four alternative options and reinforce Board-level oversight of joint commitments.
- **Progressive strengthening of coordination over time**: more coordinated governance would allow coordination to be progressively strengthened over time, with adjustments made as needed to ensure that potential benefits can be achieved while transition and change-related risks are more effectively managed.
- **Clear institutional accountability across the Board and Management**: new arrangements would link joint workplans, technical task forces and reporting arrangements to agreed priorities, responsibilities and expected outcomes.
- **Results-focused collaboration**: new arrangements should help shifts cooperation from ad hoc coordination towards monitored commitments, provided that governance discussions remain focused on concrete outcomes.

Impact on organizational efficiency

- **Limited and conditional efficiency gains, with additional workload**: efficiency gains would remain indirect and would not reduce reporting unless concrete simplifications are agreed. Additional Board and operational support workload would also arise from additional agendas, briefing materials, discussions records, follow-up tracking and coordination across calendars.

Feasibility and risks

Feasibility

- Can be implemented **without requiring a GA decision** provided mechanisms remain informal and embedded in existing Board workplans and management processes.
- **Most arrangements are feasible within existing governance structures**, especially Bureaux engagements, executive-level steering, and coordinated briefings, if each mechanism has clear purpose, output, follow-up pathway and non-decision-making authority.
- **Other arrangement may require light adjustments**: joint Technical Task Force could require the design of Terms of Reference (as done for the JIU working group), and the overall governance arrangement should clarify articulation with a Steering Committee comprising MS and executive leadership representatives.

Implementation risk

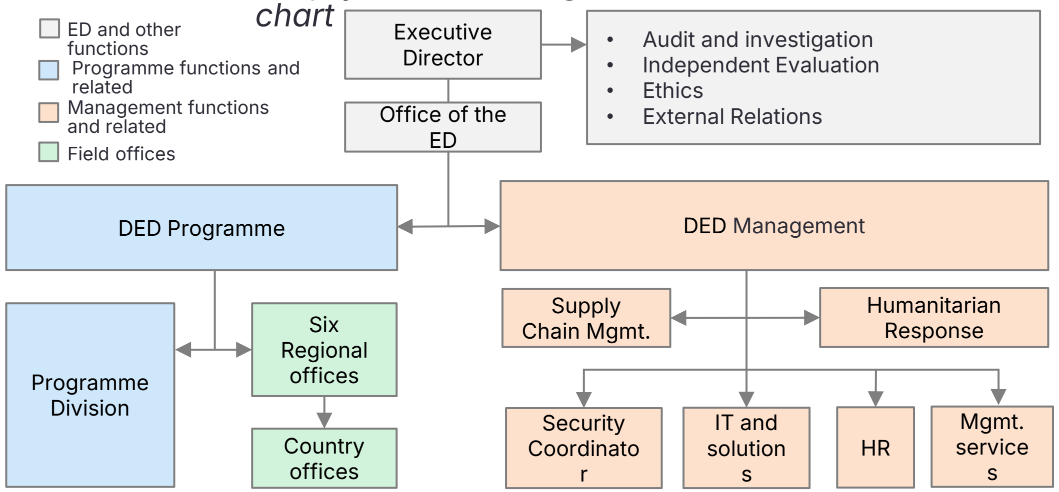
- **Limited transformative effect and impact (medium likelihood):** governance coordination may remain symbolic unless informal discussions generate actionable follow-up points, responsibility owners, timelines and links to management action or each Board's formal processes. Mitigation requires agreed workplans, documented follow-up actions, named owners and periodic reporting to each Board.
- **Additional bureaucracy and complexity (medium likelihood)**: meetings, task forces and briefings could duplicate existing processes or increase agenda congestion unless, scope, cadence, outputs and follow-up are kept limited, documented and linked to existing structures. Mitigation requires limited and time-bound coordination mechanisms, clear outputs, streamlined agendas and integration with existing Board and management calendars.

3.2 Decision-making, accountability and coordination arrangements: **As-is situation**

United Nations Population Fund

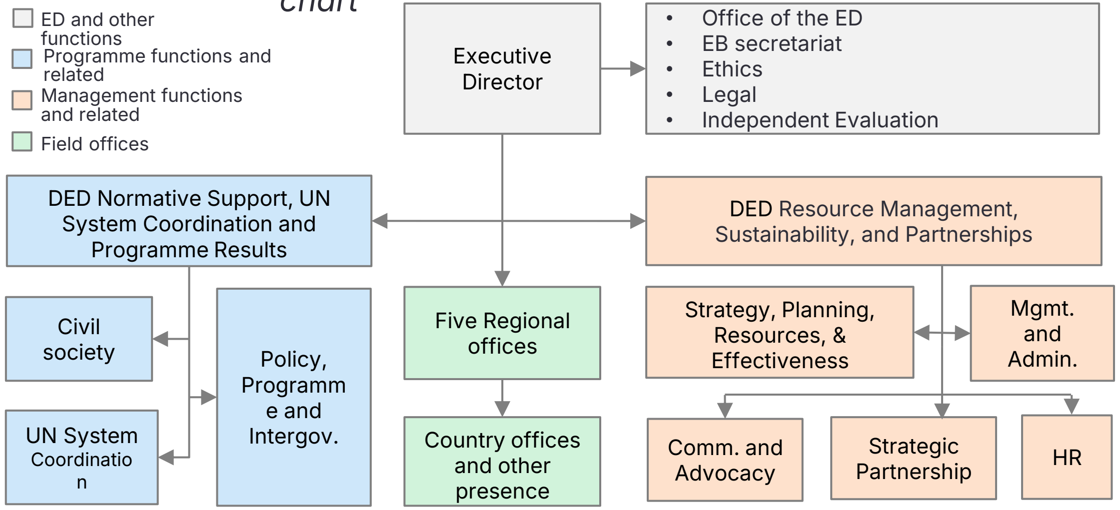
- **Organizational structure and main reporting line:** UNFPA is led by an Executive Director (ED), supported by two Deputy Executive Directors (DED) responsible for programme and management functions. Regional offices report to the Programme DED and provide oversight and support to country offices.
- **Results framework**: UNFPA's 2026 results framework is structured around six outputs (including data, policy, sustainable financing, gender norms, and humanitarian action), contributing to four outcomes (ending unmet need for family planning, preventable maternal deaths, GBV and harmful practices, and supporting demographic change), supporting UNFPA's broader goal of achieving universal access to SRH and Reproductive Rights, and accelerating implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

Simplified UNFPA organizational chart



- **Organizational structure and main reporting line:** Similarly to UNFPA, UN Women is led by an ED supported by two DEDs, covering programme/normative functions and management/partnership functions, respectively. Unlike UNFPA, regional directors have dual reporting lines to both DEDs.
- **Results framework**: UN Women's 2026 results framework is structured around five organizational outputs, contributing to three outcomes focused on normative frameworks, institutions for gender equality, and women's access to quality services. These results support UN Women's overarching goal of gender equality, women's and girls' empowerment, and the full enjoyment of their human rights.

Simplified UN Women organizational chart



3.2 Decision-making, accountability and coordination arrangements: **Implications under the potential structural merger***

High Medium Low

New arrangements*

A merger resulting in a single institutional entity would require a single executive leadership, strategic framework, and results architecture. Key features could include:

- **Unified executive leadership:** single executive head appointed by the Secretary-General, accountable to a unified governing body with clear executive authority across the full mandate.
- **Internal mandate leadership**: dedicated senior leadership or advisory arrangements to ensure that each major mandate area is adequately represented and overseen within the new entity. Staff from UN Women and UNFPA should be given priority for leadership positions in divisions aligned with the core mandate of their respective former organizations.
- **Unified HQ–field decision chain**: single clear line of authority and delegation from the Executive Head to regional and country offices, replacing current delegation of authority matrices and parallel decision-making channels.
- **Integrated strategic and results framework**: single strategic and result framework, replacing current Strategic plans and results frameworks, linking global commitments, regional/country-level programmes and frontline delivery.
- **Unified reporting framework:** unified reporting to management and governing body on results, resources, risks and transition progress, while keeping distinct visibility for sensitive areas such as SRHR, humanitarian response, GEWE coordination and population data.
- **UN reform alignment**: coordination arrangements aligned with the wider UN80 agenda, Resident Coordinator system and evolving regional architecture.
- **Strengthened accountability and performance-management functions**: dedicated capacity to oversee integrated reporting, results measurement, mandate balance, enterprise accountability and coordination across normative, operational and delivery functions.

