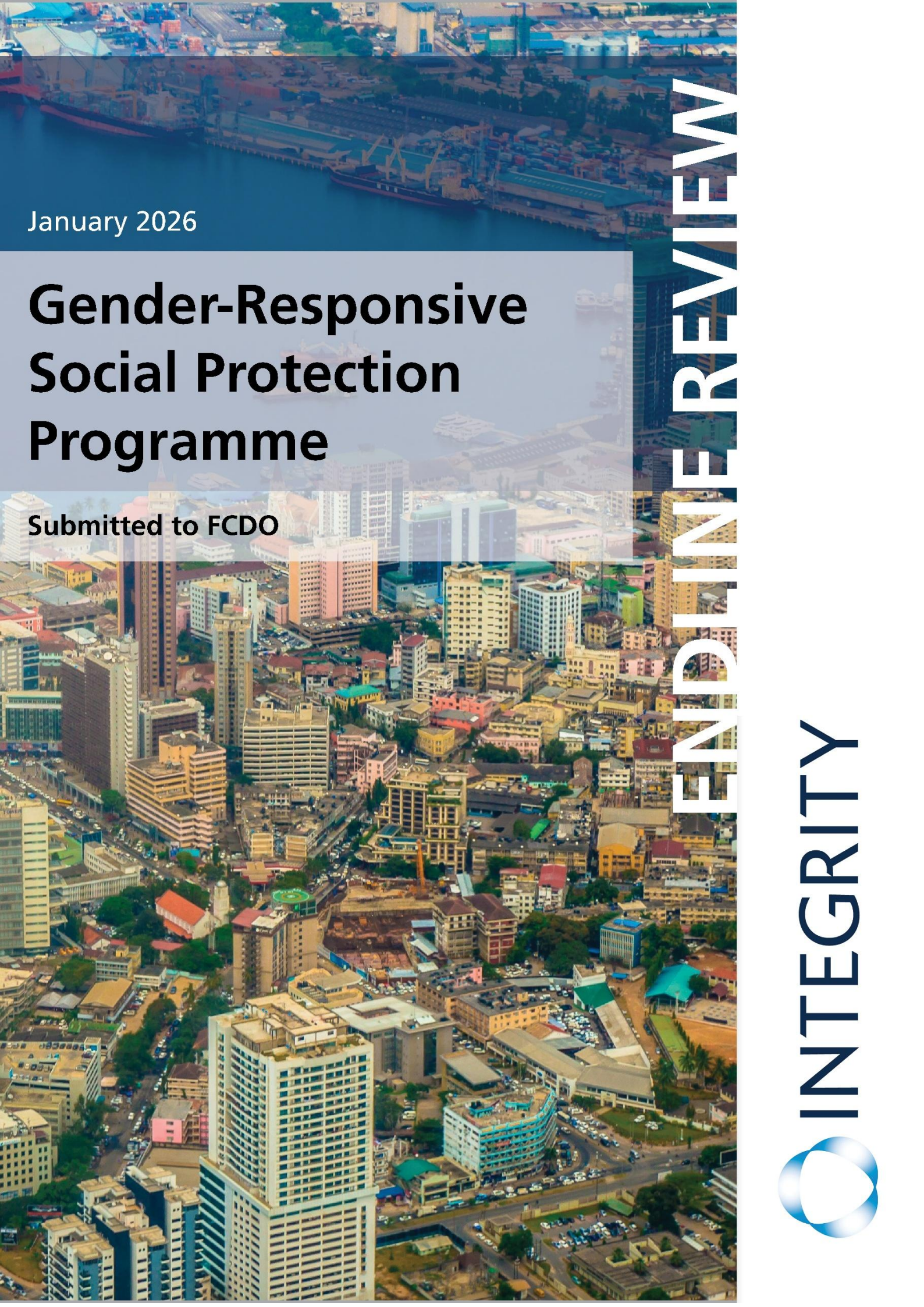


An aerial photograph of a city, likely Accra, Ghana, showing a river, port area with ships, and dense urban development with various buildings and infrastructure.

January 2026

Gender-Responsive Social Protection Programme

Submitted to FCDO

ENDLINE REVIEW

 INTEGRITY



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VERSION HISTORY

Version	Produced by	Reviewed by	Week commencing
1	Valerie McDonnell-Lenoach, Georgia Plank, Lamia Renaud, Bonnie Stuart	Susanne Turrell, Nick Moore	27/10/25
2	Valerie McDonnell-Lenoach, Georgia Plank, Lamia Renaud, Bonnie Stuart	FCDO Social Protection Team	03/11/25
3	Valerie McDonnell-Lenoach, Georgia Plank, Lamia Renaud, Bonnie Stuart	FCDO Social Protection Team, GSP Partners	27/11/25
4	Valerie McDonnell-Lenoach, Georgia Plank, Lamia Renaud, Bonnie Stuart	FCDO Social Protection Team	05/01/26

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: We are grateful to the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office for supporting this project. We are indebted to the participants who generously gave their time and expertise to make the consultation fruitful and rich. This report has been written by Integrity Global Limited. Due to the sensitivity of both the topic and findings, we request that caution is taken before referencing or circulating this document. For further information, please email info@integrityglobal.com.

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Acronyms

ASPIRE	Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity
BASIC	Better Assistance in Crises
CO	Country Office
CoP	Community of Practice
DAI	Development Alternatives International
FCAS	Fragile and Conflict-Affected States
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEWEL	Girls Education, Women's Empowerment and Livelihoods
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GRASSP	Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection
GRSP	Gender-Responsive Social Protection
GSP	Gender-Responsive Social Protection Programme
HEART	High Quality Technical Assistance for Results
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IDA	International Development Association
IP	Implementing Partner
NSSNP	National Social Safety Net Project
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PFP	Programme-Funded Post
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme
RSR	Rapid Social Response
SDA	Social Development Advisor
SP	Social Protection
SPACE	Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19 Expert Advice Service
SPIAC-B	Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board
SPL	Social Protection and Labour
SPT	Social Protection Team
SSI	Semi-Structured Interview
STAAR	Social Protection Technical Assistance, Advice, and Resources
TA	Technical Assistance
ToC	Theory of Change
VfM	Value for Money
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

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Executive Summary

Integrity was contracted in early 2025 to deliver the Endline Review of the Gender-Responsive Social Protection (GSP) programme. This review builds on the GSP baseline (2021) and midline (2022) evaluations and assesses GSP's contribution to the outcomes in its Theory of Change. It looks at what worked, why, and the factors that helped or hindered effectiveness across GSP's key modalities, including technical advice, research, advocacy, and capacity building. The review findings will inform GSP's Programme Completion Review and shape decisions on any future programme.

Gender-Responsive Social Protection programme (GSP)

GSP is a £19 million programme (2018–2026) that aims to improve outcomes for the most marginalised women and girls through social protection and gender equality policies. In May 2024, GSP was extended by one year (to March 2026) to maximise learning, policy influence, and uptake. It operates through four linked workstreams:

- **The Gender-Responsive, Age-Sensitive Social Protection research (GRASSP) programme (UNICEF Innocenti), £5 million:** Producing evidence on the contribution of SP approaches to gender equality and the integration of gender in SP systems.
- **Technical assistance (TA) (DAI), £4.1 million¹:** FCDO is improving the effectiveness of its and its partners' bilateral investments in SP and gender through the Social Protection Technical Assistance, Advice, and Resources (STAAR) Facility, delivered by DAI, and prior to that through the Expert Advisory Call Down Service Lot C, led by the Heart Consortium. It also funded a STAAR GSP adviser, with the role later becoming a broader GSP advisor.
- **Strengthening capacities and influencing practices on SP and gender in the World Bank (World Bank), £8.5 million:** With FCDO input, the World Bank established a Gender Window in the Rapid Social Response (RSR) Multi-Donor-Trust Fund, and part funded a senior gender specialist in the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice.
- **Knowledge exchange, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) (UNICEF), £1.3 million:** Activities to deliver knowledge exchange and MEL. These included an independent baseline and midline evaluation led by ITAD and Ecorys, additional UNICEF GRASSP uptake and dissemination activities, and an FCDO Programme-Funded Post (PFP) seconded to UNICEF's Child Poverty and Social Protection Unit to strengthen its focus on gender-responsive social protection (GRSP) and drive sector-wide change; this role was funded between July 2019 to August 2022 by FCDO and is now fully funded by UNICEF².

GSP's Theory of Change sets out three main pathways for embedding gender in social protection. These focus on influencing programme partners such as the World Bank, FCDO and UNICEF; government actors; and the wider community of policymakers and practitioners working on gender equality and social protection.

Review approach

To meet its objectives, the review used a theory-based, mixed-methods approach guided by the GSP Theory of Change. Outcome Harvesting was the main method used for assessing GSP's contribution to national and global outcomes. The team reviewed 132 documents and conducted 49 semi-structured interviews with delivery teams, GSP users, and other stakeholders to identify, explain,

¹ Of which £2,958,570.65 was allocated through STAAR

² The term UNICEF is used throughout the report to subsume two entities. Namely UNICEF Innocenti in reference to GRASSP research design and delivery and the UNICEF GRSP team when referring to TA for programming and policy work. The UNICEF component thereby supports evidence generation and uptake across all UNICEF engaged countries and not just the nine focal countries for GRASSP research.

and verify outcomes. Four light-touch remote case studies in Ethiopia, Nepal, Tanzania, and Zambia, provided additional insights into country-level delivery, including enablers and barriers to change, workstream synergies, uptake, and sustainability.

As with any research, this review faced some limitations. It was not possible to isolate results from FCDO's funding to the World Bank Multi-Donor Trust Fund because resources were pooled. Uptake of UNICEF outputs was also still in progress during the review, and limited access to country-level stakeholders reduced the number of interviews feeding into the case studies.

Key findings

The review addressed three overarching questions aligned with the OECD DAC criteria of effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. Key findings for each criterion are presented below, along with an assessment of the programme's value for money across its workstreams.

Effectiveness: To what extent did GSP workstreams, individually and in combination, meet their objectives?

GSP contributed to strengthened gender-responsive social protection (GRSP) systems globally, institutionally, and in countries. It shaped global policy agendas and produced key public goods. With GSP support, both the World Bank and UNICEF made considerable institutional changes: UNICEF's PFP created regional and country GRSP focal points and informed commitments made in the 2026–30 UNICEF Strategic Plans, while the World Bank's gender advisor advanced GRSP tools and helped shift organisational priorities. The World Bank's close links to operations enabled it to directly influence national programmes, and UNICEF, via GRASSP and its PFP, informed country-level design and reform, with 129 UNICEF offices now engaging governments on GRSP. STAAR provided timely support in responding to immediate and emergent needs, and had the strongest impact on GRSP communities of practice. GSP contributed across both fragile and mature systems and offered a uniquely influential, flexible, and technically far-reaching donor model.

The programme also demonstrated high adaptability. UNICEF adjusted research agendas and country focus; STAAR reshaped assignments and leveraged partnerships; and the World Bank shifted priorities and delivery approaches at the global and country levels. Flexibility was clear in sequencing, crisis response, and the use of embedded advisers and national partners.

Impact: To what extent did the GSP workstreams, individually and in combination, successfully contribute to the programme's expected impacts?

All GSP workstreams contributed to final outcomes in the GSP Theory of Change. The World Bank expanded gender-responsive social protection, while STAAR and UNICEF strengthened partner programmes, and UNICEF mobilised additional funds. Overall, GSP delivered strong institutional impacts and influenced FCDO and partner governments to integrate gender considerations into social protection.

Impact varied across workstreams and contexts. The World Bank had the greatest influence due to its larger investment and alignment with its operations. Contributions did not follow a clear geographic pattern, with mixed outcomes across systems with differing levels of maturity. STAAR helped build awareness in contexts where the integration of gender into social protection systems was less of a national priority, and was successful in reaching a diverse user base. The proximity of all GSP workstreams to World Bank and UNICEF country activities increased the likelihood of impact, and growing synergies between all GSP workstreams further enhanced effectiveness and value for money.

Sustainability: To what extent will any GRSP-related 1) financing commitments, 2) evidence-informed system-level changes, or 3) broader outcomes and benefits, contributed to by GSP, persist after the programme closes?

GSP has laid some foundations for sustainability across its workstreams. STAAR by embedding gender-responsive social protection (GRSP) in organisations it supported, UNICEF through evidence and advocacy with governments, and the World Bank via internal reforms and operations. While progress from a gender-unaware baseline is clear, sustaining these gains was suggested to require continued advocacy at the country level.

Sustainability depends on several enabling factors such as embedding advisers and national consultants, aligning GRSP with government priorities, and promoting shared learning through tools like the World Bank's Gender Markers and UNICEF's Gender Continuum. However, risks, including budget cuts, political turnover, short-term funding, and limited opportunities for follow-up, threaten progress, especially where gender as a priority remains contested. Continued local engagement is essential for context-sensitive design and lasting impact.

Value for Money: Did the resources allocated to workstream activities represent good value for money in terms of their relative contribution to GSP outcomes?

GSP delivered good value for money. World Bank Gender Window grants were rated as highly cost effective, UNICEF leveraged additional funding, and STAAR expanded its user base while promoting gender-responsive social protection. All workstreams applied cost-saving measures such as using national consultants, competitive procurement, and resource sharing. COVID-19 delays and budget constraints affected timely delivery for UNICEF. The World Bank component was the most efficient, influencing a \$9.6 billion social protection portfolio with an £8.5 million investment, reaching 108 million people (including 56.6 million women and girls). UNICEF used £5 million to catalyse an additional \$5 million in funding. While the TA Facility achieved impact-level results in Nepal and Côte d'Ivoire, its £4 million³ investment was less cost-effective at this stage. In several contexts, STAAR's role focused on awareness raising, diagnostic work or seeding dialogue around GRSP principles and in so doing laying the foundation for future systemic change. It was also suggested by SSIs that additional STAAR contributions to ultimate and final outcomes due to ongoing stakeholder-led processes may arise in the longer term after the lifetime of the facility. Equity was central throughout, with a strong focus on marginalised women, girls, and people with disabilities. For example, a World Bank grant in Uzbekistan supported the shift from institutional to community-based care and improved services for children with disabilities.

Main conclusions

GSP has clearly improved the gender responsiveness and quality of social protection systems, though progress varied across workstreams. The World Bank's close link to operations gave it strong leverage to influence programming. UNICEF's country-level impact was still emerging as uptake and dissemination were ongoing during the review. STAAR broadened engagement by reaching diverse users and supported systems not yet primed for gender-responsive approaches.

The value for money proposition in the GSP Business Case has been realised with the programme generating substantial benefits and thereby justifying its cost. Partnerships with major institutions like UNICEF and the World Bank helped mainstream gender in their operations, while STAAR strengthened awareness and enabled policy change among FCDO and other actors.

³ Of which £2,958,570.65 was allocated through STAAR

GSP acted as an incubator for learning on how to influence policy and practice. Building user capacity broadly across different groups, and using co-creation and demand-led approaches proved critical for buy-in and impact.

However, sustainability is uncertain. Budget cuts and aid reductions threaten continuity, and some results lack the maturity to endure beyond programme closure. Sustained advocacy and momentum was suggested as being critical to embedding gender-responsive social protection.

Implications for a follow-on programme

The review identified several critical interventions and implications for any future programme with similar objectives to GSP:

Capacity and uptake

- **Broad capacity building:** Build capacity on gender-responsive social protection (GRSP) across all levels of government, implementing partners, and community-based organisations.
- **Prioritise uptake plans:** Prioritise targeted uptake and dissemination of outputs among specific groups to maximise influence.

Research gaps

- **Address gaps:** Address evidence gaps by focusing on underexplored, interconnected areas such as disability, climate change, and social protection for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Delivery modalities

- **Phase delivery:** Use phased implementation to enable immediate action while laying foundations for sustainable change.
- **Modality mix:** Offer a range of support modalities to meet diverse user needs. Sometimes short, targeted inputs are more effective than long-term engagement.

Institutional influence and sustainability

- **Embedded experts:** Embed gender experts within key institutions to influence policy and sustain momentum.
- **Sustainability focus:** Linked to targeted uptake and use, make sustainability a key criterion when selecting assignments for on-demand technical assistance.
- **Programme targeting:** Ensure future Theories of Change emphasise the influencing of both existing and new social protection programmes to embed gender responsiveness.

1 Purpose, scope, objectives and methodology

This section introduces the Endline Review of the Gender and Social Protection programme. It outlines the programme's background and the review's objectives, scope, questions, intended audiences, and limitations.

1.1 Introduction

FCDO contracted Integrity in early 2025 to deliver the Endline Review of the Gender and Social Protection (GSP) programme. This review builds on GSP baseline (December 2021) and midline evaluations (November 2022) conducted by previous evaluators.

GSP is a £19 million programme funded by the FCDO Social Protection Team (SPT) in the Food Security, Agriculture, Land and Social Protection Department (FALSoc). GSP commenced in July 2018 and was originally intended to run until 2023, but was extended three times. It is scheduled to end in March 2026. It is delivered by the World Bank, UNICEF and DAI Global UK Ltd⁴. The programme aims to maximise the impact and value for money (VfM) of social protection (SP) and gender equality programming globally. It integrates strategies that address income insecurity and other persistent barriers that the most vulnerable women and girls in stable and fragile environments face. GSP comprises the following four inter-related workstreams⁵:

- **The Gender-Responsive, Age-Sensitive Social Protection research (GRASSP) programme (UNICEF Innocenti), £5 million:** Producing evidence on the contribution of SP approaches to gender equality and the integration of gender in SP systems.
- **Technical assistance (TA) (DAI), £4.1 million⁶:** FCDO is improving the effectiveness of its and its partners' bilateral investments in SP and gender through the Social Protection Technical Assistance, Advice, and Resources (STAAR) Facility, delivered by DAI, and prior to that through the Expert Advisory Call Down Service Lot C, led by the Heart Consortium. It also funded a STAAR GSP adviser, with the role later becoming a broader GSP advisor.
- **Strengthening capacities and influencing practices on SP and gender in the World Bank (World Bank), £8.5 million:** With FCDO input, the World Bank established a Gender Window in the Rapid Social Response (RSR) Multi-Donor-Trust Fund, and part funded a senior gender specialist in the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice.
- **Knowledge exchange, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) (UNICEF), £1.3 million:** Activities to deliver knowledge exchange and MEL. These included an independent baseline and midline evaluation led by ITAD and Ecorys, additional UNICEF GRASSP uptake and dissemination activities, and an FCDO Programme-Funded Post seconded to UNICEF's Child Poverty and Social Protection Unit to strengthen its focus on gender-responsive social protection (GRSP) and drive sector-wide change; this role was funded between July 2019 to August 2022 by FCDO and is now fully funded by UNICEF⁷.