**This section focuses on high-level arrangements at the global level. Regional and country-level arrangements are presented in greater detail in separate deliverables.*

Speed of implementation: Medium Term (3-4 years)

Potential benefits

Impact on operational results & delivery

- **More effective and coherent decision-making:** compared to hybrid model, a **unified HQ–field decision chain** would reduce parallel approvals and clarify authority across HQ, regional and country offices, supporting more consistent implementation.
- **Stronger end-to-end delivery and accountability**: a **single strategic and results framework** should strengthen accountability from global commitments to country-level results for results for women and girls, reducing reliance on formal or informal coordination.
- **Greater transparency and performance oversight**: **unified reporting** would provide a consolidated view of results, resource allocation and organisational performance, supporting evidence-based management and governing-body oversight.

Feasibility and risks

Feasibility

- Merging decision-making, accountability and coordination arrangements reforms appear feasible but conditional, as they build on existing decentralised structures, coordination practices results framework and reporting methodologies.
- Their success would depend on clear delegation of authority, phased implementation, and strong transition governance to avoid disrupting ongoing delivery.

Implementation risks

- Transition complexity and operational disruption: (high likelihood): the scale and complexity of the organisational transition, including the reconfiguration of country presence, redesign of leadership arrangements, and revision of reporting lines, may create temporary ambiguity in decision-making, resource allocation, and oversight, with the potential for operational disruptions. Mitigation requires phased implementation, clear delegation frameworks, interim governance arrangements and explicit accountability mapping.
- Coordination overload and added bureaucracy (medium likelihood): new cross-functional coordination mechanisms across HQ, regional and country levels could generate additional meetings, task forces and reporting requirements, slowing decisions unless mandates, decision rights and follow-up mechanisms are clearly defined. Mitigation requires clearly defined mandates, decision rights, escalation pathways and streamlined governance processes.
- Complexity of integrating results frameworks and risk of losing mandate-specific indicators (high likelihood): combining two results frameworks could be technically challenging, requiring the alignment of indicators, baselines, targets and reporting systems. In a context of results framework streamlining, this could also dilute mandate-specific indicators and weaken performance tracking during the transition period. Mitigation requires phased framework alignment, protection of mandate-specific indicators and parallel reporting arrangements during implementation.

3.2 Decision-making, accountability and coordination arrangements: **Implications under the alternative options***

High Medium Low

New arrangements*

A shared accountability and country-level results model could include the following key features:

- Collaboration framework: commitment to develop a framework for collaboration on jointly agreed programmes in areas of mandate synergy, without prescribing a specific division of labour at this stage.
- Common results framework: model derived from the collaboration framework (to be approved) and anchored in current Strategic Plans and UNSDCFs. The framework could use a shared taxonomy and jointly defined KPIs at HQ level, and be added to the existing results frameworks of both entities (e.g., through a dedicated section).
- A joint escalation mechanism: a process for resolving disputes related to roles, resources, or programme delivery, building on existing dispute-resolution mechanisms (e.g., through an ad hoc bipartite committee composed of equal representation from both organizations).
- Annual reporting to a joint session: annual reporting to both Executive Boards on EVAWG/GBV results, based on indicators agreed under the new common results framework and leveraging existing reporting mechanisms.
- Oversight through each agency's existing management structures: oversight aligned with country UNSDCFs, rather than a new governance body.

**This section focuses on high-level arrangements at the global level. Regional and country-level arrangements are presented in greater detail in D4.*

Speed of implementation: Short Term (1-2 years)
Final timing dependent on negotiation and approval of scope, results and accountability arrangements

Potential benefits

Impact on operational results and delivery

- Clarified shared and separate responsibilities are expected from defining lead and contributing roles, expected results, reporting responsibilities and escalation routes for jointly agreed activities, within existing management and governance arrangements.
- Enhanced end-to-end delivery for beneficiaries: a common results framework should strengthen the link between global commitments, Strategic Plans, UNSDCFs and measurable country-level results for women and girls, reducing the risk that collaboration remains limited to high-level coordination.
- Visibility on joint progress should be improved for Member States, Resident Coordinators, governments, donors and partners, while preserving entity-specific mandates and Executive Board accountability.

Feasibility and risks

Feasibility

- Can be implemented within existing governance and management structures, avoiding the need for General Assembly approval while introducing their own implementation dependencies, including additional coordination capacity, aligned incentives, financing, and follow-through across two organization.
- Medium to high feasibility, as the approach can build on existing Strategic Plans, results frameworks, joint programme reporting and Executive Board briefing/reporting practices. Most feasible where shared priorities, joint workplans and results frameworks have already been defined.
- Requires agreement on collaboration framework, common indicators, reporting periodicity, lead/contributing agency roles, data sources, quality assurance, and escalation channels.

Implementation risks

- Risk of adding an additional reporting and coordination layer, with associated costs (high likelihood): resources will be required to develop a common collaboration and results frameworks, as well as shared reporting, monitoring, and dispute-resolution mechanisms. Mitigation will require leveraging existing mechanisms as much as possible (e.g., reporting and dispute-resolution processes), agreeing on a manageable set of common results and indicators, and fast-tracking negotiations.
- Risk of blurred accountability (medium likelihood) if joint results are not accompanied by clear lead/contributing roles, ownership of data, decision rights, leadership commitment and escalation mechanisms. Mitigation requires formal role definitions, agreed accountability frameworks and documented governance arrangements.
- Risk of limited behavioral change (medium likelihood) if coordination mechanisms do not shift incentives or translate joint evidence into shared priorities and practical uptake by programme and policy teams. Mitigation requires clear ownership, leadership sponsorship, performance monitoring and periodic review of outcomes.

Outline

4.1 Procurement and supply chains: **As-is situation**

UNFPA United Nations Population Fund

- **Hybrid centralized–decentralized procurement model**: Procurement combines centralized purchasing with country-level procurement and implementation arrangements, allowing UNFPA to leverage purchasing power while maintaining operational flexibility.
- **Highly specialized reproductive-health procurement capability**: UNFPA is the world's largest multilateral procurer of maternal-health medicines and largest provider of donated contraceptives, with procurement activities heavily concentrated on reproductive-health commodities.
- **Significant global procurement scale and purchasing power**: Procurement volumes enable economies of scale, support commodity security and strengthen UNFPA's position in global reproductive-health markets.
- **Procurement increasingly integrated into end-to-end supply chain management**: The function extends beyond purchasing to include forecasting, logistics systems, supply planning, commodity security and supply-chain performance.
- **Strong dependence on partners and decentralized delivery systems**: Procurement supports a broad network of governments, implementing partners and country offices, requiring extensive coordination across actors and delivery channels.
- **Procurement used as a strategic market-shaping tool**: UNFPA leverages procurement volumes, supplier relationships and financing mechanisms to improve affordability, availability and sustainability of reproductive-health commodities.

UN WOMEN

- **Procurement primarily supports programme delivery and corporate operations**: Procurement is a support function enabling programme implementation, partnerships and institutional operations, rather than a core mandate-delivery capability. UN Women's mandate centres on normative, operational and coordination functions rather than commodity delivery.
- **Predominantly service-oriented procurement portfolio**: Procurement is largely focused on consultancies, technical assistance, programme support services and operational needs rather than large-scale procurement of commodities.
- **More decentralized and country-driven procurement model**: Procurement activities are closely linked to country and regional programme implementation. While UN Women has a global procurement function, decision-making and delivery rely heavily on field operations and country-level programme needs.
- **Procurement closely integrated with partnerships and programme implementation**: UN Women operates extensively through governments, civil society organisations and implementing partners, making procurement and contracting mechanisms an important enabler of programme delivery.
- **Gender-responsive procurement is embedded in the procurement approach**, reflecting UN Women's broader mandate to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

UNFPA operates a large-scale, globally coordinated procurement and supply-chain model centred on commodities, while UN Women operates a predominantly service-oriented procurement model supporting programme implementation and partnerships

4.1 Procurement and supply chains: **Implications under the potential structural merger**

High Medium Low

New arrangements

A merger would entail the establishment of a single procurement and supply chain architecture, integrating procurement governance, supplier management, contracting arrangements and supply-chain oversight across the merged organization.

In particular, it would require:

- Moving from two distinct procurement models to a common framework, integrating UNFPA's commodity-focused procurement and supply-chain capabilities with UN Women's service-oriented procurement model.
- Establishing a dedicated capacity to oversee procurement risk, supplier assurance, compliance and continuity of critical commodity and supply-chain operations across the merged organization.
- Consolidating procurement leadership, governance structures, policies and supplier management mechanisms while preserving specialized commodity procurement expertise.
- Harmonizing procurement procedures, vendor-management arrangements, supplier databases and procurement systems across both organizations.
- Integrating procurement planning, contracting and operational support arrangements while maintaining continuity of critical supply-chain operations.
- Aligning procurement categories and operating models across commodity procurement, programme delivery and corporate procurement activities.

Speed of implementation: Long Term (4+ years)

Potential Benefits

Several procurement efficiencies, including shared procurement services, supply-chain integration and common back-office arrangements, are already being pursued through UN80 initiatives such as the Unified Services Roadmap and Humanitarian Compact.

Merger-specific benefits could therefore include:

Impact on operational results and delivery

- Expanded procurement capabilities, combining UNFPA's commodity procurement platform with UN Women's programme-support procurement experience
- Integration of complementary procurement models, enabling more coherent management of commodity, programme and corporate procurement activities.
- Stronger institutional coherence through a unified procurement architecture, governance framework and supplier management approach.

Impact on organizational efficiency

- Reduced duplication in procurement governance and processes, as well as in supplier-management arrangements
- Greater standardization of procurement policies, procedures and systems across the organization.
- Stronger purchasing leverage and more efficient vendor management through consolidated supplier relationships.
- Streamlined oversight and coordination through a unified procurement architecture

Feasibility and Risks

Feasibility

Although operationally feasible, procurement and supply chains were consistently identified as one of the most sensitive areas for integration, given the significant differences between the organizations' operating models. Merger-specific risks could include:

Structural Risks

- (High) Integration complexity between procurement models (high likelihood), as UNFPA's commodity-focused procurement platform and UN Women's service-oriented procurement model have different operating requirements, governance arrangements and supplier ecosystems. A unified model would therefore require differentiated procurement streams rather than complete standardization.

Transition Risks

- (High) Supply-chain continuity risks (medium likelihood), as transition-related bottlenecks in procurement governance, operating arrangements and supply-chain processes could affect continuity of commodity procurement and humanitarian supply-chain operations, including the delivery of essential reproductive health commodities, particularly in fragile and crisis-affected contexts. This risk could be mitigated through phased migration, parallel procurement and supply-chain authorities throughout the transition, dedicated supply-chain continuity oversight, protection of local and regional supply chains until safe transfer conditions are met, and prioritization of uninterrupted country-level delivery.
- (Medium) Loss of specialized procurement expertise (medium likelihood), particularly if workforce transitions are not managed carefully. Retention measures, protected specialist teams and phased integration could help preserve critical expertise in reproductive-health commodity procurement, forecasting and quality assurance.
- (Medium) Operational disruption during transition (medium likelihood), as procurement redesign, systems changes and governance harmonization could create temporary ambiguity and disruption to procurement operations and service delivery. Phased implementation, clear decision rights, protection of critical procurement authorities, parallel operation of key systems and dedicated transition-management arrangements could reduce implementation risk.

4.1 Procurement and supply chains: **Implications under the alternative options**

High Medium Low

New arrangements

Specialized procurement continuity and vendor management, characterized by:

- Procurement-as-a-service through Third-Party Procurement arrangements where applicable, whereby one agency procures goods or services on behalf of another and charges a service fee. This could be complemented, where relevant, by mutual recognition of procurement processes or vendor-related arrangements.

Speed of implementation:

Medium Term (3-4 years)

Potential Benefits

Several procurement efficiencies could also be achieved through UN80 system-wide initiatives, including shared procurement services, integrated supply chains and Common Back Offices. Alternative options-related benefits would therefore include:

Impact on operational results and delivery

- Strengthened continuity and reliability of specialized procurement, particularly for SRHR commodities and other supply chains where uninterrupted availability is critical for programme delivery.
- Direct access to specialized procurement capabilities and commodity-supply expertise beyond what would be available through generic system-wide service arrangements.
- Improves operational support where applicable through Third-Party Procurement arrangements, whereby one agency procures goods or services on behalf of another and charges a service fee, while preserving distinct mandates and accountability arrangements.
- Greater country ownership and sustainability, by strengthening procurement planning, supplier management, capacity development and fraud prevention in programme countries.

Impact on organizational efficiency

- Overall efficiency gains (on the overall Alternative Option 4) arise from integrating support functions (e.g. Finance, HR, ICT), removing duplicated activities and consolidating functional leadership roles with harmonized processes (more details in D3).
- More efficient use of existing procurement capabilities and supplier relationships in defined procurement categories, avoiding overlapping of structures and arrangements.
- Potential economies of scale and purchasing efficiencies, particularly where procurement volumes and established supplier arrangements can be leveraged.
- Improved vendor management efficiency through more centralized approaches, clearer supplier oversight and better use of existing procurement expertise.
- Allows efficiency gains without full structural integration, although expected savings should be treated as targeted and category-specific rather than broad-based.

Feasibility and Risks

Feasibility

- High feasibility through phased implementation, as the option builds on existing inter-agency procurement mechanisms and service-provider arrangements.
- Incremental value must be demonstrated relative to existing provider arrangements, including UNDP, UNOPS and other UN-system procurement mechanisms, taking into account procurement capability, service quality, cost, prior investments and responsiveness.
- Most relevant for selected procurement categories where specialized procurement capabilities provide a demonstrable advantage over existing arrangements, particularly where technical expertise, supplier networks or quality-assurance requirements are critical.
- It does not require structural integration and would mainly depend on clearly defined third-party procurement. Specific risks would include:

Implementation Risks

- Capacity and service-delivery risks (medium likelihood), if procurement demand exceeds available resources or if shared-service arrangements are insufficiently defined. Service-level agreements (SLAs), phased onboarding of procurement categories and periodic performance reviews could help mitigate these risks.
- Supply chain continuity risks (medium likelihood), as quality-assurance arrangements, liability protections, concessional pricing mechanisms, stockholding arrangements and bridge-financing mechanisms may not automatically transfer to shared-service models. Mitigation measures would include maintain existing procurement mechanisms during transition, limit TPP arrangements initially to selected procurement categories and establish continuity safeguards before scaling.
- Legal and operational complexities (medium likelihood), where existing host-country agreements, fiduciary arrangements or operating modalities do not automatically support shared-service arrangements. Standardized MoUs, mutual-recognition arrangements, clear governance frameworks and phased implementation could support mitigation.
- Governance and alignment risks (medium likelihood) if further bilateral efficiencies are not steered through ongoing inter-agency discussions, including UN80 and the HLCM Supply Chain Network. Mitigation would require formal participation in relevant inter-agency coordination mechanisms, alignment of bilateral initiatives with agreed UN-system procurement priorities, and periodic joint reviews to ensure complementarity.
- Limited and uneven efficiency gains (high likelihood), as a non-structural model may not fully address fragmentation and would require sustained cross-entity coordination. Mitigation would require formal governance arrangements, clear accountability, agreed performance measures and periodic review of realized efficiencies.