1.2 Objectives and questions of the Endline Review

The objective of this Endline Review was to assess GSP's achievements and contributions towards outcome-level changes stated in GSP's Theory of Change (ToC) as presented in

⁴ The DAI-led consortium comprised OPM, ODI, Valid Evaluations, IRC and Key Aid Consulting.

⁵ 2024 GSP Annual Review.

⁶ Of which £2,958,570.65 was allocated through STAAR

⁷ The term UNICEF is used throughout the report to subsume two entities. Namely UNICEF Innocenti in reference to GRASSP research design and delivery and the UNICEF GRSP team when referring to TA for programming and policy work. The UNICEF component thereby supports evidence generation and uptake across all UNICEF engaged countries and not just the nine focal countries for GRASSP research.

Section 2. The review examined what has worked and why in advancing GRSP, and how national and global efforts can be improved. It also identified factors that enable or hinder the effectiveness of technical advice, research, advocacy, and capacity building, contributing to the global GRSP evidence base. The review will also inform GSP's Programme Completion Review by providing a summative analysis of GSP's performance over time.

The study was framed as a review rather than a full evaluation to allow deeper analysis of outcome-level changes GSP may have influenced. This approach enabled faster delivery, reduced FCDO administrative costs, and minimised burden on GSP Partners.

The review was designed to respond to three overarching questions, corresponding to the OECD DAC criteria of effectiveness, impact and sustainability⁸:

- 1. Effectiveness:** To what extent did the GSP workstreams, individually and in combination, meet their objectives?
- 2. Impact:** To what extent did the GSP workstreams, individually and in combination, successfully contribute to the programme's expected impacts?
- 3. Sustainability:** To what extent will any GRSP-related 1) financing commitments, 2) evidence-informed system-level changes, or 3) broader outcomes and benefits, contributed to by GSP, persist after the programme closes?

A full list of review questions is presented in Annex A. The sub-review question relating to Impact Learning (review question 2.3) builds on findings presented in the report and is presented in the conclusion given its focus on learning to be taken forward into a possible future programme. The evaluation questions on effectiveness and impact allow for an assessment of performance at both the workstream and programme levels. However, the three components use different modalities, operate in different ways, and are seeking to deliver change through different means. Both the differences and the similarities of each workstream are highlighted in the review.

For the purposes of this review, effectiveness refers to immediate and intermediate outcomes in the ToC, and impact refers to final and ultimate ToC outcomes. The review also responded to additional themes raised in the 2024/25 GSP FCDO Annual Review, as requested by FCDO during the review delivery period. These themes, and our review questions and sub-questions, are set out in Annex 1.

1.3 Scope and target audience for this Endline Review

The review scope was defined as follows:

- **Time period:** The review covered GSP implementation between July 2018 and September 2025. Given the long implementation duration, qualitative research undertaken by the review focused on GSP activity completed since 2020 to mitigate recall bias issues. The Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19 Expert Advice Service (SPACE), managed by DAI, was out of scope of this review because it has been evaluated separately.⁹
- **Coverage:** The review examined delivery across all GSP workstreams and geographies since the start of programme implementation. It focused primarily on the views and experiences of direct GSP users, as well as wider SP and gender actors and institutions¹⁰.

⁸ OECD (2021), Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully, OECD Publishing, Paris. Date accessed: 25/10/25. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1787/543e84ed-en>.

⁹ Both through the FCDO Better Assistance in Crises Performance Evaluation, and a separate GIZ evaluation.

¹⁰ Technical assistance provided through High Quality Technical Assistance for Results (HEART), the precursor of GSP, was beyond the scope of this review, due to available resources and timelines.

- **Outcomes:** The review considered contributions to immediate, intermediate, ultimate and final outcomes in the ToC and the potential for these changes. The final GSP impact (*‘improved well-being and empowerment of women and girls’*) was not directly assessed by the review.

The primary intended users of this review are the FCDO SPT and the GSP Partners. The secondary intended users are FCDO posts and policy and research teams implementing SP and gender programmes, UNICEF and World Bank operational teams and partner governments, and FCDO programme teams delivering (non-SP) TA and research, and their implementation teams. Tertiary intended users are inclusive SP TA and research programme teams external to FCDO¹¹.

1.4 Methodology

To meet the review objectives, we used a theory-based mixed-methods approach using the GSP ToC (presented in Section 2) developed by the previous evaluation suppliers to investigate any contributions GSP has made to outcomes of interest¹².

An outcome harvesting approach was used to assess GSP’s contribution to results for the assessments of effectiveness and impact globally. Outcome harvesting is “a method that enables evaluators, grant makers, and managers to identify, formulate, verify, and make sense of outcomes. The method was inspired by the definition of outcome as a change in the behaviour, relationships, actions, activities, policies, or practices of an individual, group, community, organisation, or institution¹³”.

We used GSP’s ToC to map observed changes to outcomes and conducted research to validate that the changes have taken place as suggested. We then applied a typology of contributions to results (set out in Table 1) to assess the contribution of GSP to observed changes. This approach ensured that all key results across the portfolio of GSP interventions were identified.

Table 1: Typology for assessing GSP’s contributions to results

Significant/Essential	Catalyst (triggering change)	No/limited contribution
Clear additionality: GSP support was a necessary condition for achieving the result and played a crucial and indispensable role in enabling it.	Some additionality: While GSP contributed to the result or created an entry point for triggering change, some aspects of the result may have occurred at a smaller scale.	Limited additionality: The result would have happened regardless of GSP involvement.

We complemented this approach with a case-based approach to understand the enablers and inhibitors to results at the country level. Four light-touch, remote case studies were prepared to explore GSP delivery in specific countries, with a focus on understanding GSP workstream synergies, national uptake, and sustainability. Criteria used to select the case study countries included: a) the presence of significant activity across at least two different GSP workstreams and the extent of planned synergies between them, and b) FCDO priority countries. The four selected countries were Ethiopia, Nepal, Tanzania and Zambia. The selection of case study countries was also discussed with GSP Partners to ensure that engagement with in-country stakeholders was feasible. These case studies are presented in full in Annex 5.

¹¹ As set out in the Terms of Reference for the Endline Review of GSP.

¹² The previous evaluation suppliers were ITAD and Ecorys, who conducted an independent formative evaluation of GSP (midline evaluation) between November 2020 and December 2022 (Annual Review 2023, page 1).

¹³ Wilson-Grau, R. and Britt, H. (2012), Outcome harvesting, Cairo: Ford Foundation.

1.4.1 Data collection and analysis methods

To implement these approaches, we collected data from two sources between March and October 2025:

- **Document review:** We reviewed 132 key GSP and external documents, including progress reports, synthesis reports, annual review reports, business cases and financial data.
- **Semi-structured interviews (SSIs):** We led remote SSIs with 49 GSP stakeholders, including FCDO internal stakeholders (3), GSP Partners (34), and GSP recipients and broader actors (12).

Full lists of stakeholders engaged, and documents reviewed are presented in Annexes 3 and 4.

Analysis of documents and SSIs was supported using AI (specifically, o-x.ai's own tool, signAI). Documents and interviews were analysed individually against evaluation questions and change statements, and summaries of findings across documents and interviews were produced for each question and statement. In addition to algorithmic checks, 5% of documents were reviewed, and the results of automated analysis were quality-assured manually.

To analyse data and generate robust and defensible findings, we coded collected data against our review matrix and triangulated data across methods and researcher perspectives. Trends and patterns in coded data were analysed by the team and validated with FCDO and GSP Partners to generate findings. As much as possible, all results and review findings were based on data from multiple sources. Where data inconsistencies or suspected bias were present, we discussed these internally and conducted follow-up document reviews and interviews as required. Where inconsistencies or bias issues are still present, these are discussed in the review.

1.4.2 Limitations of the review

The review faced the following limitations:

- **Analysis of World Bank Multi-Donor Trust Fund:** FCDO provided 53% of funding to a pooled multi-donor trust fund, and it was not possible to isolate its specific use. This review therefore assesses VfM of the Gender Window overall, not individual FCDO-funded grants.
- **World Bank reporting constraints:** The World Bank could not report how many Gender Window grants achieved outcome-level change due to resource constraints. To mitigate this, we prioritised analysis on reported critical changes linked to the ToC and led follow-up interviews with the World Bank to explore why some grants may not have succeeded.
- **Access to country-level stakeholders:** Findings reported in the case studies were based on a limited number of interviews. It was challenging to consult with government partners both for the case studies and for the validation of outcome harvesting results. This was due to a variety of reasons including linguistic issues and sensitivity around the engagement. To mitigate this, the team reviewed documentation and triangulated findings with other sources where possible.
- **UNICEF output uptake still ongoing:** Since the additional grant awarded to UNICEF for uptake and dissemination is still being implemented, it was not possible to report on all changes that result from these activities, since the activities will continue after the review data collection period.
- **Access to STAAR reporting:** The latest STAAR Quarterly Progress Report for the quarter July-September 2025 was not available in time for inclusion in the analysis of evidence for this review, meaning that the VfM analysis will exclude two quarters of STAAR activity before its closure in December 2025.

2 GSP Theory of Change and delivery to date

This section presents the GSP Theory of Change (ToC), an overview of its delivery during the review period, and a summary of previous evaluative evidence, most notably from the GSP Midline Review.

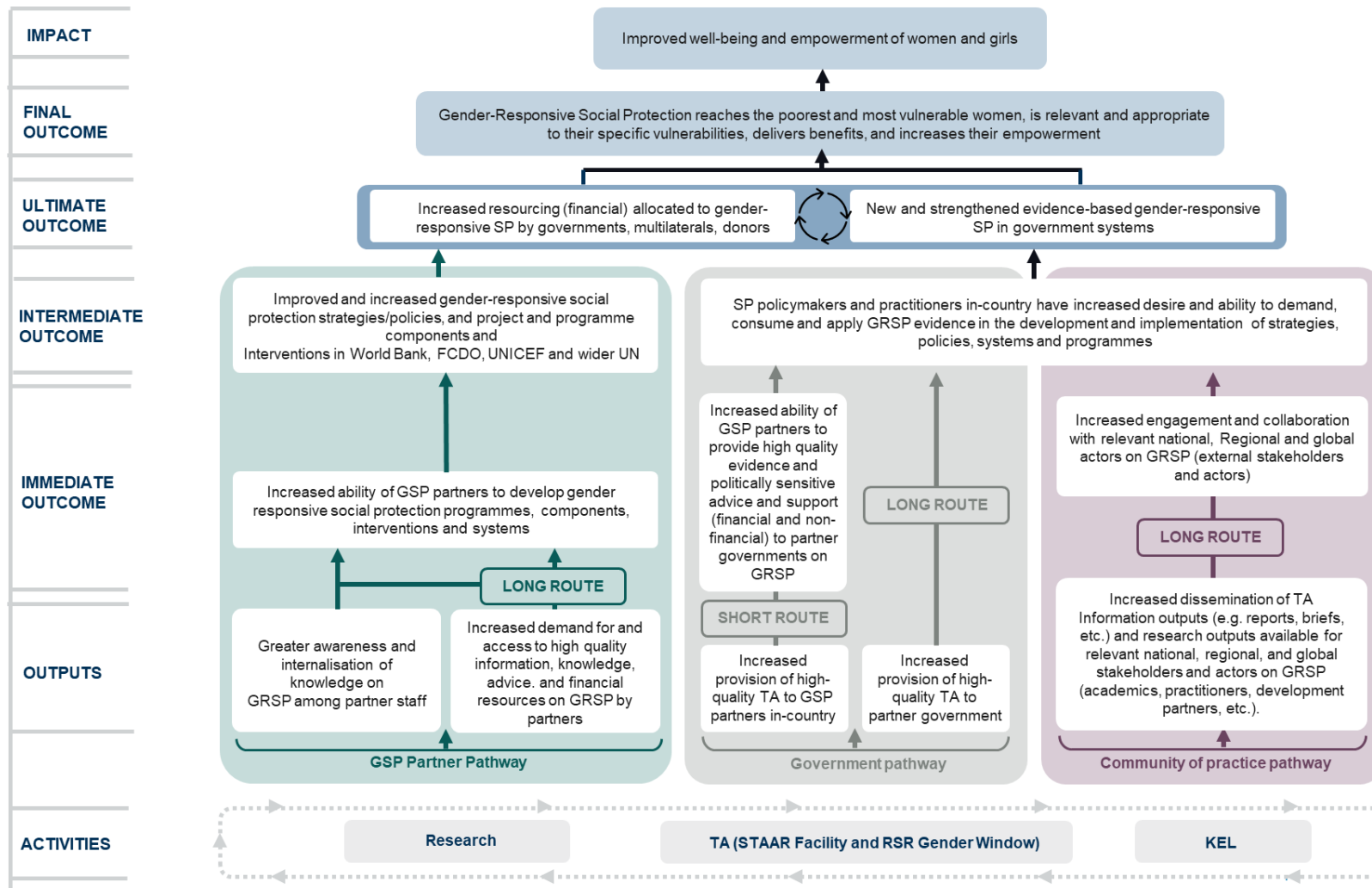
The Endline Review is informed by the ToC developed by the midline evaluation in 2021, as shown in Figure 1 below. Within the ToC, there are three main pathways related to different ‘groups’ that GSP is attempting to influence: 1) programme partner organisations (World Bank, FCDO, UNICEF), 2) government actors, and 3) broader policymakers and practitioners within gender equality and SP. These pathways are explained in more detail below:

- **GSP partner pathway:** Through programme delivery, it is expected that partner institutions will apply new knowledge and skills to shape GRSP policies, while increasing their visibility in institutional strategies. This requires partners to have the capacity and resources to use evidence and technical support to inform decisions.
- **Government pathway:** Through GSP delivery, it is expected that governments are influenced through a long and a short route. The long route builds partner awareness and capacity to engage governments on GRSP, in some cases through direct TA. The short route delivers direct, high-quality technical support and evidence to governments, to support policy uptake.
- **Community of practice (CoP) pathway:** This pathway highlights GSP’s role in influencing external GRSP policymakers and practitioners by sharing evidence, fostering collaboration, and generating public goods to drive change.

These ToC pathways can also be conceived as being direct or indirect. The direct route emphasises the provision of high-quality TA to partner governments. By working closely with government counterparts and supplying timely evidence, programme partners are expected to influence SP policymakers and practitioners relatively quickly. In contrast, the indirect route centres on strengthening internal knowledge, awareness and evidence use among staff within partner institutions. As this knowledge becomes embedded over time, these institutions are better equipped to engage governments more effectively on GRSP. While the partner pathway is central to the ToC for UNICEF and World Bank components, STAAR provides technical expertise and seeks to embed knowledge in a range of users, aiming to influence change frequently via intermediaries such as FCDO, UNICEF, or GIZ, as well as via direct government engagement.

The findings of the evaluation indicate that the ToC needs to consider at the higher outcome level the importance of enhancing the quality of existing SP programming in terms of its gender responsiveness and not only consider leveraging additional funding for GRSP. This point is discussed further in Section 4.

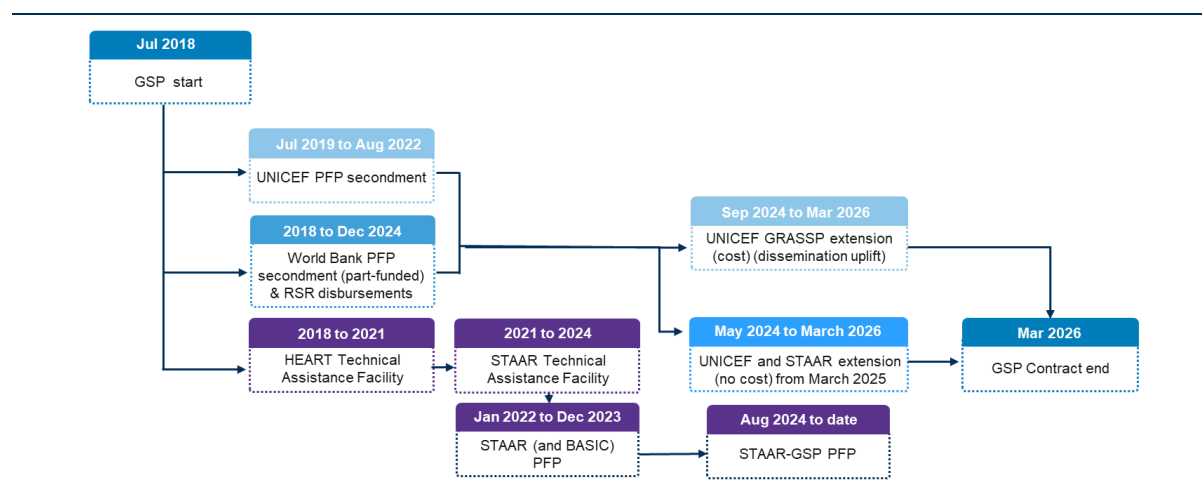
Figure 1: GSP Theory of Change



2.1 Delivery to date

The GSP has delivered against all three pathways in the ToC. GRASSP delivered research and evidence in nine countries and provided technical advice via the Programme-Funded Post (PFP) across 136 out of 150 UNICEF' country offices (COs); STAAR delivered 47 assignments over 60 countries; and the World Bank delivered 76 RSR Gender Window grants in over 50 countries. These activities started in July 2018, and some are still ongoing. Figure 2 presents a detailed delivery timeline for the programme.