4.2 HR / Workforce: **As-is situation**

United Nations Population Fund

- **The Division for Human Resources (DHR) is comprised of Governance and Center of Expertise in HQ (NY & Nairobi) and Client Services functions led by HR Business Partners in Regional Offices.** Local HR Focal Points across Country Offices liaise with DHR for operational matters.
- **The workforce is large and operationally diverse**: approximately **3,569 staff members**, of whom roughly **84% are based in the field**, plus approximately **2,340 affiliated personnel** (consultants, service contract holders and UN Volunteers).[1]
- **UNFPA's HR framework is embedded within the broader UN human resources architecture**, following a multilayered structure (the UN Charter, UN Staff Regulations and Rules, UNFPA policies, UNDP policies where gaps exist, and UN Secretariat policies where required).
- **Workforce strategy is guided by the People Strategy 2030**, which frames **HR as a strategic driver of organizational transformation**. Priorities: talent management, workforce analytics and planning, leadership development, organizational culture, and simpler HR policies and processes.
- UNFPA is implementing a **"OneHR" approach aimed at improving service delivery and responsiveness**, aimed to realize stronger regional teams gain more client-oriented services, greater delegated decision-making, and closer support to managers and personnel.
- UNFPA has established a **structured talent management framework** supporting multiple workforce processes including recruitment, performance management and staff development.
- UNFPA has made **Organizational Culture as a significant priority.**

UN WOMEN

- UN Women manages a **geographically dispersed workforce** across Headquarters, Regional Offices, Country Offices, Multi-Country Offices and Liaison Offices. The organization has approximately **1,308 staff**, of whom **25% are based at HQ and 75% are field-based.**[1]
- The **workforce model relies significantly on affiliated personnel and flexible contractual arrangement**, with approximately **2,600 affiliated personnel**, including service contract holders and short-term experts supporting programme implementation, coordination functions and normative activities.
- **Workforce strategy is increasingly positioned as a driver of organizational effectiveness**, with a **People Strategy** focusing on rough better workforce planning, leadership capabilities and employee engagement, and positioning people management as a contributor to institutional performance and organizational transformation.
- **Workforce development is supported through dedicated learning and development initiatives**, including leadership learning journeys, team learning programmes and organizational capability-building activities.
- UN Women has developed **a range of initiatives focusing on organizational culture, anti-discrimination and inclusion**. In addition to its inclusion agenda, UN Women participates in broader UN-system initiatives on mental health and employee wellbeing and monitors workforce experience through dedicated assessment mechanisms such as mental health scorecards.

1. These are exact figures. Where cost-benefit analysis expresses reductions as a share of workforce, it uses a rounded staff base of ~4,840 (instead of the exact 4,877), excluding affiliated personnel.

4.2 HR / Workforce:
Implications under the potential structural merger

High **Medium** **Low**

New arrangements

A merger would entail the establishment of a single HR function and workforce architecture, a consolidated HR leadership and rationalized management layers, harmonized HR tools and shared talent mechanisms, as well as the integration of staff and affiliated personnel.

In particular, it would require:

- Moving from two separate HR functions to one integrated HR function serving the combined entity, with unified workforce policies, staffing arrangements, talent-management processes and workforce planning mechanisms.
- Establishing a dedicated capacity supporting workforce integration, talent retention, culture alignment and strategic workforce planning across the merged entity
- Consolidating a duplicative senior functional leadership with one head of function supported by deputy or associate arrangements to preserve knowledge from both legacy entities.
- Institutionalizing common rosters, shared pipelines, mutual recognition of assessments, integrated mobility arrangements and cross-agency learning and development mechanisms.
- A workforce transition approach covering regular staff, affiliated personnel, consultants, service contract holders and other non-staff categories, with explicit rules for redeployment, internal / external status, vacancy eligibility and contract harmonization.

Speed of implementation: Medium Term (3-4 years)

Potential Benefits

Several workforce and transactional HR efficiencies, including shared services and expertise-sharing arrangements, are already being pursued through UN80 initiatives such as Common Back Offices and the Expertise-on-Demand Mechanism.

Merger-specific benefits could therefore include:

Impact on operational results and delivery

- Integrated workforce planning and workforce management, supported by a single workforce architecture, unified workforce policies and common people-management processes.
- Organization-wide talent management, enabled by common recruitment processes, talent pools, assessment mechanisms, learning programmes and career pathways.
- Consolidated HR leadership and workforce governance structures, supporting more consistent workforce decision-making and strategic workforce oversight.

Impact on organizational efficiency

- Reduced duplication and streamlined HR service delivery through the consolidation of HR leadership, workforce governance and support functions.
- More standardized workforce management through harmonized HR policies, tools and talent-management processes.
- Improved workforce visibility and resource allocation, enabled by integrated workforce data, common planning processes and organization-wide workforce governance that would not be available through expertise-sharing arrangements alone.

Feasibility and Risks

Feasibility

HR integration appears technically feasible because HR rules and practices are relatively standardized across the UN system, the two HR teams already collaborate, and both entities rely on UNDP for outsourced transactional HR services.

Merger-specific risks could include:

Implementation Risks

- Workforce uncertainty, morale decline and loss of critical expertise (medium likelihood): prolonged uncertainty regarding organizational direction, leadership arrangements, roles and transition sequencing may undermine staff morale, slow decision-making and weaken retention, particularly among personnel with specialized mandate-specific expertise. Mitigation would require clear transition milestones and decision points, structured staff-transition pathways, early clarification of roles and leadership arrangements, retention measures for critical functions, and sustained, transparent communication and engagement throughout the transition.
- Cultural integration challenges (high likelihood): organizational culture represents the main HR issue, due to different workforce profiles. Mitigation would require structured change-management programmes, leadership alignment, joint workforce engagement initiatives and phased integration of teams.

4.2 HR / Workforce:
Implications under the alternative options

High | Medium | Low

New arrangements

Joint talent management and workforce interoperability framework, aimed at

- Strengthen deployment of expertise where required and relevant
- Support knowledge and talent sharing across entities in areas of complementarity.

Speed of implementation: Medium Term (3-4 years)

Potential Benefits

Many interoperability benefits are also consistent with the **UN80 Expertise-on-Demand Mechanism and broader UN-system talent-sharing initiatives**.

Alternative options-related benefits would therefore include:

Impact on operational results and delivery

- **Dedicated access to complementary expertise in mandate-specific areas**, beyond generic system-wide expertise-sharing mechanisms.
- **More targeted deployment of specialized workforce capabilities**, improving workforce flexibility and organizational resilience in areas of strategic complementarity.
- **Enhanced knowledge sharing and cross-fertilization of expertise**, promoting stronger collaboration and dissemination of good practices across technical, programme and operational functions.
- **Improved access to specialized expertise** for country offices and joint initiatives, particularly where dedicated in-house capacity is limited.

Impact on organizational efficiency

- **Overall efficiency gains (on the overall Alternative Option 4)** arise from integrating support functions (e.g. Finance, HR, ICT), removing duplicated activities and consolidating functional leadership roles with harmonized processes (more details in D3).
- **Reduced effort in identifying and mobilizing specialist expertise**, enabling faster access to technical expertise and surge support where needs arise.

Feasibility and Risks

Feasibility

- **Relatively high feasibility**, as the option builds on existing mechanisms for talent sharing, workforce mobility, expertise-on-demand and knowledge exchange, without requiring structural integration or mandate changes.
- Benefits would be dependent **on active coordination, workforce planning and governance arrangements**, and may not materialize fully without sustained leadership commitment and workforce engagement.
- **Could be implemented progressively** through talent pools, short-term deployments, communities of practice and joint learning initiatives.
- **May help address capacity constraints in smaller country** offices by improving access to specialized expertise.

Specific risks would include:

Implementation Risks

- [Medium] **HR policy and system differences (medium likelihood)** may hinder workforce mobility and interoperability across the two organizations. Mitigation would require harmonized deployment protocols, mutual-recognition arrangements and targeted alignment of key HR processes.
- [Medium] **Availability and flexibility of core/regular funds and other earmarked resources (medium likelihood)** as growing reliance on earmarked funding limits the organizations ability to deploy expertise flexibility. Mitigation would require clear funding arrangements, cost-recovery mechanisms and prioritization of high-value deployment needs.
- [Medium] **Unclear accountability and reporting lines (medium likelihood)** could emerge in shared deployment arrangements, requiring robust governance mechanisms. Mitigation would require formal governance structures, clearly defined supervisory responsibilities and agreed deployment frameworks.
- [Medium] **Resistance to change (medium likelihood)** may limit uptake due to concerns around career progression, organizational identity, workload distribution and competition for talent. Mitigation would require leadership sponsorship, stakeholder engagement and demonstration of early benefits through trial initiatives.
- [Medium] **Benefits may not fully materialize (medium likelihood)** if interoperability arrangements are not supported by sustained leadership commitment, workforce planning and governance mechanisms. Mitigation would require clear objectives, accountability mechanisms, performance indicators and periodic review of results

4.3 ICT, data and analytics: **As-is situation**

United Nations Population Fund

- **Build and sustain national statistical capacity** are core components of UNFPA's mandate, including support to national statistical systems, censuses, CRVS and administrative data systems so countries can independently generate and use population data for decision- and policy-making. This role is increasingly important in a context of declining resources and ODA, including through South-South Collaboration. UNFPA also hosts the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems.
- UNFPA has established a **dedicated Digital Center of Excellence to develop and scale digital solutions across programmes and countries**. The Centre supports standardized digital products, innovation, AI-enabled tools and reusable platforms that can be deployed globally.
- **Core operations are supported through Quantum ERP, Quantum+, Quantum BI and Quantum CRM**, providing integrated planning, resource management, reporting and analytics capabilities. The organization increasingly leverages AI-enabled functionality and self-service analytics to support decision-making and operational efficiency.
- **Strategic ICT functions, architecture, cybersecurity and solution design are largely centralized**, while regional and country-level focal points support adoption, training and business engagement. ICT delivery relies extensively on shared services and outsourcing, with approximately 72% of ICT work already delivered through external providers or UN shared-service arrangements.
- UNFPA has expanded **AI adoption across the organization**, strengthened knowledge management and obtained ISO 27001 certification in 2025. Priorities include secure-by-design digital solutions, cloud-based operations, data governance and business intelligence.

UN WOMEN

- UN Women's **ICT function is centered on supporting corporate operations, enterprise applications, workplace technologies and business processes**.
- UN Women relies on **data, monitoring and reporting systems** to support programme management, results reporting and organizational accountability. **Data and analytics** primarily support planning, performance monitoring and reporting requirements across the organization.
- UN Women also uses the **Quantum ERP platform** and other shared UN technology services. However, enterprise systems have been configured to reflect UN Women's specific operating model, business processes and project-based management approach.
- Despite some shared platforms, UN Women maintains **its own applications, technology architecture, workflows and governance arrangements**. Differences in business processes, data structures and system configurations have become embedded in its ICT environment.
- UN Women has identified **opportunities to strengthen digital innovation through enhanced analytics, shared reporting, AI-enabled tools and collaboration on digital solutions**. Potential areas of development include dashboards, knowledge-sharing platforms and innovation initiatives.
- As with other UN entities, **ICT service delivery increasingly relies on cloud-based solutions, shared UN infrastructure and outsourced services**.

4.3 ICT, data and analytics:
Implications under the potential structural merger

High Medium Low

New arrangements

A merger would entail the establishment of a single ICT and digital governance architecture, integrating ICT leadership, cybersecurity, enterprise systems, infrastructure, digital platforms and data-management arrangements across the merged organization. Mandate-facing data, analytics, evaluation and foresight functions would need to be distinguished from ICT infrastructure integration and governed according to their substantive programmatic role.

In particular, it would require:

- Moving from two separate ICT functions to one integrated function supporting both corporate operations and programme delivery, with a common digital strategy, governance framework and technology roadmap.
- Establishing a dedicated digital governance and cybersecurity capacity supporting enterprise architecture, cybersecurity, business continuity, data governance and technology-risk oversight across the merged entity.
- Consolidating ICT leadership, architecture, cybersecurity, enterprise systems, data governance and analytics functions under a unified organizational structure.
- Harmonizing enterprise systems, business processes, reporting models, data standards and operating procedures across both legacy entities, including the alignment of Quantum configurations and associated platforms.
- Establishing common data governance, analytics and AI frameworks, including shared dashboards, reporting mechanisms and digital innovation initiatives.

Speed of implementation: Long Term (4+ years)

Potential Benefits

Several ICT efficiencies are already being pursued through system-wide initiatives, including shared ICT services, the Technology Accelerator Platform and the UN System Data Commons.
Merger-specific benefits would therefore need to go beyond system-wide interoperability and focus on integration under a single organizational authority:

Impact on operational results and delivery

- Improved business continuity and digital resilience, through a single ICT governance model, common cybersecurity standards and more consistent technology-risk management across the merged organization.
- More coherent enterprise architecture and application portfolio management, enabling a single organization to rationalize platforms, workflows and business systems where duplication exists.
- Improved data governance for corporate reporting and management, where data ownership, standards and reporting processes are placed under a single institutional framework.

Impact on organizational efficiency

- Reduced duplication in ICT governance, enterprise systems and application management, where systems are genuinely overlapping and not already covered by UN-wide shared services.
- Potential optimization of software licensing and maintenance arrangements, subject to assessment of existing contracts, shared-service agreements and system-wide initiatives.
- Better prioritization of digital investment, through a single ICT roadmap and consolidated decision-making on cybersecurity, infrastructure, platforms and digital tools.

Feasibility and Risks

Feasibility

ICT integration appears technically feasible but operationally complex. Both organizations already rely on common UN technology platforms and shared ICT services, while UN80 is also advancing shared ICT services and system-wide technology initiatives. The main challenge is therefore not only technology integration, but also business-process harmonization, cybersecurity, resilience, and support to programme delivery.

Specific-merger risks would include:

Implementation Risks

- Complex systems and business-process integration (high likelihood): Both organizations may use common platforms but with different configurations, workflows, reporting models and governance arrangements. Mitigation would require phased harmonization, business-process redesign and readiness-based migration.
- Cybersecurity, resilience and business-continuity risks (high likelihood): Integration could expose vulnerabilities if systems, access controls, data governance and incident-response protocols are not aligned before migration. Mitigation would require cybersecurity due diligence, continuity planning, parallel operations and security-by-design implementation.
- Data migration and standardization challenges (medium likelihood): Differences in data structures, reporting approaches and governance frameworks could complicate integration of data platforms, analytics environments and enterprise applications. Mitigation would include data-quality assessment, phased migration, common data standards and clear ownership rules.
- Significant transition costs and implementation effort (high likelihood): realizing ICT integration benefits would require substantial upfront investment in systems harmonization, migration and data consolidation (more details in D3). Mitigation would include phased implementation, investment planning and separating one-off integration costs from recurrent savings.

4.3 ICT, data and analytics: **Implications under the alternative options**

High Medium Low

New arrangements

ICT interoperability and shared digital capabilities:

- Establish a joint ICT governance forum to align digital investments, maintain a shared technology roadmap, share best practices and evaluate options for reusable or shared ICT services
- Establish a targeted interoperability framework, focusing on areas where alignment is most feasible, notably shared data platforms, analytics tools, and selected digital applications
- Develop, expand and/or scale up existing AI resources to serve both agencies programmatically and operationally, where relevant and applicable, underpinned by sustainable cost-recovery mechanisms.