Figure 2: GSP delivery timeline (source: Annual Review 2025)



2.2 Previous evaluative evidence

Prior to this Endline Review of GSP, the programme has undergone two evaluations: a baseline in December 2021 and a midline in November 2022. Findings from these previous evaluations informed the focus and design of this review. The baseline found GSP effective despite complexity, highlighting institutional contributions, increased GRSP demand, and the influence of key individuals. The baseline, which was framed as a *“retrospective assessment of the mechanisms in place”*, focused on efficiency, relevance and effectiveness. Despite a complex implementation context, the baseline found that GSP contributed to supported institutions, expanded demand for GRSP, and benefited from the drive of key individuals at the World Bank, FCDO and UNICEF. It recommended refining the logframe to better reflect workstream-level contributions.

The midline found that GSP had made steady progress across all ToC pathways, driven by stakeholder collaboration, tailored TA, and strengthened institutional learning. The midline, which was framed as a *“formative assessment of the programme progress towards planned outcomes”*, focused on assessing the efficiency, coherence, relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of GSP. The midline focused on system-level changes driven by GSP. It found steady, relevant progress across the ToC pathways, enabled by stakeholder collaboration. It also highlighted GRASSP's contributions to the GRSP knowledge base, tailored TA delivery for different actors, knowledge exchange and institutional learning, and synergies among implementers.

There are also two related ongoing or planned evaluations to this review. The GSP sister programme, Better Assistance in Crises (BASIC), is currently being evaluated. This programme funds TA and research to improve the use of SP approaches in crises with TA also delivered through STAAR. UNICEF is also seeking to conduct an independent evaluation of its GSP outputs to understand their research uptake and effects on policy and programming.

3 Review findings: Effectiveness

The next sections present our review findings by the three overarching questions and related sub-questions, drawing on multiple data sources. Each section presents key findings, challenges and opportunities, and an initial summary of findings.



Effectiveness: To what extent did the GSP workstreams, individually and in combination, meet their objectives?

Table 2: Effectiveness key findings summary

Sub-questions	Key findings
3.1 Adaptation of delivery to changing contexts	The programme demonstrated a high degree of adaptability across all three components. UNICEF adapted research agendas, modalities, and country focus; STAAR reshaped assignments, reallocated resources, and leveraged partnerships; the World Bank shifted priorities, delivery modalities, and institutional arrangements at global and country levels. Flexibility was evident in sequencing, responsiveness to crises, and use of embedded advisers and national partners.
3.2 Contribution to immediate and intermediate outcomes	GSP made clear contributions to strengthened GRSP at global, institutional, and country levels. It shaped global policy agendas and produced key public goods. With GSP support, UNICEF and the World Bank made major institutional shifts: UNICEF's PFP established GRSP focal points and informed the 2026–30 UNICEF Strategic Plans, while the World Bank's gender advisor advanced GRSP tools and priorities. Close links to its operations enabled the Bank to influence national programmes, and UNICEF's GRASSP and PFP informed country reforms, with 129 UNICEF offices now engaging governments on GRSP. STAAR provided timely support to immediate and emergent needs and strongly influenced GRSP communities of practice. Overall, GSP made contributions across fragile and mature systems and offered a uniquely influential and flexible donor model.

3.1 Adaptation of delivery to changing contexts

Implementation: To what extent did GSP sufficiently adapt its delivery to changing contexts, and what factors influenced its ability to flexibly deliver outputs?

Finding 1: GSP demonstrated a high degree of adaptability across GSP partners and components, showing that flexibility has been a defining feature of its implementation.

3.1.1 UNICEF component

The UNICEF component demonstrated sustained adaptability in both research and TA, reflecting flexibility in response to contextual shifts, operational constraints and emerging priorities. At a strategic level, the GRASSP initiative adapted its research agenda to incorporate emerging thematic priorities, such as the intersection of gender and climate change, ensuring continued relevance to partner needs and policy shifts¹⁴. Adaptation was also evident in delivery modalities during the COVID-19 pandemic, with research dissemination and stakeholder engagement shifting to virtual platforms while in-person data collection was maintained where feasible¹⁵. The

¹⁴ GRASSP Research Plan Review, 2023.

¹⁵ UNICEF CO interviews – Tanzania, Ghana, Vietnam, 2024.

programme also adjusted its country focus in response to feasibility and security conditions. For example, Benin was excluded because its SP programming relied on one-off payments rather than recurring transfers, meaning there was no sustained beneficiary cohort to track over time. This prevented meaningful longitudinal analysis of gendered impacts and limited the potential for system-level learning¹⁶.

Adaptation also extended to how findings were used and enabled by local partnerships. In Tanzania's Ujana Salama programme, research insights were incorporated during implementation - rather than solely during the design phase - allowing mid-course correction and greater relevance to programme delivery¹⁷. In Ghana, the UNICEF GRSP team developed a GRSP roadmap to fill identified national policy gaps and linked this to the global programme on ending child marriage, demonstrating responsiveness to government demand and policy timing¹⁸. Flexibility was enabled by partnerships with national and local research actors, which allowed plans to be tailored to local realities and evolving political and institutional dynamics¹⁹.

Alongside the research portfolio, the UNICEF PFP adapted the scale and intensity of TA to reflect differing needs and capacities across country offices. Support was provided at three levels: high-intensity, mid-range, and light-touch, ranging from embedded, ongoing advisory inputs to one-off clinics or targeted requests²⁰. This differentiated model of engagement enabled responsiveness while managing finite resources.

3.1.2 STAAR component

The STAAR component demonstrated operational adaptability by reshaping assignments to reallocate resources in response to shifting priorities and constraints. Rather than cancelling activities when operational conditions shifted, assignments were modified, combined or sequenced to address overlapping objectives, enabling continuity of delivery and sustained contribution to programme goals²¹. Resource reallocation was used to maintain momentum on priority outputs and ensure efficient use of available delivery capacity²². In 2023/24, reductions in FCDO programme budgets and resulting STAAR staff capacity triggered reprioritisation. Resources were redirected to safeguard critical outputs, while some activities were scaled back or delayed. These adjustments enabled continued delivery against strategic objectives, although they reduced the depth and coverage of support in some cases²³.

Adaptation was facilitated through partnerships with national consultants, embedded advisers and wider external networks. These actors enabled continued engagement with governments and helped sustain delivery during periods of fiscal and operational pressure, reinforcing GSP's positioning as a responsive and trusted partner²⁴. In Nepal, for example, despite high FCDO staff turnover, STAAR was able to leverage its network of local consultants to carry out the redesign of the Beti Padhau-Beti Bachao (BPBB) programme and support read-across with similar STAAR work taking place in India. STAAR consultants leading this work in Nepal and similar work in India presented to UNICEF social policy advisers from across the region to build traction for integrating social protection in their country level plans for the Global Programme to End Child Marriage, demonstrating targeted collaboration between the two components.

¹⁶ GRASSP Country Adaptation Notes, 2022.

¹⁷ SSI with SP Specialist, Tanzania CO.

¹⁸ Ghana Policy Engagement Summary, 2023.

¹⁹ Local Partner Debriefings, 2023.

²⁰ UNICEF PFP Support Matrix, 2024.

²¹ STAAR-D/A/STAAR-GSP Annual Review Inputs 2025, pp. 20-22.

²² STAAR-D/A/STAAR-GSP Annual Review Inputs 2025, pp. 20-22.

²³ STAAR-D/A/STAAR-GPR1 to March 2025 V1, pp. 16-17, 20, 26.

²⁴ STAAR-D/A/STAAR-GPR1 to March 2025 V1, pp. 23, 25.

3.1.3 World Bank component

The World Bank component demonstrated adaptability through shifts in funding priorities, the adoption of flexible delivery modalities, and institutional changes that enabled responsiveness to both global and country-specific contexts.

At the global level, the RSR Gender Window reoriented its grants to address the gendered impacts of COVID-19, reflecting responsiveness to crisis conditions and emerging needs²⁵.

Flexible grant allocation mechanisms also supported experimentation with new delivery models, including integration of digital financial services into GRSP programmes²⁶. When the RSR Gender Window closed in December 2024, the Bank shifted focus to consolidating and disseminating learning through client-facing reports and dissemination events²⁷. Institutional continuity was reinforced through the partial absorption of the Gender Adviser role into the Social Protection and Labour (SPL) Global Practice, with the post retained at 50% time beyond programme closure²⁸. However, adaptation was not uniform.

At the country level, adaptation reflected both contextual volatility and differing entry points. In South Sudan, engagement modalities shifted repeatedly between direct government engagement, UN agency channels and national systems to maintain progress on gender-based violence (GBV) response mechanisms in a fragile context²⁹. In Fiji, the sequencing of support for the Adaptive Social Protection Strategy allowed delivery to align with government absorption capacity, starting with analytical work before moving to strategy development in the context of COVID-19 and Cyclone Harold³⁰. In Samoa, flexibility in scope enabled integration of gender considerations into the National Social Protection Policy Framework, expanding support beyond general SP design to address care burdens and labour market constraints affecting women³¹. In Zambia, the Girls Education and Women Empowerment and Livelihoods (GEWEL) project adopted a test-learn-adapt model, piloting interventions such as digital payments and gender assessments before scaling. The structure of the Gender Window allowed iterative refinement aligned to implementation lessons³².

3.1.4 Factors influencing adaptability across the programme

Several cross-cutting factors shaped the programme's ability to adapt delivery in response to changing contexts:

- **Flexible funding mechanisms were a central enabler.** The structure of RSR Gender Window grants allowed scope and scale to be adjusted as priorities evolved, while the PFP model within UNICEF facilitated resource mobilisation and reallocation following the end of the secondment, embedding gender expertise into a staff position for continuity and sustainability that has outlasted the FCDO financial contribution. These mechanisms created space for pivots without requiring wholesale redesign.
- **Responsiveness was also supported by strong partnerships and networks.** Across components, the use of national consultants, embedded advisers and local research partners enabled alignment with government priorities and adaptation to contextual and operational realities. These relationships provided on-the-ground flexibility and continuity where internal delivery capacity was constrained.
- **Adaptation was, however, shaped by external constraints.** At times, UK ODA budget reductions and disbursement delays disrupted implementation timelines, while security

²⁵ RSR Final Progress Report 2019-22, p. 10.

²⁶ RSR Gender Window Review Report – Oct 2024, p. 12.

²⁷ Programme Annual Review 2025, p. 44.

²⁸ Programme Annual Review 2025, p. 44.

²⁹ Outcome Harvesting Change #13, 2025.

³⁰ Fiji/Samoa Evaluation Notes, p. 2.

³¹ Fiji/Samoa Evaluation Notes, p. 1.

³² Outcome Harvesting Changes #5 & #6, 2025.

challenges, government transitions and limited institutional absorption capacity reduced the scale or depth of delivery, even where core objectives were maintained.

- **Institutional arrangements further influenced flexibility.** Embedding gender expertise within the World Bank's SPL Global Practice created continuity beyond the closure of the RSR Gender Window, while UNICEF's differentiated model of TA – ranging from intensive to light-touch support – enabled adjustments to the scale and modality of engagement.
- **Crisis conditions acted as both stressors and catalysts for adaptation.** The COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, and conflict-affected settings required shifts in modality, sequencing and delivery channels. These pressures highlighted the programme's capacity to adjust approaches while maintaining relevance to evolving needs.

3.2 Contribution to immediate and intermediate outcomes

Outcome contribution: To what extent did GSP workstreams contribute to immediate and intermediate outcomes, compared to other possible factors, including the context or alternative interventions, or recipient-related contributing factors?

Finding 2: Overall, GSP has been effective in improving the quality and responsiveness of SP systems, with clear evidence of both immediate and intermediate outcome changes across all three components.

Contribution is evident across all GSP partners, although through different pathways. At the global level, the programme has shaped policy agendas and contributed to the generation of global public goods through tools, technical guidance and knowledge products (CoP pathway)³³. Both UNICEF and the World Bank have also demonstrated internal institutional change supported through GSP engagement (partner pathway). In UNICEF, the PFP played a central part in shifting staff roles and responsibilities, including the establishment of regional and country GRSP focal points and routine provision of technical clinics, webinars and one-to-one advisory support, which increased staff confidence and capability to integrate GRSP into programme design and policy engagement³⁴. These changes were reflected in the inclusion of explicit GRSP commitments and indicators in the 2022-25 and 2026-30 UNICEF Strategic Plans³⁵. In the World Bank, the Gender Adviser position within the SPL Global Practice was institutionalised at 50% time, enabling ongoing technical support to task teams and contributing to the development and uptake of tools, such as the 4x4 SPL matrix, which integrates gender across operations and analytical work. This institutionalisation signalled a shift in organisational priorities by embedding gender responsiveness as a core dimension of SP operations, rather than a thematic add-on³⁶.

All three GSP partners have contributed to policy and programme changes in specific country contexts, though at varying levels of maturity (government pathway). The World Bank's proximity to operations has enabled it to influence system-level reforms and programme design more directly. It used RSR Gender Window grants to shape analytical groundwork and policy dialogue that informed loan design. Providing TA to task teams during project preparation and restructuring also allowed gender-responsive features to be embedded into large-scale national programmes. UNICEF's work shows signs of country-level influence, particularly where GRASSP research and PFP support have informed national discussions on programme design or policy reform. At this time, there are approximately 129 UNICEF offices engaging on GRSP with government counterparts. Its direct

³³ These include the expansion of the ASPIRE sex-disaggregated social protection database and the development of technical guidance on gender-responsive adaptive social protection.

³⁴ UNICEF PFP Support Matrix, 2024; UNICEF CO staff interviews.

³⁵ UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-25 and 2026-30; GRASSP synthesis and dissemination materials.

³⁶ Programme Annual Review 2025, p. 44; SPL Global Practice internal guidance notes (4x4 matrix).

implementation of the GSP programme at country and regional level has meant UNICEF built awareness, generated evidence and institutional commitment, and directly influenced governments to adopt GRSP designs, including in some cases with the World Bank as a partner. However, these outcomes are at an earlier stage of maturity than those observed through World Bank. The World Bank has been positioned to embed gender-responsive approaches directly into large-scale operations, allowing it to shape system design and implementation more immediately. DAI, through the STAAR mechanism, has demonstrated concrete and often time-sensitive contributions, with its model repeatedly identified as effective in responding to immediate, emerging needs, and catalysing the work of other actors. For example, in Nepal, STAAR advisers worked alongside UNICEF to strengthen the redesign of gender-responsive programme components during a period of policy transition (partner pathway).

The government and partner pathways are the most consistently evidenced across all three components, reflecting a focus on advising ministries, working through national systems and responding to government demand. The CoP pathway is most visible within the STAAR model, where peer exchange, technical networks and communities of learning have helped diffuse practices. GSP contributions have been observed in both fragile and more mature SP contexts, indicating the programme's adaptability across operating environments. Contributions were designed to be catalytic: they have been necessary to enable change but are not, on their own, sufficient to deliver full-system transformation.

There is currently no comparable donor initiative providing the same type of influence, flexibility and technical reach across actors and geographies³⁷. As such, GSP occupies a distinctive space in the global SP ecosystem.

Annex 2 shares the analysis of GSP's contribution to immediate and intermediate outcomes across the components. For each, it shares results (identified by the respective organisations within the outcome harvesting process), the significance of their contribution, other factors that may have led to the change and, finally, how the GSP contribution was validated.

3.3 Factors enabling or hindering results across the programme

Finding 3: GSP outcomes were enabled by government ownership, complementarity between GSP partners, and agile use of funding and advisory mechanisms, but were limited where shocks and institutional capacity constraints reduced absorptive capacity and slowed institutional uptake.

Several enabling factors shaped the programme's ability to generate immediate and intermediate outcomes across the three GSP partners:

- **Strong government engagement and ownership was central, particularly where stakeholders were involved from the outset.** For example, in Nepal, early engagement with government stakeholders by UNICEF and STAAR during the redesign process of the Beti Padhau-Beti Bachao programme helped to build ownership of gender-responsive approaches and created momentum for policy uptake³⁸.
- **Effective collaboration and complementarity across GSP partners also acted as a key enabler.** UNICEF drew on STAAR advisory inputs from Ethiopia and Nepal to strengthen the relevance and uptake of GRASSP research. The World Bank was able to leverage partnerships at global, regional and country levels to extend the reach of TA, including through coordination with client governments, UN agencies, and regional networks³⁴.

³⁷ SSIs with other donors.

³⁸ UNICEF–STAAR Collaboration Notes, 2023; UNICEF CO Tanzania Interview, 2024.

- **Grant mechanisms played an important role in creating entry points for policy dialogue and technical influence.** Under the World Bank's RSR Gender Window, grants in Fiji and Samoa were used to open space for engagement on GRSP, with sequencing of analytical work and strategy development tailored to government absorption capacity. In Zambia, RSR funding enabled iterative piloting and scaling of interventions under the GEWEL project, including digital payments and gender assessments. For UNICEF, dissemination grants helped position research findings for integration into national systems over time. For example, workshops in Vietnam contributed to integrated gender considerations into the Decree 20 social assistance reform³⁹.
- **The nature of STAAR TA further enabled traction,** with the facility intentionally working with and through other organisations and stakeholder-led processes, using sequencing and layering of assignments to support momentum and institutional change. Longer-term advisers with established expertise and relationships were perceived as trusted actors and were able to align closely with donor and government programmes. The layered nature of multiple STAAR assignments, rather than one-off inputs, created continuity that helped embed knowledge and supported institutional uptake of gender-responsive practices. Wider global advocacy around GRSP (for example, care systems) also created a favourable climate⁴⁰.

At the same time, several constraints hindered or slowed the GSP's ability to contribute to outcomes:

- **External shocks and fragile contexts disrupted delivery across multiple settings.** COVID-19 delayed research activities under GRASSP by up to a year in some countries, while insecurity in Mali and South Sudan created obstacles for implementation. Political dynamics within national systems also at times limited influence, constraining the scope or uptake of engagement⁴¹.
- **Institutional and organisational constraints affected continuity and uptake, particularly within UNICEF.** Internal restructuring at UNICEF Innocenti risked disrupting research dissemination and weakening the use of findings. Funding cuts and uncertainty across components, including delays linked to the UK ODA budget review, reduced the timeliness of adaptation and limited institutional capacity to absorb TA⁴².
- **Entrenched gender norms and underrepresentation of women in leadership positions constrained progress in several contexts, especially in efforts to influence women's economic empowerment and GBV-related reforms.** This was evident in engagements in Zambia and Samoa, where policy shifts required negotiation within conservative institutional environments. Fragmentation within national systems and partner organisations also limited coordination, particularly where adviser presence was inconsistent or timebound. Finally, missed opportunities for cross-grant learning, such as sharing across digital payment initiatives supported under RSR and STAAR, reduced efficiency and slowed diffusion of promising practices⁴³.

These enablers and constraints interacted across GSP partners. For UNICEF, synergies with STAAR reinforced government engagement in Tanzania and Ethiopia, although delays caused by COVID-19, budget constraints and internal restructuring slowed follow-through. The World Bank benefited from grant-funded entry points and large-scale operations influence, but progress was moderated by entrenched gender norms and uneven lesson-sharing across grants. For STAAR, credibility, embedded advisory roles and layered assignments enhanced institutional uptake, while inertia within SP systems, variable coordination, and dependence on donor momentum created vulnerabilities in sustaining results.

³⁹ UNICEF change immediate and intermediate outcome statement 5

⁴⁰ STAAR-D/A/STAAR-GPR1 to March 2025 V1; STAAR-D/A/STAAR-GSP Annual Review Inputs 2025; Annual Review 2025.

⁴¹ UNICEF CO Interviews – Ghana/Vietnam, 2024; GRASSP Country Adaptation Notes, 2022.

⁴² Programme Annual Review 2020; STAAR-D/A/STAAR-GPR1 to March 2025 V1.

⁴³ STAAR-D/A/STAAR-GPR1 to March 2025 V1; RSR Gender Window Review Report – Oct 2024.

4 Review findings: Impact



Impact: To what extent did the GSP workstreams, individually and in combination, improve and successfully contribute to the programme's expected impacts?

Table 3: Impact key findings summary

Sub-questions	Key findings
4.1 Ultimate and final outcome contribution	All GSP workstreams contributed to ultimate and final outcomes. The World Bank expanded GRSP, STAAR and UNICEF strengthened partner programmes, and UNICEF mobilised additional funding. Overall, GSP contributed to strong institutional impacts and positively influenced FCDO and partner governments on gender responsiveness in SP.
4.2 Variation in contribution	The World Bank had the greatest impact due to larger investment and alignment between GSP funding and the Bank's country operations. Impact was not clearly linked to geography, with results variable across different SP system maturity contexts. STAAR raised GRSP awareness in contexts where the integration of gender into social protection systems was less of a national priority, reaching a diverse user base. The close proximity of GSP to World Bank and UNICEF country activities appeared to increase the likelihood of impact. Growing GSP workstream synergies also enhanced impact and VfM.

4.1 Ultimate and final outcome contribution

Ultimate and final outcome contribution: To what extent did GSP workstreams significantly contribute to the actual or expected a) increased allocation of financial resources to GRSP, and b) new and strengthened evidence-informed GRSP in government systems, leading to accessible, relevant, appropriate and effective GRSP, compared to other possible contributing factors?

Findings mainly draw on outcome harvesting change statements shared by GSP Partners, follow-up validation interviews with GSP Partner staff and other partners, and a review of programme documents. A full list of reported outcome changes at these ToC levels is presented in Annex 2.

Finding 4: GSP strengthened gender responsiveness in SP by influencing key institutions and partner governments, with impact expected to grow as uptake and dissemination increase. It also heightened FCDO's focus on gender-responsive programming.

4.1.1 UNICEF component

The UNICEF component of GSP reported two results at the ultimate outcome ToC level, which we validated, and graded using the contribution rubric outlined in Section 1.

Result 1: Leveraging funds for GRSP: Increased resource mobilisation for GRSP including the securing funding for the GSP post and portfolio and country and regional programming.

Six new donors have committed \$5 million to support GRSP activities⁴⁴, signalling the maintenance of donor commitment to sustained investment in gender equality within SP systems and highlighting how targeted funding can enable governments and partners to scale up inclusive, gender-transformative interventions for vulnerable populations. This result aligns with the ultimate outcome in the GSP ToC: *“increased (financial) resourcing allocated to gender-responsive SP by governments, multilaterals and donors”*.

GSP’s contribution is rated as significant/essential, as UNICEF’s PFP actively engaged with donors and led proposal development to secure additional funding⁴⁵. This funding would not have been possible without increased donor confidence and commitment to addressing the unique vulnerabilities of women, girls, and adolescent girls within SP systems. UNICEF’s strong partnerships with international donors, alignment with global agendas on gender equality and SP, and sustained advocacy efforts to prioritise women and girls’ needs in national development plans were also contributing factors to the realisation of this result.

Result 2: GRASSP research played a pivotal role in influencing the design of Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) 6, Ethiopia’s national social safety net programme.

GSP, via GRASSP research, supported the design of PSNP6 to strengthen its gender responsiveness. The GSP support thereby contributed to the ultimate outcome of GSP: *“new and strengthened evidence-based GRSP in government systems”*.

GSP’s contribution to this result is rated as catalytic as the work supported key improvements to the design of PSNP6. This included influencing policy objectives targeting gender-specific risks like maternal health and early pregnancy, access to enhanced education, reducing child marriage and GBV, and improved women’s economic inclusion. GRASSP findings shaped national policy through their inclusion in thematic reports⁴⁶, while STAAR built government capacity in Ethiopia via research and workshops. PSNP6 (2026-2030) will be supported by the World Bank and funded through a multi-donor trust fund and other partners. PSNP6 in Ethiopia is a strong example of the GSP influencing across all three partners, UNICEF, World Bank, STAAR, to strengthen the gender component in the new PSNP6.

4.1.2 World Bank Component

Result 1: The World Bank reported that between FY18 and FY24, RSR Gender Window grants have influenced over 63 World Bank IDA/IBRD operations, influencing \$9.6 billion in financing towards GRSP.

The \$9.6 billion represents the total volume of funding on SP for these 63 operations. This result was reported as contributing to the ultimate outcome of GSP: *“increased resourcing allocated to GRSP”*. FCDO contributed 53% of Trust Fund monies for the Gender Window.

GSP’s contribution to this result is rated as catalytic/triggering change because of the role of existing World Bank operations and country programmes. The RSR Gender Window grants did not necessarily increase World Bank SP financing but instead influenced the design and focus of existing programmes to make them more gender-responsive through changes like improved targeting, digital payments, and gender-smart delivery. SSIs suggested that some operations were gender-blind before and that grants supported teams to adapt existing programmes to make them more gender responsive. While they did not generate new GRSP funding, they helped shape the equity focus of the

⁴⁴ SSIs – the six new donors are providing \$5 million in additional funding for GRSP work including a UK-based private sector donor, Hewlett Foundation, GIZ/BMZ, DFAT, SIDA.

⁴⁵ SSI UNICEF.

⁴⁶ UNICEF Innocenti GRASSP Synthesis Report 2024.

Bank's large SP portfolio, which grew significantly post-COVID, increasing from \$3 billion in 2019 to \$6 billion in 2020 and \$9 billion in 2020/21.

This finding suggested that the GSP ToC should be updated to reflect how this result was produced. While the ToC for GSP sets out the pathway to increased reach of SP programmes for the poorest and most vulnerable women as a result of increased resourcing for GRSP, the assessment of this result indicates that the ToC's ultimate outcome should be adjusted to also reflect the quality of existing programming and not just volume of additional funding for GRSP.

This finding suggests that GSP exceeded expectations when compared to its original Business Case. The Business Case indicated that *"DFID's investment of £8 million in the RSR gender window could be associated with approximately £220 million of additional IDA funding for gender-responsive social protection"*. While this expectation was not fully realised because quality of existing programming rather than new funding for GRSP was supported by the RSR Gender Window grants, the Business Case expectations that the Gender Window grants would have catalytic effects on the design and implementation of GRSP has nonetheless proved true.

This result is connected to a higher-level final outcome contribution (discussed below), focused on the increased reach of SP programming.

Result 2: Gender Window grants have reached 108.6 million individuals globally, of whom 56.6 million are women and girls now with access to GRSP.

GSP contributed to expanding the reach of over 63 World Bank IDA/IBRD operations, linked to \$9.6 billion in funding, enabling more individuals, especially women and girls, to access SP.

GSP's contribution to this result is rated as catalytic/triggering change since increased access to GRSP is linked to the influence of the grants on 63 operations. There has been a growth in the number of World Bank SP and Jobs operations that have been gender-tagged, meaning that projects have a results chain by linking gender gaps identified in analysis to specific actions tracked in a results framework. The percentage of World Bank SP and Jobs operations that are gender-tagged has increased from 56% in 2019 to 100% in 2025. The rating of medium contribution is due to existing programmes (which reach just under 109 million people) becoming more gender responsive rather than expanding reach to include more individuals. The World Bank has dedicated SP team members at country level who also contributed towards and supported the realisation of these results.

We validated an additional result at final outcome ToC level reported by the World Bank which relates to the GEWEL programme in Zambia⁴⁷:

Result 3: In Zambia, the World Bank-funded GEWEL project supported over 145,000 poor rural women with grants and training to start income-generating activities. Through its 'Keeping Girls in School' component, 148,161 female students across 65 districts were enrolled in secondary school with financial support, and 2,926 girls in three districts benefited from a pilot addressing school-related GBV.

The increase in GEWEL's reach is a final outcome in the GSP ToC, reflecting increased access to GRSP. GSP's contribution is rated as significant/essential for both poor rural women and female students. RSR Gender Window funding supported TA and research to the Zambian government that improved GEWEL's livelihoods component, helping over 145,000 rural women gain financial independence through grants and skills training linked to sustaining income-generating activities, while also reducing exposure to GBV.

⁴⁷ This result combines two reported results by the World Bank as they focus on the same programme.

The TA and analytical research also supported the ‘Keeping Girls in School’ component. The analytical work informed adaptations to SP systems so that they can be more responsive to risks faced by young girls, in turn keeping them safe and in school for longer. As a result, as of December 2023, just over 148,000 female students across 65 districts in all 10 provinces were enrolled in secondary school and received regular support for school fees and other payments. A total of 2,926 girls in three districts benefited from the empowerment pilot aimed at addressing school-related GBV⁴⁸. The GBV analytical assessment also significantly contributed to the Bank’s Safety First Toolkit, which is now in implementation in multiple countries including Cameroon and Zambia.

The RSR Gender Window grant activities were rated as catalytic/triggering change as they helped inform the successful scale-up of GEWEL 2. The analytical work provided necessary understanding to inform bespoke design and targeting approaches, which in turn contributed to the strong performance of the programme. In Zambia, the GEWEL project has contributed to lower school drop-out rates among poor adolescent girls in households receiving targeted cash transfers, allowing more girls to remain at school.

Two additional results were validated for the World Bank RSR Gender Window grants:

Result 4: In Niger, under the Refugees and Host Communities Support Project, over 31,000 refugees and host community women have been economically empowered through digital cash+ initiatives, enabling them to start businesses, increase their incomes and strengthen economic resilience.

Result 5: In Indonesia, the adaptation and piloting of the KLIK PEKKA model empowered female-headed households and low-income women to obtain legal identity documents.

GSP’s contribution to both these results is assessed as catalytic/triggering change. The RSR Gender Window grant to Indonesia funded the adaptation, testing and scaling of the KLIK PEKKA model across 80 villages. The model was initiated by PEKKA, a national-scale NGO aimed at empowering women. Through the grant advocacy, efforts were initiated for the replication of the model in national systems. As a result of this initiative, women were able to access legal identity documents and thereby access SP etc. The RSR grant to Niger financed a mobile cash transfer diagnostic which shaped the design and deployment of a gender-responsive smart digital payment system aimed at supporting refugee and host community livelihoods.

4.1.3 STAAR component

The STAAR component reported on two results that contribute to the GSP ultimate outcome of strengthening governments’ SP systems.

Result 1: The Government of Nepal demonstrated a strong and increasing commitment to GRSP, particularly in addressing child marriage.

The Government of Nepal’s commitment to GRSP, particularly in addressing child marriage, was evident through several initiatives and actions. The redesign of the Beti Padhau-Beti Bachao (BPBB) programme in Madhesh Pradesh aimed to reduce early marriage and promote girls’ education. BPBB is a flagship programme in Madhesh Pradesh, started by Nepal’s Chief Minister. It aims to empower girls by reducing early marriage and promoting their education. This redesign was informed by a STAAR assignment conducted for UNICEF as the primary user.

⁴⁸ World Bank RSR Gender Window Report October 2024.

GSP's contribution is rated as significant/essential. In 2021, ODI, with UKAID support, conducted a review of the BPBB programme for UNICEF which informed STAAR's delivery. The review recommended that BPBB be redesigned to make it more effective and ensure a better impact. STAAR provided TA to the Provincial Government of Madhesh Pradesh, supporting the Ministry of Education in redesigning the BPBB programme, and also developed a roadmap for using SP to tackle child marriage in Nepal, which was well received by stakeholders and highlighted as a key reference point for shaping programme direction, particularly regarding financing and coordination. STAAR also facilitated provincial roundtables and learning events, which sustained momentum and supported the government's commitment to addressing child marriage through SP.

Aligned to STAAR's delivery model, other actors were involved in the achievement of this result. The Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare in Nepal collaborated on the design and implementation of SP measures to address child marriage. Despite staff turnover within FCDO Nepal, the work has remained a priority, with the incoming Social Development Adviser collaborating closely with STAAR to sustain momentum for systemic change. For example, STAAR supported the incorporation of this work within the FCDO Rights, Inclusion, Voice and Accountability programme.

Result 2: The Côte d'Ivoire government introduced a new parental leave policy that extended maternity leave for civil servants to six months and paternity leave to 30 days.

Côte d'Ivoire has adopted a new decree to extend maternity and paternity leave for public civil servants. This new parental leave policy reflects a significant institutional change in the country's approach to parental leave, embedding gender-responsive principles into national policies.

GSP's contribution to the result is rated as significant/essential. GSP's STAAR workstream played a pivotal role in influencing the development of this policy. STAAR contributed by amplifying UN Women's advocacy efforts on the importance of GRSP and by facilitating national care policy dialogues. STAAR also provided TA and evidence-based recommendations that informed the policy's design, ensuring that the policy addressed gendered risks and vulnerabilities.

The programme's contribution was further enhanced because STAAR advisors were working within UN Women on this assignment. UN Women was a key actor in this reform, advocating for GRSP and providing TA to the Ministry of Social Protection and STAAR's close collaboration with the organisation served to enhance the programme's impact. UN Women's long-standing relationship with the Ministry and its sustained advocacy efforts since 2023 were important in achieving this policy change.

4.2 Variation in contribution

Variation in contribution: How did change in the ultimate and final outcomes vary by a) workstream and delivery modality, b) user group, c) geography, and d) the extent of workstream synergies?

Finding 5: GSP's impact varied most by workstream, with the World Bank showing the strongest results due to greater investment and links to operations. STAAR's diverse user base enabled exploration of under-addressed topics, while UNICEF's geographically targeted approach is still being assessed as uptake continues. Collaboration across workstreams has grown, improving reach and reducing duplication.

4.2.1 Variation by workstream and delivery modality

Across GSP, the World Bank's contribution was the most substantial due to its larger financial share of GSP funding and strong links between grants and the Bank's operations. The World Bank's substantial operational portfolio (\$9 billion in 2021/21) meant it was particularly well placed to

improve the quality of its SP programming. While UNICEF's contribution to impact is valuable, further uptake and use of GRASSP generated evidence may materialise before or indeed after the end of the GRASSP grant in March 2026. STAAR's contributions to strengthening government systems are notable, but reduced user engagement after the completion of STAAR support can reduce momentum for policy uptake.

Encouraging multilaterals to better mainstream gender in their operations and programming was the primary mechanism through which GSP contributed to system change. There is also evidence of system change on the part of governments in relation to the gender responsiveness of SP policy and practice. The Business Case for GSP indicates that one of the outcomes of GSP is: *"New and strengthened evidence-based SP programmes, systems and policies, implemented by DFID, Governments, other donors and multilaterals"*. Evidence from the review shows that GSP has been most successful in engineering system change in partner institutions (World Bank, UNICEF); staff in both institutions have been incentivised to increase gender responsiveness in programmes due to availability of advice, tools, gender markers or indicators or, in the case of UNICEF, references in the institution's Strategic Plan.

STAAR support is driving institutional change, with embedded advisers improving coordination and influencing policies, such as parental leave in Côte d'Ivoire⁴⁹ and action against child marriage in Nepal. STAAR stakeholders highlighted that not all systems are ready for GRSP reforms, and advisers play a key role in raising awareness of and interest in GRSP and identifying relevant entry points. STAAR's engagement in Eswatini is a demonstration of the value of entry points; as a result of STAAR's review of social assistance system and opportunities for advancing programmes on the gender continuum, STAAR and UNICEF were invited to make a presentation on GRSP to ministerial staff. Similarly, STAAR's learning session with Government of Cambodia stakeholders provided a valuable and well-received opportunity to increase stakeholder understanding of GRSP. That said, SSIs indicated that entry points and GRSP baselines vary, so short-term assignments may not yield immediate outcomes. One adviser described their role as a *"sherpa"*, helping governments and humanitarian actors understand each other and identify useful actions. GSP evidence and support also helped drive system changes elsewhere, including survivor-centric design in Zambia's GEWEL programme, gender objectives in Ethiopia's PSNP6, and adoption of gender-smart digital payment systems in Niger.