Speed of implementation: Medium Term (3-4 years)

Potential Benefits

Several benefits are already being pursued through **UN80 system-wide initiatives**, including **shared ICT services**, the **Technology Accelerator Platform** and the **UN System Data Commons.** Alternative-option benefits focus on incremental interoperability gains between UNFPA and UN Women, building on existing collaboration and enabling more consistent information sharing, digital collaboration and selected shared digital capabilities:

Impact on operational results and delivery

- **Improved interoperability of selected systems and data platforms**, enabling more consistent information exchange and collaboration for agreed joint initiatives.
- **Better alignment of programme, operational and reporting data for selected joint initiatives**, supported by interoperable platforms and common standards rather than full data integration.
- **Improved access to shared digital expertise, tools and AI resources**, allowing both organizations to leverage existing capabilities and technical knowledge more effectively.

Impact on organizational efficiency

- **Overall efficiency gains (on the overall Alternative Option 4)** arise from integrating support functions (e.g. Finance, HR, ICT), removing duplicated activities and consolidating functional leadership roles with harmonized processes (more details in D3).
- **Reduced duplication in selected digital investments**, through greater reuse of platforms, applications, tools and digital services across both organizations.
- **More coordinated ICT governance and technology planning**, supported by a shared roadmap and joint evaluation of digital investments.
- **More efficient deployment of digital capabilities**, through greater reuse of platforms, applications, tools and technical expertise across both organizations. **Broader analytics and AI benefits would depend on additional investment and governance arrangements**; they should not be attributed to limited ICT interoperability alone.

Feasibility and Risks

Feasibility

- **Moderate to high feasibility**, as the option focuses on interoperability rather than full ICT consolidation. It could build on UN80 system-wide initiatives, but benefits depend on clear use cases, investment, data-governance arrangements and cybersecurity safeguards.
- **Could be implemented incrementally** through shared dashboards, common analytics tools, AI capabilities and interoperable data platforms.

Specific risks could include:

Implementation Risks

- **Significant technical complexity (medium likelihood)**, as interoperability would still require alignment of data models, APIs, cybersecurity requirements and system architectures. Mitigation would require limited pilots, agreed standards and phased rollout.
- **Cybersecurity and data-protection risks (high likelihood)**, particularly when sharing operational, programme or workforce data across entities. Mitigation would require access controls, data-sharing protocols and cybersecurity review before integration.
- **Investment and change-management risks (medium likelihood)**, as interoperability benefits would require sustained funding, technical capacity and adoption by business users. Mitigation would require prioritizing high-value use cases and defining ownership, funding and support arrangements.
- **Risk of fragmented implementation and limited adoption (medium likelihood)** if interoperability initiatives are pursued without strong governance, leadership commitment and a shared roadmap. Mitigation would require a joint ICT governance forum, clear ownership arrangements, prioritization of high-value use cases and regular monitoring of implementation progress.

4.4 Legal and risk support: **As-is situation**

United Nations Population Fund

- **Legal support is strongly influenced by UNFPA's global country presence**: The legal function goes beyond traditional advisory support and plays an important role in maintaining and managing the network of legal arrangements that enable UNFPA to operate across programme countries. This includes host-country agreements, basic agreements and other country-specific legal frameworks that establish the conditions for UNFPA's presence and operations.
- **Risk management is embedded into programmatic and operational decision-making**: UNFPA operates in complex development and humanitarian environments and therefore uses enterprise risk management not only as a compliance tool, but also as a mechanism to support informed operational decision-making and risk-taking within defined parameters.
- **Legal and risk support are closely linked to implementing-partner delivery**: Significant effort is devoted to partner oversight, fiduciary controls, sanctions processes, fraud prevention and safeguarding. This reflects the importance of implementing partners in UNFPA's delivery model and explains why compliance and safeguarding are such prominent elements of the overall framework.
- **Risk governance is highly structured but integrated with management processes**: Dedicated governance bodies and enterprise risk reporting mechanisms support oversight and escalation of critical organizational risks, while preserving a balance between operational flexibility and institutional control.

UN WOMEN

- **Legal support is closely linked to mandate implementation and organizational arrangements**: UN Women's legal function is primarily focused on supporting mandate implementation, organizational arrangements and institutional decision-making. While some legal work overlaps with other UN entities, a significant portion is mandate-specific and reflects UN Women's distinct normative, advocacy and coordination role.
- **Enterprise risk management is embedded across planning, monitoring and decision-making processes**: The organization's risk management framework is designed to integrate risk considerations directly into strategy, planning, performance monitoring and management decisions, rather than treating risk management as a standalone compliance exercise.
- **Legal and risk support are also closely linked to implementing-partner delivery**: Implementing partners are central to UN Women's business model, particularly through programme implementation, civil-society partnerships and grant-making mechanisms. Significant effort is devoted to partner-related risk management, oversight, fraud prevention, safeguarding and assurance, reflecting the central role of implementing partners in delivering UN Women's mandate.
- **Risk management extends across programme, partner and operational activities**: UN Women applies dedicated risk assessments covering projects, programme partners, fraud, private-sector partnerships, social and environmental risks, and safety and security risks.

4.4 Legal and risk support:
Implications under the potential structural merger

High Medium Low

New arrangements

A merger would entail the establishment of a single legal and risk support architecture, including harmonized legal advisory functions, risk governance mechanisms, compliance frameworks and risk-management processes.

In particular, it would require:

- Moving from two separate legal and risk functions to one integrated legal and risk support function serving the merged entity, with unified legal advisory, risk-management and compliance frameworks.
- Establishing a dedicated risk, compliance and mandate-assurance capacity supporting enterprise risk management, compliance oversight, safeguarding, governance assurance and mandate protection across the merged entity.
- Consolidating duplicative legal leadership and governance structures while preserving mandate-specific expertise and institutional knowledge.
- Aligning different legal, governance and risk-management approaches into a common architecture.
- Harmonizing partner-risk management, compliance, anti-fraud and safeguarding frameworks across both organizations.
- Reviewing and transitioning Host Country Agreements, Basic Agreements, contractual obligations and other legal arrangements to ensure continuity of operations.

Speed of implementation:
Long Term (4+ years)

Potential Benefits

Unlike procurement, HR and ICT functions, few UN80 system-wide initiatives directly target legal and risk support; consequently, the following benefits would be specific to the merger:

Impact on operational results and delivery

- Integrated legal and risk architecture: A single legal, compliance and enterprise risk management framework supporting a unified organization and mandate.
- More coherent compliance and safeguarding frameworks: Harmonized compliance, fraud prevention, implementing-partner oversight and safeguarding systems could improve consistency across operations and delivery modalities.
- Greater institutional coherence: A unified legal and risk architecture could reduce fragmentation between legal, compliance and risk-management processes while supporting more consistent governance and accountability arrangements across the merged organization.

Impact on organizational efficiency

- Reduced fragmentation across legal, compliance and risk-management functions through a common governance framework.
- More standardized compliance, safeguarding and partner-risk management processes across the organization.
- Streamlined governance, oversight and accountability arrangements supporting more consistent risk management.

Feasibility and Risks

Feasibility

The merger is legally feasible, but the primary value would come from a unified legal and risk architecture rather than from major cost savings; transition effort is expected to be significant due to the need to align governance arrangements, ensure continuity of host-country agreements and operational arrangements, and manage the transfer of assets, liabilities and contractual obligations.

Specific-merger risks would include:

Implementation Risks

- Disruption of country-level legal arrangements (high likelihood): Host Country Agreements, Basic Agreements and related country legal instruments may require review, renegotiation or replacement. Mitigation would require phased transition planning, early engagement with host governments, maintenance of existing legal arrangements until replacement agreements are in force and dedicated legal-transition support teams.
- Legal continuity risks (high likelihood): mandate-protection mechanisms could be established through dedicated governance safeguards, mandate-assurance functions and mandate-specific reporting. However, their effectiveness would depend on intergovernmental decisions and implementation arrangements, meaning mandate protection cannot be fully guaranteed. Mitigation would require clear legal transition frameworks, formal governance decisions and preservation of critical legal authorities during transition.
- Contractual and liability risks (medium likelihood): Existing contracts, supplier agreements, staff arrangements and legal obligations would need to be transferred without creating legal uncertainty. Mitigation would require a phased transfer of obligations and provisions continuity.
- Differing risk appetites (medium likelihood): Risk appetite is also a product of operating models and contexts (e.g. a strong humanitarian focus versus a more normative role) so a new, common risk framework would be needed to capture these differences. Mitigation would require a common risk-management framework and jointly agreed risk thresholds.