STAAR has been a key modality for FCDO engagement on GRSP, with FCDO as its largest user and an active participant in STAAR-led events. A recent STAAR webinar on 'SP during budget constraints' drew strong FCDO attendance⁵⁰. The evidence note on gender-responsive care and support systems developed jointly between UNICEF and STAAR was among STAAR's most accessed resources, with over 1,000 downloads⁵¹, and its workshop, also a joint initiative between UNICEF and STAAR (alongside FCDO) on care and support systems, attended by FCDO, UNICEF, the World Bank and leading experts, led SPIAC-B to prioritise care and support themes. Interviews suggested this work significantly influenced FCDO's policy direction, reflected in Minister Anneliese Dodds' October 2024 speech referencing unpaid care⁵². Following STAAR's support, FCDO's Jobs and Inclusive Growth Team is now advancing work on care and support systems⁵³.

STAAR's PFP was valuable in generating demand from FCDO users for GRSP TA. In all, six people filled the PFP over the lifetime of the TA Facility. Some of the PFPs were supported by BASIC,

⁴⁹ STAAR Quarterly Progress Report January-March 2025, SSIs.

⁵⁰ SSIs. STAAR and UNICEF are also running a joint learning series on GRSP – targeted at donors and agencies working in the space. It is intended to be a participative learning session rather than a broadcast-type webinar, so it is by invitation rather than open access. Currently STAAR has 150 acceptances of which 23 are FCDO – including many from posts.

⁵¹ STAAR Change Statements for Outcome Harvesting Workshop.

⁵² *"We need to be making headway here, and more quickly, growing economies in a way that's sustainable and creates quality jobs for women, reforming care, as well as Ajay mentioned, so that men and women share the responsibilities of unpaid care work more easily and equitably, that care workers are properly rewarded and represented."*

⁵³ SSIs.

others by GSP. While the STAAR PFP role was shorter in duration than the equivalent posts in UNICEF and World Bank, SSI evidence suggested GSP was well served by PFPs. An important element of the PFP role was to raise awareness of GRSP within FCDO and increase demand for TA support. Similar to the PFP roles in the World Bank and UNICEF, the PFP in the TA Facility also engaged in capacity building. For example, the STAAR PFP worked closely with SPIAC-B to further develop FCDO SPT GRSP resources, which were reported to have been especially useful for staff without development backgrounds during the DFID–FCDO transition, into a broader capacity-building package for global stakeholders.

Overall, SSIs reported a variation in the degree to which the PFP in the TA Facility supported the institutionalisation of GRSP within FCDO. Some staff in FCDO acquired an interest and knowledge on GRSP and there is a core group within FCDO who have an interest in GRSP. However, policy shifts in FCDO, a changing funding environment, challenging workloads, and shifts in the priorities of FCDO country teams has meant that GRSP has not been institutionalised fully and SSI suggested that additional efforts are needed to support this agenda.

The sustainability of these GRSP-related institutional changes remains uncertain given current funding constraints. To further support sustainability, GSP has invested in the World Bank and UNICEF who have longstanding presence in-country to carry forward the GRSP agenda in implementation with government partners. This is evidenced by the number of UNICEF and World Bank country offices actively advancing GRSP in country via the UNICEF Strategic Plan and Country Development Plans and the World Bank RSR. Both the World Bank and UNICEF report that gender advisers, now embedded within their institutions, are helping maintain capacity, tools and resources to support continued progress.

4.2.2 Geography

The breadth of coverage of the World Bank is broad, with 48 countries benefiting from one or more country-specific grants. In the majority of the country-specific grants (65%), one grant was awarded to an individual country, although seven⁵⁴ countries received two grants, one country (Zambia) three grants, and one country (Liberia) four grants⁵⁵. The intention of the distribution of the World Bank Gender Window grants was to implement most grant activities in International Development Association (IDA) countries or International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) countries. There was an intentional skew towards IDA countries given that most of the grant recipients were in Africa. There was also a deliberate skew towards fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS) (one-third of the grants) since gender inequalities tend to be exacerbated in FCAS settings.

STAAR supported a broad portfolio, engaging with 60 countries and was suggested to have benefited from being able to respond to strategic and demand-led opportunities⁵⁶. While GSP's logframe indicators encouraged expansion into new countries, the programme also adopted a prioritisation approach around key themes while remaining responsive to emerging needs. SSIs reflected that a narrower focus on fewer countries could have deepened understanding of country systems, yet they also highlighted the importance of flexibility to engage where stakeholders were most active. Evidence suggested that deeper engagement, whether through targeted, longer-term work, as in Lebanon or the Sahel, or through sequenced support, as in Nepal and Zambia, was effective in delivering results. This may point to the value of a nuanced approach that balances strategic targeting with demand-led responsiveness.

⁵⁴ The seven countries were Pakistan, Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea, Brazil, Cote d'Ivoire, Republic of Congo and Indonesia.

⁵⁵ The correlation of results to investment and number of RSR Gender Window grants is analysed in the VfM section.

⁵⁶ STAAR Quarterly Progress Report April-June 2025. SSIs noted that many of these countries were countries supported under the Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19 Expert Advice Service (SPACE). Between April 2020 and November 2021, SPACE supported decision makers across national governments, donors, and IPs in more than 40 countries with independent, evidence-based, timely and actionable advice to meet growing needs.

UNICEF provided technical advice or support broadly via the PFP across UNICEF's network of 150 country offices and additionally its regional offices, although the GRASSP work was a more targeted approach covering nine countries⁵⁷. While the additional uptake and dissemination grant did make provision for regional and global events, a number of specific countries⁵⁸ were selected because they were assessed as primed to leverage the GRASSP findings for implementation with government and other development partners in-country.

Components varied in geographic targeting, and combining global activities with focused national engagement in fewer countries was suggested as more strategic. Only 46% of STAAR assignments had a country focus, compared to 79% of World Bank Gender Window grants, with the rest targeting multi-country, regional or global levels⁵⁹. STAAR reported that global momentum, such as advancing care and support systems, helped reinforce national-level work⁶⁰. However, SSIs suggested that a more targeted country focus, particularly for STAAR towards the end of the programme, may have been more strategic.

4.2.3 Variation by user group

The mix of modalities and IPs led to some differences across the workstreams in the diversity and breadth of users of the support. In essence, the different workstreams attracted different users.

The STAAR component had the greatest variety of user groups across the components. GSP's user groups have become more diverse over time, with 19 non-FCDO, non-STAAR users reported in 2023/24 increasing to 35 non-FCDO cumulative users by March 2025⁶¹. Comparable data for BASIC shows its user base to be less diverse (with 32 other users in 2024/25). Nonetheless, FCDO remains the most frequent user of GSP support with almost one third of assignments targeted at this user group⁶², with UNICEF also a significant other user of STAAR GSP. While the number of government users appears to be low (3), this number is misleading as other users, such as UNICEF, make requests for support on behalf of or in partnership with partner governments.

While the primary users were institutional actors from within World Bank operations or UNICEF COs, the partnerships of both with in-country government partners meant that the support provided was connected to in-country SP programming. The in-country presence of UNICEF and the World Bank meant that there was continuity in advocacy to influence change to government SP systems. STAAR's short-term TA model was useful in terms of flexibility, but the absence of sustained in-country presence in the aftermath of the assignments was suggested to affect momentum for change by some SSIs. However, STAAR has sought to use cost-effective ways of maintaining contact and providing support when new opportunities to drive change emerged with past service users, for example by engaging national consultants in these tasks after the completion of assignments. STAAR's approach of embedding advisers into local structures was deemed effective in driving change within users⁶³. Users have also embedded STAAR advice and knowledge into standard processes. For example, World Bank Sahel and UN Women, and users have also designed and funded programmes focused on GRSP. for example, in the case of the GIZ Female Leadership and MENA Regional Programmes.

⁵⁷ UNICEF Innocenti GRASSP Synthesis Report 2024. The nine countries are Angola, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, United Republic of Tanzania, Ethiopia, Mali, Mexico, Uruguay and Vietnam.

⁵⁸ The selected countries were Vietnam, Angola, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Mali.

⁵⁹ STAAR Quarterly Progress Report January-March 2025

⁶⁰ STAAR Quarterly Progress Report April-June 2025

⁶¹ Cumulative number of users - STAAR Quarterly Progress Report April-June 2025

⁶² STAAR Quarterly Progress Report January-March 2025

⁶³ SSIs

4.2.4 Extent of workstream synergies

The synergies between the UNICEF and STAAR workstreams were strongest, although over the life of GSP all three workstreams worked together, increasingly so towards the end. These synergies have been useful in driving impact and strong VfM.

The synergy between the STAAR and UNICEF workstreams amplified impact, with UNICEF's PFP-led capacity-building efforts leading increased demand for STAAR from UNICEF COs⁶⁴. There were strong connections and relationships, with components leveraging each other's access and expertise in multiple contexts, including between STAAR and UNICEF (Nepal child marriage, Tanzania Cash+). In partnership with UNICEF, STAAR facilitated and delivered the consultation process for *"We Deserve Better: Unlocking the Power of Social Protection for Women and Girls in Nepal"*. The knowledge shared by STAAR was featured in UNICEF's We Deserve Better Outcomes Report, published in September 2024⁶⁵.

There were also linkages between UNICEF and World Bank RSR Gender Window work, for example in the conduct of training on prevention of GBV in Zambia⁶⁶. Moreover, all workstreams engaged on global events including participation in the delivery of the SPIAC B Gender Group meeting and a partners' meeting in Lusaka, Zambia, in January 2025. STAAR and UNICEF Innocenti co-delivered a GRSP workshop at the FCDO Social Development Advisor Professional Development Conference. The World Bank shared its learning series, and STAAR and UNICEF offered relevant inputs to the themes⁶⁷. However, there was not much evidence of synergies between the different World Bank RSR Gender Window grants driving impact, even when the topics were similar, for example on gender-smart digital payment systems.

⁶⁴ SSIs.

⁶⁵ We Deserve Better: Unlocking the Power of Social Protection for Women and Girls, UNICEF, 2023.

⁶⁶ STAAR Quarterly Progress Report April-June 2025.

⁶⁷ STAAR Quarterly Progress Report January-March 2025.

5 Review findings: Sustainability



Sustainability: To what extent will any GRSP-related a) financing commitments, b) evidence-informed system-level changes, or c) broader outcomes and benefits, contributed to by GSP, persist after the programme closes?

Table 4: Sustainability key findings summary

Sub-questions	Key findings
5.1 Sustainability foundations	GSP has built some sustainability foundations across its three components: STAAR through institutionalising GRSP in TA-supported organisations, UNICEF via evidence and advocacy with governments, and the World Bank through internal reforms and operations. Despite progress from a gender-unaware baseline, embedding gender in SP programmes sustainably still requires stronger advocacy and pressure at the country-level.
5.2 Sustainability lessons	We identified multiple enabling and limiting factors that were suggested to affect GSP sustainability. Enabling factors included embedding advisers and national consultants, aligning GRSP with government priorities, and promoting shared learning through tools like World Bank Gender Markers and UNICEF's Gender Continuum. Limiting factors included budget cuts, political turnover and restructuring, short-term funding, and limited opportunities for follow-up on progress, especially in contexts where a gender focus remains contested. Sustained local engagement was suggested to be critical for context-sensitive design and lasting impact. Finally, the World Bank and UNICEF appeared to have more control over the sustained uptake of GSP activities because of their more extensive local presence and operations. STAAR's delivery model faced some challenges in ensuring the sustainability of its work as it was less linked to programming or embedded at institutional level. That said, STAAR did make efforts to maximise opportunities for sustained uptake of its outputs.

5.1 Sustainability foundations

Sustainability foundations: To what extent has GSP established solid foundations and specified mechanisms to increase the likelihood that any outcomes and impacts produced persist after its closure?

Finding 6: Overall, GSP has established some foundations for sustainability, to varying levels across the three components. Each pathway in the GSP ToC has contributed to laying sustainable foundations.

The remainder of this section is structured against the three pathways of change outlined in the ToC.

5.1.1 Partner pathway

All three components contributed through the partner pathway by helping institutionalise GRSP in TA-supported organisations. UNICEF demonstrated effective sustainability planning in taking over the funding of the PFP – initially funded by FCDO through GSP, now covered by core funds. The results reported for UNICEF in this report, against outcomes (see Section 3 on effectiveness) and impact (see Section 4 on impact), show that UNICEF institutionalised GRSP in its operations. The support provided by the PFP to 136 country offices contributed to the establishment of solid foundations for sustainable integration of gender into UNICEF's SP activities. Clear examples

of institutionalisation include the development of strategies, tools and guidance such as the Strategic Plan, Gender Continuum, and Gender Indicators, and at country level the improvements of UN joint SP programmes using evidence on gender issues. Review findings also show that these strategies, tools and guidance were directly informed by evidence from GRASSP research activities. Finally, UNICEF is planning to launch Centres of Excellence or CoEs (technical assistance and policy hubs) in January 2026 with their new Strategic Plan (2026-2029). These CoEs include a specific focus on TA to governments on GRSP as well as a fully funded post and portfolio on GRSP for the next 4 years at minimum. The CoE aims to be the new formulation of all UNICEF technical and programmatic work globally, demonstrating a significant result for GSP, and an important enabling factor for the sustainability of GRSP initiatives.

The review also found that the TA delivered by the STAAR Facility contributed to raising awareness and improving stakeholder capacity on gender responsiveness. Additionally, STAAR's efforts to develop and disseminate knowledge products targeted a diverse group of stakeholders through varied outputs like papers, blogs, events and technical workshops – many of which are available online (see Box 1 under section 3.1.16). These activities were important to establish the necessary conditions for governments to understand and embed gender responsiveness in policies and planning, and directly supported parallel activities on the government pathway. Further, STAAR assignments were largely conducted locally⁶⁸ by national experts who may, in some cases, have easier access to stakeholders and a stronger understanding of the political economy in which they live and work than international consultants. The use of national consultants supported or mentored by international consultants, in delivery of GRSP assignments was deemed a lasting legacy of STAAR, as such expertise remains in country in the aftermath of the programme.

Similarly to UNICEF, the World Bank fostered strong foundations for sustainable GRSP within its own operations. At institutional level, the World Bank benefited from the support of the FCDO PFP and was able to fund the role, using core funds, after FCDO support ended. This allowed the continuation of specialist support within the Bank, which helps ensure sustainable foundations for GRSP. The PFP also contributed to the institutionalisation of tools and guidance aimed at systematically embedding gender considerations into Bank operations. Examples include the development of Gender Markers and the requirement to include Gender Indicators in Bank operations; and the development of a GBV Toolkit (the Safety First Toolkit⁶⁹, also available as an online training module) which was informed by GSP-supported initiatives including the RSR Grants in Zambia. Finally, while the multiple rounds of RSR Gender Window grants supported in-country foundations for sustainable GRSP, one grant was instrumental in building foundations for better evidence on gender, supporting gender mainstreaming in programming. The ASPIRE Database⁷⁰ provides the necessary portal for any organisation, government department or researcher to access and analyse SP data by gender. This represents an important step towards sustainably improving the use of gender data in the design of SP systems.

5.1.2 Government pathway

At government level, UNICEF has built strong foundations by combining evidence and advocacy at country level. Evidence from GRASSP and non-GRASSP focus countries, including Angola, Tanzania, Ghana, Zambia, Ethiopia and Vietnam, shows GRASSP's in-country research being used by the PFP and by national stakeholders to improve the design of SP programmes to make them more responsive to gender issues. The uptake and dissemination activities, funded by the

⁶⁸ 82% of STAAR level of effort was used nationally.

⁶⁹ World Bank, Safety First: How to Leverage Social Safety Nets to Prevent Gender Based Violence: operational guidance. Available from [World Bank](https://www.worldbank.org/en/data/datatopics/safetyfirst).

⁷⁰ ASPIRE: The Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity, available from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/data/datatopics/aspireWorldBank>

GRASSP dissemination and uptake grant and currently under implementation, will further support these foundations.

The World Bank used its existing operations to advance GRSP integration in SP systems. The Bank's proximity to SP systems provided a sustainable avenue for the integration of GRSP. As gender-responsive improvements were made within the context of large operations, this provided incentives for stakeholders involved in World Bank operations to buy into gender-responsive initiatives. The Bank was also able to leverage existing and deep-rooted relationships with governments across the globe, including ministries or departments responsible for designing and implementing national SP systems. The Bank's involvement in the financing and delivery of these national SP systems has meant that they have been able to deliver gender-responsive interventions, such as training sessions and system improvements from ministry level all the way down to social case workers. This ensures that members of the SP delivery chain have the capacity to continue integrating gender responsiveness in their day-to-day operations after GSP ends.

5.1.3 Community of practice pathway

CoPs and other knowledge exchange activities have a strong role to play to establish these necessary pre-conditions for the reception of TA. The review findings show that an important part of ensuring the capacity of governments or partners to sustainably embed gender responsiveness in SP systems comes from their maturity and depth of understanding of gender issues. STAAR's learning groups, CoPs and technical workshops served to create opportunities for raising awareness on GRSP, sharing lessons on what works in GRSP, and encouraging experts and stakeholders, including government actors, to share advice and lessons learned. These activities were important to ensure the sustainable strengthening of the enabling environment for gender integration in SP programming.

5.1.4 Risks to sustainability

Finding 7: Despite these institutional, governmental and CoP foundations, findings show some risks to the sustainability of GSP outcomes.

GSP has improved gender responsiveness in SP programming, with varying end results some were more foundational while others were transformative. GSP components worked in many different countries and contexts and often worked in contexts where social protection systems were largely gender-unaware. The discrepancies in results presented in this report suggest that many systems supported were not yet ready to mainstream gender. For these contexts, evidence shows that continued investment in advocacy and technical support is essential for sustainable integration. While the STAAR Facility showed that providing short-term responsive support on GRSP can deliver sustainable change, some challenges with the model, notably the extent the support was embedded in user institutions or its distance from social protection programming, could impact the likely sustainability of its work.

While we identified examples that show that all components contributed to furthering the integration of gender in SP systems, gaps still remain. Notably, while STAAR contributed to furthering the evidence base and to exchanging lessons on gender responsiveness (CoP pathway), the programme's delivery approach somewhat limited its ability to fully control or influence the uptake of gender-responsive outputs in the long term. The majority of STAAR assignments were designed to respond to emerging needs, therefore limiting opportunities for follow-ups or ongoing engagement with the TA recipients following support. This approach, while responsive to partner needs, can limit opportunities to sustain the results achieved in users' organisations. To mitigate these risks, STAAR intended to collect feedback from assignment users at two points: immediately after assignment

completion using a form, and then a few months later using a follow-up call. The immediate form feedback was used to inform progress of assignment outcomes and provide either STAAR, or the user, with clear next steps. Later call feedback was used to assess progress on the uptake of outputs. These feedback data were compiled into structured assignment summary notes. It was intended that these notes would collectively provide accountability for performance against the ToC. Many of these notes were suggested to have been shared with FCDO towards the end of STAAR's delivery and FCDO stakeholders identified that there was a missed opportunity to share these notes earlier to inform adaptation and learning. Finally, while STAAR stakeholders indicated that they faced some challenges in getting timely feedback from STAAR users, in some cases FCDO stakeholders suggested that users were not contacted to schedule feedback calls.

Additionally, the ongoing institutional restructuring underway in UNICEF at the time of this review may affect the organisation's ability to retain a strong GRSP focus, or to continue funding the embedded specialist roles, such as the PFP, which has been a primary enabler of GRSP within the institution. Similar risks, including fiscal pressure, may affect the World Bank's ability to sustain GRSP outcomes or to continue integrating GRSP in new operations. These risks are explored below.

5.2 Sustainability learning

Sustainability learning: What were the most critical ways through which the sustainability of GSP benefits was enabled or threatened, and how should a programme with similar objectives and delivery modalities mitigate these?

The Endline Review also looked at the factors that enable or threaten GSP sustainability.

Findings showed some similarities across components and pathways. This section demonstrates that GSP sustainability is dependent on a number of enabling or hindering factors ranging from the type of support provided to contextual factors, and the level of collaboration between components.

5.2.1 Partner and government pathway

Finding 8: Sustainability through the partner and government pathway benefited from embedding institutional advisers and using local consultants to enable locally informed TA.

By embedding advisers within institutions and governments, components were able to ensure that gender is meaningfully and coherently embedded in existing SP systems. Many examples cited above for UNICEF and the World Bank showed that existing programmes, such as PSNP in Ethiopia or GEWEL in Zambia benefited from gender-responsive improvements, either through direct component support, or through lessons learned from research and evaluative activities (analytical support provided by the World Bank and STAAR or GRASSP).

To achieve this, UNICEF, the World Bank, and STAAR consultants to some extent, used existing relationships to facilitate access to SP stakeholders such as ministries responsible for SP. This was particularly successful in contexts where there was existing buy-in, awareness, and resources available within governments to understand and address gender issues. GSP components leveraged this enabling environment by aligning the GSP activities to the local government initiatives, thus achieving results for GSP and for the national SP systems at the same time. This is a particularly important finding for assessing the sustainability of programmes.

While all components leveraged these relationships, UNICEF and the World Bank's proximity to country SP programmes enabled longer-term influencing on gender responsiveness issues. These relationships supported the embedding of GRSP activities in wider operations or government initiatives. In an ever-evolving world with shifting priorities, ensuring strong relationships and access is

critical for ensuring ownership transfer and continued buy-in for GRSP. On the other hand, while STAAR operated within the natural limitations of a technical assistance delivery modality, it proved effective in providing responsive interventions and played a key role in complementing other GSP components, as discussed in Sections 3 and 4.

5.2.2 Community of practice pathway

Finding 9: The CoP pathway supported systematic gender integration through outputs such as the World Bank Gender Markers, UNICEF's Gender Continuum, and STAAR's peer learning groups. These helped raise awareness, build capacity and promote shared learning.

The establishment of gender-related tools and forums will continue to support sustainable integration of GRSP in national systems, such as World Bank Gender Markers, the UNICEF Gender Continuum, or STAAR gender peer learning groups. These tools and ways of working will likely play a strong role to incentivise stakeholders and programme teams to continue embedding, reporting on and sharing lessons on gender issues, particularly if their use is systematised by SP actors.

Collaboration and lesson sharing between GSP components is also an enabler of sustainability. Evidence from the review shows levels of collaboration and synergies (see Section 4); as well as sharing of lessons through open publications (see Box 1) and CoPs (see Box 2). These exchanges of experiences and lessons are important enablers for organisations, especially when they want to navigate common barriers and blockers to designing and delivering meaningful GRSP programmes. They also support the delivery of a coordinated and coherent SP sector that can be maximised to support affected communities.

Box 1: Using online repositories to share lessons and experiences from GRSP initiatives

GSP partners are actively sharing evidence and lessons on GRSP using online repositories such as the World Bank RSR web page, which offers resources, developed with Gender Window grants, in varied formats (toolkits, handouts, videos, e-learning courses). The STAAR Facility set up a dedicated page on the exiting socialprotection.org website to list all TA assignments and uploaded publications and briefs for public access. GSP partners also contribute to expanding the evidence base on GRSP through publications on the socialprotection.org web page, which was redesigned with STAAR assistance. Evidence from STAAR, UNICEF and the World Bank, as well as many other partners, can be found in dedicated resources tabs. GSP partners also use the platform to advertise learning clinics, events, and working group meetings to members, including the upcoming GRSP learning clinics co-organised by UNICEF and STAAR between October and December 2025. This platform, with its many functionalities, was suggested to play a strong role in ensuring the sustainability of GSP as it allows for GSP evidence to be structured and made available to the public, whether they are government policy leads in partner countries, independent researchers, or women's rights organisations.

Box 2: Ensuring sustainability through CoPs

In December 2024, the World Bank launched a CoP on Gender and SP. The initiative was spearheaded by the GSP PFP within the World Bank. It aims to provide a platform for fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange and cross-regional learning among experts, practitioners and World Bank task team leaders working at the intersection of SP and gender equality. Since its launch, the CoP has opened up to integrate partners working on GRSP. CoP sessions are held quarterly and

feature lessons learned from World Bank teams and partners. Examples of sessions delivered include: *“Promoting women’s labour force participation”*: a session focused on sharing lessons from a World Bank study on parental leave benefits which features contributions from UNICEF; and *“Addressing gender inequality in fragile, conflict and violent settings”*, which was jointly organised by the World Bank’s Fragility, Conflict, and Violence, Gender and SP working groups. It featured a presentation from STAAR on gender-transformative SP in crisis contexts and a UNICEF-WFP-WB presentation on Afghanistan’s partnership model for building GRSP systems. These CoP sessions enabled discussions and rich cross-learning as well as strengthened collaboration between GSP components. UNICEF’s PFP also convenes gender and social protection specialists within the UN, in a GRSP technical clinic CoP and through the global technical team on care and support, which focuses heavily on GRSP.

5.2.3 Sustainability risks

Finding 10: Each pathway faces risks which can undermine GSP’s ability to sustain support and progress GRSP globally. Key hindering factors range from budget cuts to political turnover, institutional restructuring and insufficient follow-up mechanisms.

The review identified a number of key risks that continue to threaten the sustainability of GSP.

These risks affect the partner, government and CoP ToC pathways. They are, however, more prevalent within the partner and government pathways. In the government pathway, fiscal pressure, political turnover and budget cuts in partner countries create uncertainty and may threaten the capacity of World Bank operations to continue meaningfully integrating GRSP into national SP systems despite World Bank financing support. For UNICEF, budget cuts and institutional restructuring threaten long-term outcomes as well as UNICEF’s capacity to continue funding the PFP (also relevant for the World Bank). While these risks persist, UNICEF’s forthcoming Strategic Plan (2026-2029), establishment of Centres of Excellence, and commitment to fully fund a GRSP post through at least 2029, partially mitigate some of the risks outlined above.

While STAAR TA operated independently of broader initiatives, it successfully delivered targeted support within its scope. However, gender issues, as detailed in the previous sub-EQ (sustainability foundations), typically require ongoing engagement, which is best achieved through follow-up assignments, relationship management, and continued financial support. For short-term assignments, the limited opportunities for systematic follow-up engagements can make it challenging to track impact, maintain momentum, and influence the uptake and implementation of gender policies. STAAR’s interventions did, however, lay important groundwork upon which future engagements can build, including from UNICEF and the World Bank.

Finally, all components encountered resistance when addressing gender issues. Intensifying or re-emerging gender backlash can put GRSP outcomes at risk. It is therefore crucial for GRSP stakeholders to understand the underlying causes of this resistance and respond through carefully designed, locally grounded engagement with communities and local actors. By building trust and communicating effectively with community members and leaders, GRSP actors can design and implement context-sensitive programmes that align with shared objectives. This approach can help navigate sensitive topics and create space for addressing gender issues, even in restrictive environments. This can further be supported by CoP activities such as awareness raising, evidence sharing, and local network engagements. Additionally, the onboarding of qualified and experienced national consultants to deliver TA can bring the added benefit – although not guaranteed – that local experts can help maximise opportunities for access to stakeholders. This is because local consultants may be better tuned into the political economy of the context in which they live and work.

6 Review findings: Value for money

Did the resources allocated to workstream activities represent good value for money in terms of their relative contribution to immediate, intermediate and ultimate outcomes?

Finding 11: GSP delivered good VfM. World Bank Gender Window grants were highly rated as cost effective, UNICEF attracted additional funding for GRSP, and STAAR expanded its user base while raising awareness of GRSP.

Table 5: Value for Money key findings summary

Key findings
Economy: Resources used demonstrated VfM, with good use of cost containment measures, such as use of national and local consultants by all workstreams, competitive procurement, cost sharing, and leveraging resources from partner institutions or other donors.
Efficiency: Of the GSP workstreams, the World Bank RSR Gender Window delivery was the most efficient, as borne out by Annual Review scores (2019 to 2025) although a stakeholder noted that the depth of monitoring of the quality of World Bank delivery was somewhat less than conducted by STAAR and UNICEF. While PFPs were praised in SSIs as a key modality underpinning the efficient delivery of the workstreams, building on past engagements or work was also cited as an important enabler of efficiency in delivery. Delays due to COVID-19 and budget constraints and uncertainties affected the timely delivery of the UNICEF and STAAR workstreams.
Effectiveness and cost effectiveness: Against VfM effectiveness indicators, two GSP workstreams met or exceeded expectations, while STAAR fell moderately below its target in relation to its indicator – the percentage of assignments that have been implemented effectively. The World Bank component was highly cost effective: £8.5 million influenced a \$9.6 billion SP portfolio reaching 108 million people (56.6 million women and girls). UNICEF also delivered strong institutional results, with £5 million catalysing an additional \$5 million for SP programming. STAAR achieved impact-level results in Nepal and Côte d'Ivoire, but its £4 million⁷¹ investment was less cost effective due, in part, to the maturity of some supported systems limited readiness for change.
Equity: Equity, and in particular a focus on marginalised women and girls and people with disabilities, was central to all workstreams under GSP. For example in Uzbekistan, an RSR Grant supported the Government's agenda to deinstitutionalise childcare facilities and transition to community and family-based care alternatives for vulnerable children deprived of parental care. The grant supported the government to develop a robust monitoring and evaluation system to enable it to monitor the quality of care provided in both institutional care facilities, and in the alternative community and family-based care facilities. With the introduction of this monitoring tool, government, through the National Agency for Social Protection, is now able to systematically track child profiles, care arrangements and quality of services rendered, while identifying centres at heightened risk of neglect, violence, or poor living conditions. Consequently, this is enabling authorities to take timely and corrective actions to ensure the protection and wellbeing of children living in these facilities, many of whom are children with disabilities.

⁷¹ Of which £2,958,570.65 was allocated through STAAR

6.1 Economy: Are the cost of inputs well managed?

Key cost drivers across all workstreams remain as outlined in the GSP Business Case: fee rates and staff salaries, travel and subsistence, and security-related expenses⁷². In the case of UNICEF and the World Bank, staff and contractual services consumed 78% and 92% respectively of spend⁷³, with internal staff costs 48% of total costs in the case of UNICEF and 35% for the World Bank RSR Gender Window⁷⁴.

All STAAR TA assignments were delivered within their original budgets and stayed within the agreed fee cap, except where scope was expanded⁷⁵. STAAR presented an analysis of costs per output in its quarterly reports, which showed that GSP's most significant spending in terms of number of milestone payments was on the following: embedded advisers (18 instances), reports (11 instances), inception reports (12 instances) and strategy and roadmaps (13 instances)⁷⁶.

Management costs were consistently capped at 8% for UNICEF programmes, which was competitive compared to other research providers (4-20%)⁷⁷. The 8% indirect support costs are standard across UNICEF programmes and represent the core funding to UNICEF covering administrative and management costs. The management costs for the World Bank are set centrally at 7%. The 2021 Annual Review of GSP noted that:

“ *while this is at the upper end of management costs, given the global reach of the World Bank and the links to IDA, IBRD and domestic resources, this is judged appropriate”.*

One of the grants awarded by the Trust Fund was to support the RSR Gender-Smart Programme Management Team, for an amount of \$1.083 million (or 5.6% of the Trust Fund), which was for the conducting of knowledge management activities. STAAR's management costs cover not only administrative and management oversight functions, but also technical and strategic management of the facility, as well as learning and knowledge management⁷⁸. If management costs are confined purely to administrative and managerial oversight functions, then the cost is 8.2%⁷⁹. With these costs included, STAAR's costs would be higher at 18% over the life of the STAAR contract – though this figure fluctuated as the number of assignments in the portfolio changed.

FCDO suppliers are typically required to specify cost containment measures to manage economy. Examples of such measures used by GSP suppliers included:

- **Use of national/local consultants:** UNICEF hired local consultants to enhance programme quality and reduce costs associated with international consultants, as seen in the GRASSP programme⁸⁰. National statistical offices were contracted for data collection in Angola and DRC at significantly lower costs compared to academic or professional firms⁸¹. However, one SSI noted that GRASSP should have engaged more with ongoing national research efforts underway in partner countries, as part of the development of sustainable research capacity in partner countries. Two thirds of the days worked on STAAR assignments have been country-focused and of these, 82.3% have been worked by national staff⁸². This compares favourably with BASIC, for

⁷² GSP Annual Review (Draft) 2025.

⁷³ Financial reports from World Bank Trust Fund and UNICEF Certified Statements of Account 2020-2025

⁷⁴ Personnel figures for the World Bank Gender Window include, additionally to staff, consultant costs for short-term or long-term agreements.

⁷⁵ STAAR Quarterly Progress Report, Oct-Dec 2024, V2 for FCDO review.

⁷⁶ STAAR Quarterly Progress Report January-March 2025.

⁷⁷ GSP Annual Review 2023, p. 20; GSP Annual Review 2024, p. 20.

⁷⁸ SSIs.

⁷⁹ STAAR administrative data.

⁸⁰ GRASSP Final Report July 2024.

⁸¹ GRASSP Final Report July 2024.

⁸² Source: STAAR Project Tracker (Budget and Financing) 10 April 2025. This included consultant days on assignments that have concluded or are in implementation.

which 57.3% of days for country-focused assignments were worked on by national staff. The Bank used staff for the execution of the grants, although consultants, mainly international, were used to address any gaps in expertise⁸³.

- **Competitive procurement:** STAAR achieved cost containment through competitive procurement, strict fee rate caps, and adherence to FCDO expense guidelines, with only a small percentage of consultant days exceeding fee caps, justified by expertise levels⁸⁴. Similarly, the World Bank RSR Gender Window grants used a competitive process to award grants. The Bank reported that the Gender Window was heavily oversubscribed, with applications exceeding awards in a ratio of 2:1. UNICEF also used competitive procurement processes for the award of contractual services required to deliver GRASSP research.
- **Cost sharing and leveraging resources from other donors:** Some examples of cost sharing included GRASSP sharing costs with other donor funding, such as Sida and the US, optimising resource use⁸⁵. The collaborative development of a global training programme on GRSP, under the GRSP team as a TA mechanism, involves FCDO, UNICEF and Germany, therefore avoiding duplication and leveraged existing resources⁸⁶. The SPACE Facility (part of STAAR) leveraged shared funding with other donors, enabling greater outputs and reach⁸⁷. The STAAR Facility supported BASIC and GSP assignments; the shared management infrastructure has reduced costs for both components as a result of sharing the cost of the same Leadership Team, as well as common reporting to FCDO. Another example of added value of this arrangement is that BASIC can provide a bigger platform to showcase the work of GSP at little cost, for example the Rome Forum in 2024 (spearheaded by FCDO, delivered by STAAR and involving a range of stakeholders in the sector including GIZ, USAID, World Food Programme.). Other examples of cost sharing by STAAR include UNICEF hosting the follow-up workshop for the Eswatini uptake with the government (£1,000 to £1,500, approximately, based on previous workshop costs in Eswatini), and in the case of the MENA Regional Coordination mapping (B270), the Facility Manager supported a CashCap regional adviser to take forward the work in STAAR's place (£20,000)⁸⁸.

Both UNICEF and the World Bank committed to funding PFPs beyond FCDO support, demonstrating their value⁸⁹, as well as saving GSP funds. The World Bank was also able to attract additional funding for the Trust Fund (see Figure 3), which SSIs noted was down to FCDO being a *'first mover'* in this space, attracting other donors to provide resources into the Gender Window.