Outline

Comparative overview: **Structural Merger**

Component	Main arrangements	Speed of implementation	Main potential benefits	Main risks
Governance and intergovern-mental oversight	Unified governing body; institutional integration; interim governance arrangements	Long Term (4+ years)	• Is expected to strengthen UN Country Team positioning and political influence through **greater institutional scale** • Is expected to **improve coherence** and accountability from global commitments to field delivery	• GA negotiations in a context of geopolitical polarization. • **Financial risks** associated with a potential decline in donor funding and the need to finance upfront transition costs. • Potential lack of political appetite for a joint Board **Rating**: High
Decision-making, accountability and coordination arrangements	Unified executive leadership; single HQ–field decision chain; integrated strategic, results framework and reporting system	Medium Term (3-4 years)	• A unified decision-making structure would streamline governance, clarify authority, and support more consistent implementation • A single strategic and results framework is expected to strengthen end-to-end accountability for delivering results for women and girls • Unified reporting would improve transparency and performance oversight by providing a consolidated view of results, resources, and organisational performance	• Risk of temporary operational disruption due to the complexity of the organisational transition. • Integrating results frameworks could be technically complex and affect the continuity and comparability of existing entity-specific KPIS **Rating**: Medium
Procurement and supply chain	Single procurement and supply-chain architecture	Long Term (4+ years)	• **Would expand procurement capabilities and stronger institutional coherence**, through integration of commodity, programme and corporate procurement activities • **Would** lead to more **optimum and efficient use of human resources** • **Would improve standardization**, including stronger vendor management and procurement oversight	• Integration complexity between procurement, as UNFPA's commodity-focused procurement platform and UN Women's service-oriented procurement model have different operating requirements, governance arrangements and supplier ecosystems. A unified model would therefore require differentiated procurement streams rather than complete standardization. • Could result in **supply-chain continuity risks**, particularly for commodity procurement and humanitarian operations, including the delivery of essential reproductive health commodities in fragile and crisis-affected settings • Operational transition risk, as procurement redesign, systems changes and governance harmonization may create temporary ambiguity and affect procurement operations and service delivery. **Rating**: **Medium**
HR / workforce	Single HR function and workforce architecture	Medium Term (3-4 years)	• **Would better integrate workforce planning and organization-wide talent management**, through a single workforce architecture and common people-management processes • **Would streamline HR service delivery**, with stronger workforce visibility and resource allocation	• Could result in **workforce uncertainty, morale decline and loss of critical expertise**, particularly where uncertainty around roles, leadership and transition sequencing affects retention and staff engagement • Could result in **cultural integration challenges**, as differences in organizational cultures and operating models may complicate workforce integration **Rating**: Medium
ICT, data and analytics	Single ICT, data and analytics function	Long Term (4+ years)	• **Would improve business continuity, digital resilience and data governance**, through a single ICT governance architecture • **Would streamline ICT governance and systems, and better prioritization of digital investments**	• **Could result in complex systems and business-process integration**, including data migration and standardization challenges • **Could result in** cybersecurity**, resilience and transition-cost risks**, requiring significant investment and implementation effort **Rating**: Medium
Legal and risk support	Single legal and risk architecture	Long Term (4+ years)	• **Would better integrate legal, compliance and risk architecture**, supporting a unified organization and mandate • **Would improve governance coherence and more standardized compliance, safeguarding and risk-management processes**	• **Legal continuity risks**, including continuity of legal authorities, governance safeguards and accountability arrangements • **Disruption of country-level legal arrangements and contractual/liability risks** during transition (subject to OLA review and confirmation) **Rating**: Medium
Package level	Integrated governance, leadership, operational, corporate and enabling-function architecture across the unified organization	Medium to long term (varies by component	• Would strengthen institutional scale, decision-making coherence, organizational efficiency and development impact for women and girls through merging governance arrangements, leadership structures and operational support functions.	• Medium to high transition complexity: it would require the mandates of both organizations to be protected against potential duplication and require careful management of operational continuity, governance arrangements, workforce integration and systems change during a transition period to manage disruption risks.

Comparative overview: **Alternative Options**

Note that civil society inputs emphasized that the comparison should consider not only the scale of potential institutional change, but also evidence of net benefit, mandate protection, transition and implementation risks, and continuity of country-level delivery. CSOs also highlighted the potential of stronger collaboration and selected interoperability in areas of demonstrated complementarity.

Component	Main Arrangements	Speed of implementation	Main **potential** benefits	Main risks
Governance and intergovern-mental oversight	One joint formal EB session per year; regular joint informal EB sessions; Joint technical Task forces	Timing dependent on agreement; Potentially Short-Term (i.e.. 1–2 years) for initial arrangements	• Joint governance could **reinforce Boards' oversight and implementation of the alternative options** • Alternative arrangements could support progressive **strengthening of coordination at strategical and operational level** while managing transition risks • Not contingent on GA approval	• Informal governance coordination may have limited impact for beneficiaries if it does not change incentives or accountability mechanisms • Additional meetings, task forces and reporting could increase bureaucracy without clear decisions, KPIs or follow-up • Reliance on continued coordination and negotiated agreement could delay decisions and implementation, particularly where the organizations must resolve complex and sensitive mandate, accountability and financing issues. (e.g., on EVAWG/GBV). **rating**: Medium
Decision-making, accountability and coordination arrangements	Common results framework; joint escalation mechanisms; annual reporting to joint session	Timing dependent on negotiation and approval of scope, results and accountability arrangements	• Clearer accountability for joint activities could be promoted through defined roles, reporting responsibilities, and escalation mechanisms within existing governance arrangements • A common results framework could strengthen the link between global commitments and country-level results for women and girls if both organizations agree its scope, indicators, decision rights, reporting requirements and relationship to their separate accountability frameworks. • Joint reporting could improve visibility of collective progress for key stakeholders while preserving entity-specific mandates and accountability arrangements • Not contingent on GA approval	• Additional coordination and reporting mechanisms may increase administrative costs and complexity if not kept streamlined and aligned with existing processes. • Joint results may create accountability challenges unless roles, decision rights, and governance arrangements are clearly defined. • Collaboration mechanisms may have limited impact if they do not translate into shared incentives, ownership, and behavioral change across teams. • Reflecting potentially high coordination and accountability risks where roles, decision rights and incentives are not agreed **rating**: Medium
Procurement and supply chain	Procurement as a Service	Medium Term (3-4 years)	• **Could preserve specialized procurement expertise and supply-chain continuit**y, particularly for specialized procurement categories and critical commodities • **Could lead to targeted efficiency gains through shared services and vendor-management arrangements**, without requiring structural integration	• **Could result in capacity and service-delivery risks** if procurement as a service is insufficiently defined or resourced. • **Could result in limited and uneven efficiency gains**, as benefits depend on sustained coordination and may not fully address underlying fragmentation. **rating**: Medium
HR / workforce	Joint talent management and workforce interoperability framework	Medium Term (3-4 years)	• **Could improve access to specialized expertise across organizations**, including targeted deployments and expertise-on-demand arrangements • **Could improve workforce flexibility, organizational resilience and knowledge-sharing**, while preserving separate mandates and workforce-management systems	• **HR policy, funding and accountability differences** may limit workforce mobility and interoperability • **Benefits may not fully materialize** without sustained leadership commitment, workforce planning and governance arrangements **rating**: Medium
ICT, data and analytics	ICT interoperability and shared digital capabilities	Medium Term (3-4 years)	• **Could improve interoperability of selected systems and data platforms**, supporting information sharing, collaboration and agreed joint initiatives • **Could improve the ICT governance and the deployment of digital capabilities**, through shared tools, platforms and expertise	• **Could result in technical interoperability, cybersecurity and data-protection challenges**. • **Could result in investment, change-management and fragmented-implementation risks**, requiring sustained governance and leadership commitment. **rating**: Medium
Legal and risk support	**Non-merger comparator**: Existing institutional arrangements	N/A	• **Preserves existing legal authorities, accountability frameworks and institutional arrangements** • Avoids **legal-transition requirements** associated with a merger	N/A
Package level	Improved joint governance, accountability, procurement, HR and ICT arrangements, while preserving existing legal authorities and separate mandates management	Short-term to Medium-Term (varies by option)	• Could strengthen collaboration at strategic and technical levels in selected areas and enhance efficiency, coherence and development impact in these areas for women and girls, while preserving the organizations' separate mandates, legal identities and structures	• Medium: they would introduce their own implementation dependencies, including additional coordination capacity, aligned incentives, financing and follow-through across two organizations