⁸³ SSIs

⁸⁴ STAAR GSP Annual Review inputs 2025; STAAR QPR January-March 2025

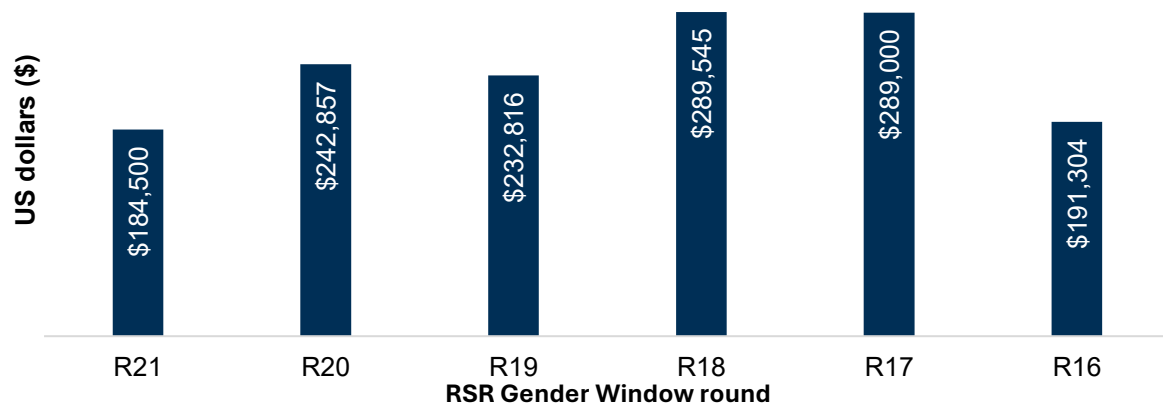
⁸⁵ UNICEF

⁸⁶ GSP Annual Review Report 2024

⁸⁷ BASIC Performance Evaluation: Baseline Report, December 2021

⁸⁸ STAAR Quarterly Progress Report April-June 2025

⁸⁹ GSP Annual Review 2023

Figure 3: World Bank RSR Gender Window sources of funds (USD)


Source: World Bank RSR Gender Window financial reports

6.2 Efficiency: How well were the inputs converted into outputs?

Based on an analysis of workstream Annual Review output scores since 2019, the World Bank workstream had the strongest performance over the lifetime of GSP. All its scores rated A (meeting expectations) or A+ (moderately exceeding expectations).

The review identified mixed evidence on the output performance of the TA Facility. While the performance of STAAR has met expectations in the last two Annual Reviews (2024 and 2025), over its lifetime, TA facility output scores have fallen short of expectations on four occasions.⁹⁰ The pre-STAAR TA facility fell short in terms of output scores in 2020 and 2021 and STAAR was moderately below expectations in 2022 and 2023. Efficiency in the delivery of the TA facility over its lifetime was compromised by a number of factors, including 1) delays in responding to requests, 2) output quality, and 3) delays arising from procurement of a new TA provider and a lengthy inception.

However, STAAR did succeed in increasing the pace of delivery in FY 2023/24, with 22 new assignments delivered in comparison with 24 in the 2019-23 period⁹¹. Moreover, as reported in Section 3, STAAR demonstrated operational flexibility and adaptability by reshaping assignments in response to shifting priorities and constraints. The move from the use of the Expert Advisory Call-Down Service framework to a TA provider was good from an efficiency standpoint, saving the FCDO SPT time in managing multiple contracts and processing amendments for changes to contracts. Despite these time delays, 94% of STAAR assignments and their deliverables were rated as satisfactory or higher by users⁹².

Overall, UNICEF efficiency performance aligned with expectations, except in 2019, when there was insufficient progress on the finalisation of the implementation plan and delays in finalisation of publications in 2023⁹³. UNICEF's output performance in some years was affected by delays in the conduct of research activities due to COVID-19. It is also worth noting that many activities of the GRSP team were not formally featured in the original GSP partnership framework and logframe. These activities include direct technical assistance, capacity building and organisation of high-level

⁹⁰ The on-demand technical assistance facility was delivered through the Oxford Policy Management (OPM) led High Quality Technical Assistance for Results (HEART) consortium as part of the FCDO's Expert Advisory Call Down Service (EACDS) until August 2021. The Annual Review scores for the facility pre STAAR were A in 2019, C in 2020 and B in 2021.

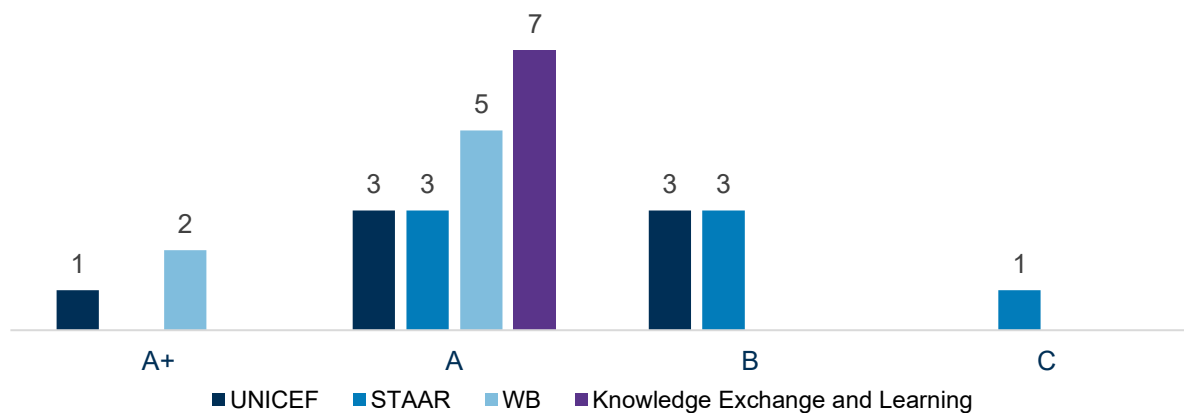
⁹¹ GSP Annual Review 2024.

⁹² STAAR Quarterly Progress Report April - June 2025.

⁹³ 2019 and 2023 GSP Annual Reviews.

events. This additional support from the GRSP team increased efficiency in delivery as well as enhanced performance of this component.

Figure 4: Overview of GSP Annual Review Scores 2019-2025 by Workstream



The review identified two key efficiency drivers for GSP:

- PFPs critical for capacity building:** Investments in capacity building initiatives delivered through the PFPs in the GSP partner organisations were found to be highly cost efficient, in particular for the strengthening of in-house institutional capacity within UNICEF and World Bank teams, resourcing them with the capacity to strengthen the gender responsiveness of SP programming⁹⁴. The UNICEF PFP was pivotal in amplifying GRASSP research findings via high-level events attended by key stakeholders. The World Bank Gender Expert embedded in the Social Protection and Jobs team was assessed as playing a key role in strengthening the gender responsiveness of the Bank's SP programming. The PFP in STAAR was a shorter role than for the other workstreams, but provided valuable inputs increasing demand for TA and ensuring strong FCDO engagement on GSP.
- Drawing on existing relationships and engagements:** For the STAAR component, leveraging existing materials and learning across contexts was efficient in terms of maximising outputs and reducing duplication. For example, GRSP training in Botswana, Cambodia, Eswatini and Uganda built on previous work, enhancing efficiency⁹⁵. STAAR's sequencing and layering of assignments across workstreams further reduced duplication and maximised resource use⁹⁶. The percentage of countries that have accessed STAAR's services (or predecessor BASIC/GSP TA facilities through the EACDS framework) more than once is 57.89% in the case of GSP and 67.92% in the case of BASIC⁹⁷. GRASSP used existing networks and CO engagements, as well as pre-existing survey tools etc. which reduced spend and supported efficiency in the conduct of the research⁹⁸. In all cases, UNICEF research was conducted in partnership with large government programmes, which was efficient from an uptake perspective⁹⁹. The proximity of the World Bank RSR Gender Window grants to operations provided a highly efficient route for use of the research and findings generated by the grants to impact design and delivery of GRSP programming¹⁰⁰.

However, there have been challenges to the efficient delivery of GSP, notably arising from delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic and budget constraints and uncertainty:

⁹⁴ SSIs

⁹⁵ STAAR GSP Annual Review inputs 2025, p. 40

⁹⁶ STAAR Quarterly Progress Report January-March 2025

⁹⁷ STAAR Quarterly Progress Report January-March 2025

⁹⁸ SSIs

⁹⁹ GSP Annual Review 2023

¹⁰⁰ SSIs

- COVID delays:** COVID-19 delayed delivery of all three workstreams of GSP. Efficiency in the delivery of the World Bank workstream was severely compromised by COVID-19 pressures and delays¹⁰¹. Delays due to COVID-19 affected the pre-STAAR TA Facility by impacting on the ability of consultants to travel, affecting consultant availability and in some instances leading to a pause in work¹⁰². Although this did create an opportunity to deliver the virtual expert helpdesk, SPACE, globally in response to unprecedented SP needs¹⁰³. Political unrest also impacted STAAR delivery timelines, but the programme adapted efficiently, reallocating resources to focus on uptake and dissemination activities to sustain results and maximise impact¹⁰⁴. GRASSP research was delayed by one year in some instances due to COVID-19, which was deemed sensible by SSIs in ensuring good quality (a decision was made to avoid remote data collection and prioritise in-person data collection to ensure that requisite quality standards were upheld)¹⁰⁵. Overall, the programme's ability to adapt during COVID-19, including shifting timelines and focusing on desk-based research, demonstrated resourcefulness in maintaining progress despite significant challenges¹⁰⁶.
- Budget constraints and uncertainty:** Despite reductions in ODA during the programme lifespan, minimal changes have been made to the GSP budget, with only the STAAR Facility impacted¹⁰⁷. Budget constraints occasionally led to a reactive approach in selecting STAAR's portfolio of work, which may have impacted the ability to fully capitalise on strategic opportunities¹⁰⁸. However, collaborative decision making between STAAR and FCDO on funding priorities helped mitigate the impact of budget uncertainties, ensuring that resources were allocated to strategically important activities¹⁰⁹. One SSI noted the value of STAAR issuing a call for requests for support, allowing STAAR and FCDO to prioritise which assignments were supported.

6.3 Effectiveness: Did outputs lead to intended outcomes and impact?

In this section, we review the performance of the programme against the effectiveness VfM indicators cited in the GSP Business Case and comment on the cost effectiveness of the programme and its workstreams to the extent possible given the availability of data.

Table 6: VfM Effectiveness key findings summary

Effectiveness VfM Indicator	Performance
UNICEF Workstream – Research: Adoption of research findings into SP policy and practice or evidence of progress towards that	Met expectations in Business Case: The GRASSP programme achieved its desired outputs, including high-quality research and dissemination, despite delays caused by external factors ¹¹⁰ . Research outputs influenced policy discussions, such as Angola's decision to continue a cash transfer programme ¹¹¹ and integration of gender considerations into social assistance reforms in Vietnam, as well as integration into design of PSNP6 in Ethiopia. There was strong evidence of institutional take-up and engagement on GRSP within UNICEF and its network of country offices, as a result of GRASSP research and significantly due to the technical clinics and advisory support of the PFP. However, the full effectiveness of GRASSP research will

¹⁰¹ GSP Annual Review 2022.

¹⁰² Annual Review 2021.

¹⁰³ SPACE was not in scope for this review as it has been evaluated elsewhere as explained in Section 1.3 of this review report.

¹⁰⁴ Annual Review 2022, p. 20; STAAR GSP Annual Review inputs 2025, p. 43.

¹⁰⁵ SSIs.

¹⁰⁶ SSIs.

¹⁰⁷ GSP Annual Review 2025 (Draft).

¹⁰⁸ STAAR Quarterly Progress Report January-March 2025, (Annex D_Risk Matrix_Jan-March 2025, p. 6).

¹⁰⁹ STAAR QPR January-March 2025, Annex D_Risk Matrix_Jan-March 2025, p. 10.

¹¹⁰ GRASSP Final Report July 2024, p. 18, GSP Annual Review 2025 (Draft).

¹¹¹ GRASSP Final Report July 2024, p. 18.

become clearer once the uptake and dissemination activities are completed in March 2026.

STAAR – Advisory services:

Percentage of call-down assignments that have been implemented effectively

Moderately fell short of expectations: At the time of reporting, the percentage of GSP assignments commissioned by non-STAAR users achieving objectives set out in the Terms of Reference with a score of 4 or higher out of 5 have not met expectations; in 2023/24 and 2024/25 87% and 81% of assignments scored 4 or above respectively, against a final target of 90%.¹¹² The figure reported in the draft GSP Annual Review for 2025 was 87.5%. These rates for 2023/24 and 2024/25 are lower than the performance rates for BASIC, which were 100% and 89% against a target of 90% for the same reporting periods¹¹³. GSP user satisfaction scores for 2024/25 were 81% (against a target of 90%) although 94% of GSP users confirmed they were at minimum satisfied with STAAR support (a score of 3)¹¹⁴ More recent data on GSP user satisfaction in FY 2025/26 indicates that all GSP users met the minimum satisfaction levels (a score of 3). That said, GSP succeeded in diversifying its user base, with 35 users (not categorised as FCDO or STAAR) using the facility in 2024/25, with UNICEF being a particularly frequent user of the facility (12 instances). Apart from the results reported under effectiveness, the STAAR Facility delivered some notable assignments including social roadmaps to tackle child marriage in Nepal and Zambia, and a significant volume of knowledge products and events, which were well received with high engagement and satisfaction levels, indicating that the resources allocated to these activities contributed effectively to immediate and intermediate outcomes¹¹⁵.

World Bank Partnership: Rate of IDA and domestic resource mobilisation for gender-sensitive RSR projects

Exceeded expectations in the Business Case: The £8.5 million invested by FCDO under GSP influenced WB operations amounting to \$9.6 billion, significantly exceeding the ambition in the Business Case. The Business Case for GSP had envisaged that the RSR Gender Window could be associated with approximately £220 million of additional IDA funding on GRSP. WB grants demonstrated exceptional influence, with each dollar distributed linked to over \$1,800 in WB operational financing, amplifying the impact of relatively modest investments¹¹⁶.

However, as noted under impact (see Section 4), while the intention in the Business Case was for the leveraging of additional funding for GRSP programming, in reality the grants mainly influenced the effectiveness and quality of existing IDA programming in terms of gender responsiveness. The significance of the grants' influence is amplified as over the lifetime of the RSR Gender Window there was a huge scale-up in SP programming due to COVID, with funding increasing from \$3 billion in 2019 to \$6 billion in 2020 and \$9 billion in 2020/21. SSIs reported that GSP support was a key factor in the Bank mainstreaming gender in its operations. The percentage of Social Protection and Jobs Team operations that were gender-tagged increased from 56% in 2019 to 100% in 2025.

¹¹² Not all users of the TA Facility provide feedback on levels of satisfaction with the service. Therefore, actual satisfaction levels may differ from that reported.

¹¹³ STAAR, Quarterly Progress Report April -June 2025.

¹¹⁴ STAAR QPR Jan-March 2025.

¹¹⁵ STAAR_QPR January-March 2025, pp. 12-14, p. 24.

¹¹⁶ World Bank Final RSR Progress Report 2019-2022.

6.4 Cost effectiveness: Were results proportionate to the programme's investment?

World Bank RSR Gender Window grants: Given the scale of the influence of the RSR Gender Window grants on World Bank operations and SP programming strengthening their gender responsiveness, the £8.5 million investment by GSP was very cost effective. Across the board the grants have improved the gender responsiveness of World Bank operations, reaching over 100 million people and investments of \$9.6 billion in SP programming. When the Bank reported outcome-level changes to the Endline Review Team, they reported a number of institutional changes as well as selected examples of change at the country level. The Bank reported the challenge, from a resource perspective, of following up on all 76 RSR Gender Window grants to establish how many delivered outcome-level change and to explain why some grants did not. The results reported were examples of grants known to have successfully delivered change. The Bank also reported that while it cannot say that every grant was individually successful, the portfolio of RSR Gender Window grants, as a whole, was influential in terms of increasing the gender responsiveness of SP programming. The reasons provided by the Bank as to why some grants may not have delivered outcome-level change are set out below:

- Partner governments were not committed to GRSP due to other priorities.
- Changes in government disrupted progress towards change.
- It takes time to achieve outcomes; the work had not progressed that far in some partner countries.
- Capacity shortcomings in partner governments posed a challenge to implementing change.

6.4.1 STAAR

With an investment of £4.1 million¹¹⁷, the TA Facility, while smaller in scale than the World Bank and UNICEF components, has represented a cost-effective mechanism for advancing GRSP, providing timely, high-quality technical inputs while maintaining flexibility and responsiveness to shifting priorities and contexts.

Across the programme, STAAR delivered more than 40 GSP-related assignments spanning analytical work, strategy design, embedded advisory roles, and cross-partner coordination.

The Facility's demand-led model enabled resources to be directed efficiently towards high-priority requests, often within short turnaround times and under constrained budgets. Assignments were often small and time-bound, allowing a wide reach across partners and contexts at modest cost. Importantly, the model was designed with the understanding that not all assignments would be expected to deliver outcome-level change. In several contexts, particularly where the integration of gender into social protection systems was less of a national priority, STAAR's role focused on awareness raising, diagnostic work, or seeding dialogue around GRSP principles. These engagements laid groundwork for future systemic change but were not intended to generate measurable outcome-level results within the programme period.

In countries and institutions with greater SP maturity – such as Nepal, and Lebanon – STAAR's embedded advisers and longer-term or layered assignments contributed to visible outcome-level change, including enhanced coordination among donors and integration of gender-responsive approaches in national or regional SP strategies (e.g. through GIZ's MENA regional programme). The use of national consultants (82% of all delivery days) also improved cost effectiveness.

¹¹⁷ Of which £2,958,570.65 was allocated through STAAR

STAAR maintained strong financial discipline. All assignments were delivered within budget, with management costs averaging 18% across the life of the programme¹¹⁸, comparable to peers once cross-cutting learning and coordination functions are considered. The Facility leveraged cost sharing with other mechanisms such as SPACE, achieving efficiency through joint staffing and shared infrastructure with BASIC.

Looking ahead, if a similar programme were designed with a smaller budget, SSI evidence suggests that three priorities would strengthen cost effectiveness and strategic impact:

1. Concentrating some resource on a limited number of focus countries or themes to enable deeper system-level engagement and facilitate diagnostic work and outcome tracking over time.
2. Maintaining a balance between reactive, demand-driven support and proactive 'push' investments in areas where gender responsiveness is not yet prioritised but where STAAR's convening power can be catalytic.
3. Retaining flexible delivery mechanisms (e.g. call-down TA and embedded advisers) while devolving greater autonomy to the delivery partner to approve and implement small assignments swiftly, reducing transaction costs.

6.4.2 UNICEF

In the case of the UNICEF workstream, the review team identified results in four out of nine GRASSP countries: Ethiopia, Vietnam, Angola and Tanzania. Most were reported at outcome level, apart from Ethiopia which reported both immediate and intermediate outcomes (see Section 3) and ultimate outcome (see Section 4). Mexico, Uruguay and Burkina Faso have GRASSP dissemination activities planned between Q4 2025 and Q1 2026. Dates are currently being confirmed. UNICEF is also planning to host two key global moments in Q4 2025 for the dissemination of GRASSP findings and research (in addition to other outcomes); namely, a UNICEF-DFAT GRSP Global Symposium taking place between 10 and 12 February 2026 in Bangkok, and a high-level event at the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70) taking place between 9 and 20 March 2026 in New York City.

Out of the seven outcome and impact results reported in Sections 3 and 4 of this review report, five were achieved thanks to a contribution from both GRASSP and the PFP; and two were associated with only one of each UNICEF modality. The variation in results between GRASSP countries can be explained by a heterogeneous context in GRASSP focus countries. Some GRASSP countries like Ethiopia or Tanzania have a long history of SP and gender engagement, facilitated through their national SP systems. Highlighted in the impact learning section, strong engagement with national stakeholders also played a strong role in ensuring the realisation of results in Angola, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Vietnam. However, in Mali, DRC and Burkina Faso, UNICEF results were slowed or hindered by political instability and staff turnover (associated with the fragile context). In Mexico and Uruguay, as well as in DRC, another factor to note is the preliminary nature of GRSP dialogues. In Burkina Faso, despite the political instability, UNICEF is leveraging GRASSP evidence to inform preparatory work associated with the design of a new national SP strategy. In Uruguay, UNICEF is supporting national dialogue on SP amid a wider (and lengthy) government-led reform process. In Mexico, UNICEF is leveraging GRASSP findings to influence national policy design as part of the wider development of a National Care system and National Development Plan. This shows that UNICEF's ability to achieve results in GRASSP countries is tied to the maturity of each national context and how advanced they are on GRSP dialogues.

¹¹⁸ As noted under Economy (Section 6.1), if management costs exclude technical and strategic management of the facility and are confined purely to administrative and managerial oversight functions then the cost falls to 8.2% (data provided by STAAR).

6.5 Equity: Are benefits distributed fairly?

The programme prioritised equity by focusing on marginalised women and girls and targeting IDA countries over IBRD countries¹¹⁹. All three components developed resources and knowledge products supporting the development of capacity on GRSP programming, and research conducted by the workstreams ensured that insights informed policies designed to serve these groups. The programme also focused on disabilities to an extent within research and TA activities supported by STAAR and UNICEF.

¹¹⁹ GSP Annual Review 2020

7 Closing remarks

This section presents an overarching summary of the review findings in the context of its implementation history and concludes with a summary set of implications for a possible GSP follow-on programme.

7.1 Conclusions

GSP is now moving into its final phase of implementation and will close after six years in delivery at the end of March 2026. The programme's launch was inadvertently aligned to the rapid expansion of SP initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic. This alignment created a strategic opportunity to advocate for more gender-responsive SP approaches. The programme capitalised on this, driving institutional change across UNICEF, the World Bank, FCDO, and partner governments by integrating gender into SP programming. Its flexibility and adaptability have enabled it to respond effectively to evolving contexts and diverse user needs.

GSP made a clear contribution to improved gender responsiveness and the quality of SP systems, although progress varied by workstream. UNICEF country-level influence is less mature than the other workstreams as uptake and dissemination is ongoing. The World Bank's proximity to its operations gave it significant leverage in influencing SP programming, allowing it to influence a large portfolio of some \$9.6 billion supporting in excess of 100 million beneficiaries. While UNICEF succeeded via the work of the PFP to mobilise more resources for GRSP, the Bank's influence was more on strengthening the quality of its existing programming. The STAAR workstream provided the programme with an opportunity to engage with and influence a more diverse set of users, as well as supporting SP systems that are not yet aware or primed to become more gender-responsive by building a case with partners on the importance of addressing this issue. The programme succeeded in delivering change in terms of partner institutions (UNICEF, World Bank and FCDO) and government SP systems, while CoP influence is assessed as strongest under STAAR.

The Business Case for GSP noted that the programme, if successful, would generate substantial potential benefits that would more than justify the cost. The evidence from this review aligns with the VfM expectations stated in the Business Case. Partnering with key institutions, such as UNICEF and the World Bank working on SP, to encourage them to better mainstream gender in their operations has paid off and represents solid VfM. The investment in the STAAR Facility is also justifiable from a VfM perspective, given its influence on FCDO and a broad range of users, as well as its flexibility in supporting users to become more aware and better understand GRSP, and progress changes in policy and practice.

GSP was an innovative mix of modalities, with a grant-awarding component with a broad geographical (48 specific countries) coverage, a more focused research component covering a small number (9) of countries and an on-demand TA facility with a broad geographical footprint (60 countries). As such, the programme served as a useful incubator for learning on what works in trying to influence and shape policy and practice in the SP space. An important lesson concerning modalities is that building capacity of a variety of stakeholders (national and local stakeholders, IPs and grass roots organisations) is critical, with co-creation and demand-led approaches valuable for buy-in and use. Embedding gender experts in key institutions in the SP space also works, positioning the support close to programming and thereby engendering opportunities for influence and advocacy on the issue. A phased implementation period (involving creation of a roadmap which serves as a broader system-oriented plan) is also a good strategy, recognising that systemic change takes time and short-term assistance can build foundations for change. Coverage of underexplored areas was something that STAAR invested in, providing the opportunity to develop pioneering thinking and evidence on areas such as care and support systems,

LGBTQ+, local actors, child marriage, women's leadership and crises. The synergies between the UNICEF and STAAR workstreams were strongest, although over the life of the programme, and increasingly towards the end all three workstreams worked together, driving impact and also delivering VfM. However, synergies within the individual components particularly UNICEF and RSR Gender workstreams were less apparent with the potential for more joined-up working between the different RSR grants and also in the UNICEF component, between the different research projects.

Some useful takeaways from the Endline Review on SP programming include the need for programmes to consider interlinked vulnerabilities, as well as addressing entrenched social norms. Impact evaluations, such as those undertaken by GRASSP, can be very useful in shaping programming and ensuring cost-effective intervention. Tailoring interventions to the specific country context consistently emerged as critical from all components of the programme.

There are several positives that enhance the likely sustainability of the support. The foundations for sustainable institutional change within the World Bank and UNICEF are evident due to the likely sustainability of the newly acquired capacity and resources developed by the programme, which should support continued attention to GRSP after the programme is closed. Both the Bank and UNICEF will benefit from the ongoing presence of gender experts and resources, such as examples of good practice, tools, and guidance on how to design and implement GRSP. Moreover, the ongoing presence of the Bank and UNICEF in partner countries will provide continuity in the conversation with partners on GRSP. The increased interest of FCDO staff and access to high-quality resources, the majority of which were produced by STAAR, also bodes well for likely sustainability of the newly acquired capacity and know-how, and the use of the resources and tools developed with GSP support.

However, there are also challenges which may constrain or hinder the continuation of this work in the aftermath of GSP closure. At country level, the foundations for sustainable change are more delicate, requiring an ongoing injection of momentum and continuity in advocating for GRSP programming. While some GSP results contributed to changes in policy or programme design, not all results achieved the level of maturity necessary for changes to remain after programme end. Inevitably, uncertainty and budget cuts, including reductions in spend on aid, are likely to affect the sustainability of GSP's work, particularly if partner governments deem this agenda a lower priority than other areas. Unfortunately, the closure of the programme in March 2026 will leave a gap if partners do not succeed in accessing funding for future GRSP technical support mechanisms.

7.2 Implications for a future follow-on programme

Based on the review findings and conclusion, we have outlined a set of key critical interventions and lessons that should be deployed by any successor programme with similar objectives to GSP. FCDO and GSP partners should continue to advocate for technical support facilities, to drive forward GRSP. Some suggested critical interventions for follow-up programmes are set out below:

Building capacities of different levels of governments, IPs and community-based organisations is important to drive impact. The Final RSR Progress Report noted that it was also important to enhance the capacities of World Bank teams to integrate gender considerations into SP programmes¹²⁰. STAAR's work in Nepal found that there is a need to engage with a diverse groups of stakeholders including local actors, grass roots organisations and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion actors in the design and delivery of SP programming. The UNICEF and World Bank components emphasised the value of working closely with partner governments; co-creation and demand-led approaches are essential for fostering buy-in and use. GRASSP's contribution to the

¹²⁰ SSIs

Gender ToC was described as “*eye-opening*” by one stakeholder as it provided a government stakeholder (in Ghana) with a clear plan for progressing towards gender-transformative approaches. All modalities should work more closely with national research institutions and efforts in partner countries to support the development of sustainable research capacity.

A timely deliberate focus on dissemination and uptake is critical. Sustained advocacy and policy dialogue are essential to foster political commitment and awareness. Advocacy efforts by FCDO, leveraging its platform and political diplomacy, can open doors for collaboration and ensure that gender remains a priority in global SP discussions, amplifying the programme’s impact¹²¹. Strong partnerships with multi-stakeholder platforms such as SPIAC-B can enhance visibility and influence policy discourse and use. A direct pathway from the GSP support to SP programming better ensures take-up and use of the research etc. Adequate funding and technical support for both programme design and implementation is critical to addressing identified gender issues and enhancing programme impact¹²². Programmes should consider the cost effectiveness of different uptake and communication strategies and their use for different audiences to maximise uptake.

Identifying and responding to gaps in evidence and research: In the case of STAAR, some assignments focused on underexplored and interlinked research areas such as disability, climate change, and SP for LGBTQ+ individuals which advanced novel areas of research and raised awareness. FCDO rated STAAR’s work on the care and support system as pioneering¹²³ and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) found the work on the intersection between social protection, climate and disability important in terms of addressing evidence gaps.

Key lessons concerning modalities and design considerations distilled from the Review’s findings are presented below:

- **Theory of Change:** It is important for follow-up programmes to reflect in their ToCs the importance of influencing existing as well as new SP programming in terms of embedding gender responsiveness. Clarity on expectations about system change should be clearly articulated by funders and implementers as part of the development of the ToC and supporting narrative.
- **Country targeting:** Prioritising focus countries to work with can deepen understanding of country systems but responding to demand flexibly can also lead to this understanding through sequenced engagements. A dual approach is likely needed to support country targeting in any similar follow-up programme.
- **A phased implementation approach allows for immediate action while laying the foundation for systemic change, e.g. starting with a gender-responsive roadmap supports immediate progress with defined short-term actions**¹²⁴. The STAAR Ending Child Marriage Roadmaps in Zambia and Nepal were praised in the recent Annual Review (draft 2025) as providing excellent context analysis and a comprehensive understanding of both barriers and entry points.
- **Monitoring and reporting:** In order to strengthen the frequency and feedback from Trust Funds, the FCDO could require quarterly reporting of change stories from a random sample of grants to show whether they influenced programme design or delivery or not. The endline review confirmed influence in reported cases, but the World Bank lacks visibility on all grants. A simple requirement for grant leads to report on operational impact would address this. Alternatively, the Bank’s synthesis reports could systematically cover all grants and their effects, not just those known to deliver change, to avoid outcome-selection bias.

¹²¹ SSIs STAAR.

¹²² SSIs.

¹²³ SSIs.

¹²⁴ SSIs.

- **Meeting user needs:** Not every context warrants a long input; sometimes short, sharp support can help (such as a TA facility like STAAR can provide). A range of modalities can address diversity in user needs and requests.
- **Embedding gender experts within key institutions, such as UNICEF and the World Bank, created opportunities to influence policies and programmes and sustain momentum behind GRSP.** The UNICEF and World Bank results demonstrate that this approach has been effective in terms of driving institutional system change in particular.
- **Synergies and linkages:** The findings of the Endline Review demonstrate that it takes time and energy for programme components to join up and work together. Moreover within component working is also important to cultivate, to support the sharing of lessons between the different TA assignments, grants or research projects.
- **Sustainability:** It is important to include sustainability as one of the selection criteria for on-demand TA facilities to ensure that it is built in from the outset. It is useful if each short-term assignment has a clear institutional owner who can take forward the work following completion of the TA. Issuing calls for proposals to potential users for on-demand support can serve as a useful mechanism to combine a strategic focus and prioritisation of certain themes and geographies, with flexible draw-down support from the facility. Consideration of the political economy around gender responsive social protection would be valuable in the case of focus countries supported by a future TA facility.

7.3 Design and context factors for consideration in GRSP programming

The review highlighted the importance of the following design features for any GSP follow-on programme for supporting the embedding of gender-responsive approaches in SP programming:

- **Robust research and data is valuable to inform programme design and adapt interventions to specific contexts.** The importance of leveraging lessons learned from pilot projects and evaluations is clear from GSP¹²⁵. Tailoring interventions to the socio-economic, cultural and political contexts of target populations is critical¹²⁶. GRASSP's approach of conducting impact evaluations and cost-effectiveness studies to identify the most impactful and efficient interventions is noteworthy; SSIs reported that findings from these studies informed the design of subsequent programme phases, enhancing their value and impact. It is also very important that findings from research and TA assignments are translated into actionable recommendations according to SSIs. More broadly regarding gender-related data, the World Bank's ASPIRE database, which includes sex-disaggregated SP data, has been rated by SSIs as a valuable global public good for evidence-based policymaking.
- **Addressing inter-linked vulnerabilities:** The World Bank Final RSR Progress Report noted the need for programmes to combine multiple interventions such as cash transfers, skills training and GBV prevention. Addressing interlinked vulnerabilities requires linking SP with other policy areas such as climate change, education and health¹²⁷. It is important to address barriers to inclusion, such as exclusion from registration processes or digital payment systems¹²⁸. The experience from World Bank RSR Gender Window grants is that digital cash transfers with a gender lens can enhance women's financial inclusion (based on the experiences in Nigeria and Zambia)¹²⁹.
- **Social Norms:** SSIs reported that it was important for SP programmes to address entrenched social norms and political sensitivities around gender. Long-term integrated approaches are

¹²⁵ Ecorys/ITAD, GSP Inception Report.

¹²⁶ SSIs.

¹²⁷ STAAR GSP Annual Review inputs 2025.

¹²⁸ GSP Annual Review 2021.

¹²⁹ SSIs, World Bank RSR Gender Window Report October 2024.

needed to address structural issues like social norms and gender inequalities. There is, therefore, a need to move beyond short-term, project-based interventions¹³⁰.

- **Working with multilateral institutions and Trust Funds:** The Endline Review found that there were some shortcomings in the sufficiency of ongoing and regular monitoring and reporting on the RSR gender window grants, as the focus was more on the output-level results rather than the difference the grants made, in terms of outcome-level achievements. Going forward, it would be useful to consider some periodic outcome level reporting for Trust Funds, possibly using an approach such as outcome harvesting as was used for this review. This would provide the funding organisation with more detail, over the lifetime of the programme, on how grants were contributing to outcome-level change.

¹³⁰ SSIs.

Annexes

Annex 1: Review questions

This Annex presents the full set of questions addressed by the review. In each case, additional lines of inquiry shared by FCDO during the evaluation have been added. The 2.3 Impact Learning question is presented in the conclusion of the report given the emphasis of the questions on learning.



Effectiveness OECD-DAC criteria – Did the intervention contribute towards meeting its objectives?

1. To what extent did the GSP workstreams, individually and in combination, meet their objectives?

1.1 Implementation: To what extent did GSP sufficiently adapt its delivery to changing contexts, and what factors influenced its ability to flexibly deliver outputs?

1.2 Outcome contribution: To what extent did GSP workstreams contribute to immediate and intermediate outcomes, compared to other possible contexts, alternative interventions, or recipient-related contributing factors? How has STAAR resulted in behaviour shifts in terms of user adoption of GRSP in programmes, components and systems? Assess the extent and type of influence that RSR Gender Window grants had on Bank operations. Confirm staff user experience (Bank and UNICEF). Confirm utility of ASPIRE sex-disaggregated data.

1.3 Variation in contribution: How did actual or expected outcome contributions vary by a) workstream and delivery modality, b) user group, c) geography, and d) the extent of workstream synergies?

1.4 Value for money: Did the resources allocated to workstream activities represent good value for money in terms of their relative contributions to immediate, intermediate and ultimate outcomes?

- **Demonstrate how the STAAR component worked to engineer behavioural shifts towards adopting GRSP in programmes, components and systems.**
- **Assess the extent and type of influence that RSR Gender Window grants have had on the operations of the World Bank. Capture internal staff user experiences in the World Bank and UNICEF.**
- **Confirm the utility of ASPIRE sex-disaggregated data.**

Impact OECD-DAC criteria – What difference does the intervention make?

2. To what extent did the GSP workstreams, individually and in combination, successfully contribute to the programme's expected impacts?

2.1 Ultimate and final outcome contribution: To what extent did the GSP workstreams significantly contribute to the actual or expected a) increased allocation of financial resources to GRSP, and b) new and strengthened evidence-informed GRSP in government systems, leading to accessible, relevant, appropriate and effective GRSP, compared to other possible contributing factors? How have the different components of GSP influenced system change in terms of adoption of GRSP? Provide examples of system change including demonstration of system change in partner institutions. Explore the extent to which knowledge dissemination and uptake strategies were able to effectively lead to system change. Is there a GRSP marker at corporate level for the World Bank?

2.2 Variation in contribution: How did change in the ultimate and final outcomes vary by a) workstream and delivery modality, b) user group, c) geography, and d) the extent of workstream synergies?

2.3 Impact learning: What are the most critical interventions, and related design and context factors, that any follow-up programme, or programme with similar objectives, should consider to enhance the likelihood of positive outcomes and impact? Have the World Bank and UNICEF learned

about how best to engage internal staff and COs on GRSP? How have different TA models worked to engineer system change in the adoption of GRSP?

- **Explore the TA models in use by GSP components and their effectiveness in influencing system change.**
- **Provide evidence on GSP's impact on partner institutions and examples of system change.**
- **Does the World Bank have a GRSP marker at corporate level?**

Sustainability OECD-DAC criteria – Will the benefits last?

3. Sustainability: To what extent will any GRSP-related a) financing commitments, b) evidence-informed system-level changes, or c) broader outcomes and benefits, contributed to by GSP, persist after