Outline

Potential sequencing and conditions for success

Merger scenario	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030+
Governance & Intergovernmental oversight					
Decision-making, accountability & coordination					
HR / workforce integration, transition & mobility					
Legal & risk architecture integration					
ICT, data & analytics interoperability and harmonization					
Procurement & supply-chain consolidation					

Conditions for success

- Explicit mandate protection
- Phased and disciplined implementation
- Continuity of critical operations
- Clear governance and accountability arrangements
- Dedicated transition financing
- Strong political and stakeholder support,including structured civil society engagement

Alternative options	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030+
Enhanced governance coordination (5.1) (Timing dependent on agreement)					
Shared accountability and country-level results (2.4)					
Harmonization of business process (4.1)					
Specialized procurement continuity and vendor management (4.2)					
Joint Talent Management (4.3)					
ICT interoperability and shared digital capabilities (4.4)					

Conditions for success

- Strong governance and accountability mechanisms
- Leadership commitment and common strategic priorities
- Progressive implementation
- Harmonized frameworks and standards
- Preservation of complementarity mandates and specialized expertise
- Adequate sourcing and incentives
- Continued engagement with civil society and women's organizations

Outline

Triangulation of evidence across assessment components

For each component assessed in this deliverable, evidence was triangulated across multiple sources, including the desk review and stakeholder consultations. The table below presents the key documents and interviews used to inform the assessment of each component.

<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2">Component</th><th colspan="2">Component specific</th><th colspan="2">Cross-cutting</th></tr>
<tr><th>Key documentation</th><th>Key interviews</th><th>Key documentation</th><th>Key interviews</th></tr>
<tr><td>Governance and intergovernmental oversight</td><td>• Executive Boards’ Rules and Procedures
• UNGA Resolutions</td><td>• Secretary of Executive Board
• Intergovernmental Support
• Regional Directors</td><td rowspan="6">• Strategic Merger Assessment
• Alternative Options Assessments
• CSOs’ Reponses to the two reforms scenarios
• UN80 document
• MOPAN Assessments
• UNFPA and UN Women Independent Evaluations</td><td rowspan="6">• CSOs (working sessions)
• Legal Department</td></tr>
<tr><td>Decision-making, accountability and coordination arrangements</td><td>• Organizational charts
• Integrated Results and Resources Frameworks
• Strategic Plans
• Management and Administration Reviews</td><td>• Head of Department and Divisions
• Regional Directors
• Country Representatives</td></tr>
<tr><td>Procurement and supply chain</td><td>• Procurement and Supply Chain Performance Documentation</td><td>• Senior Executive Leadership
• Procurement and Supply Chain Management Leadership</td></tr>
<tr><td>HR / workforce</td><td>• Strategic and Workforce Planning Documents
• Human Resources Policies and Governance Frameworks
• Organizational Design and Workforce Structure Documents</td><td>• Senior Executive Leadership
• Human resources leadership and workforce planning specialists</td></tr>
<tr><td>ICT, data and analytics</td><td>• IT consolidation proposals</td><td>• Senior Executive Leadership
• Information technology and digital transformation leadership</td></tr>
<tr><td>Legal and risk support</td><td>• Governance, Accountability and Oversight Frameworks
• Enterprise Risk Management Documentation
• Legal and Institutional Frameworks</td><td>• Senior Executive Leadership
• Legal, risk management and oversight functions</td></tr>
</table>

Stakeholder Interactions

Stakeholder Group	Engagement
UN Women Headquarters	Deputy Chief of Staff, Deputy Executive Director, Chief Financial Officer and other headquarters-based leaders consulted during the assessment
UNFPA Headquarters	Directors and senior management from management services, strategic resource planning and related headquarters functions
Regional Offices	Regional Directors and regional leadership representatives from UNFPA and UN Women regional offices
Country Offices	UNFPA and UN Women Country Representatives and country-level perspectives gathered through consultations and dedicated country representative engagements
Civil Society Organisations	Participants in dedicated consultation processes and written submissions during the assessment
Member State Perspectives	Perspectives reviewed through Executive Board discussions, formal statements and UN80 consultation processes
Project Governance	Steering Committee discussions with UNFPA and UN Women throughout the assessment process

Bibliography

Author	Year	Document
Feminist Cross-Coalition (FCC) UN80 Working Group	2026	Response to the Strategic Merger Assessment of UNFPA and UN Women
Feminist Cross-Coalition (FCC) UN80 Working Group	2026	Reform Without a Merger: Options for Enhancing Coherence, Efficiency, and Country-Level Impact
Fòs Feminista	2026	Getting UN80 Right: Protecting Mandates While Improving Coordination
JIU	2024	Review of management and administration in UN-Women
MOPAN	2025	Assessment Report: UNFPA
MOPAN	2025	Assessment Report: UN Women
Soroptimist International & Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice	2026	Consolidated Findings: The UN Liquidity Crisis, UN80 Reform and the UNFPA–UN Women Merger
UN	2011	Rules of Procedures of the Executive Board of the UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS
UN Women	/	Developing the UNW People Strategy
UN Women	2026	Organizational Chart
UN Women	2025	UN Women Strategic Plan 2026-2029 (UNW/2025/7)
UN Women	2025	L&D Leadership & Team Learning Journeys and Support 2025

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Author	Year	Document
UN Women	2025	FRS Background Note – Organisational Culture and Anti-Discrimination
UN Women	2025	UN Women Efforts on Racial Discrimination Background Note
UN Women	2025	Risk Management Policy
UN Women	2025	Integrated Results and Resources Framework (Annexed to the Strategic Plan 2026-29)
UN Women	2024	MHS Scorecard Results – UN Women Extract
UNFPA	2026	Overview Summary_Legal & Risk Frameworks
UNFPA	2026	Organizational Chart
UNFPA	2025	ExBo_Joint update on ERM and critical risks
UNFPA	2025	UNFPA Strategic Plan 2026-2029 (DP/FPA/2025/9)
UNFPA	2025	Integrated Results and Resources Framework (Annexed to the Strategic Plan 2026-29)
UNFPA	2024	External_Human Resources Policy in UNFPA
UNFPA	2024	2024 Procurement Stats
UNFPA	2024	External_UNFPA Supplies Annual Report 2024

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Author	Year	Document
UNFPA	2022	Formative Evaluation of UNFPA Engagement in UN Development System Reform
UNFPA	2022	External_UNFPA Enterprise Risk Management
UNFPA	2018	External_Policy against fraudulent and other prescribed practices
UNFPA & UN Women	2026	Alternative Options for Enhanced Alignment, Impact and Efficiency
UNFPA & UN Women	2026	Strategic Merger Assessment of UNFPA and UN Women: Final Consolidated Report
UNFPA & UN Women	2026	IT consolidation proposal and assumptions
UNGA	2010	Resolution 64/289 establishing UN Women
UNGA	1993	Resolution 48/162 (Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields)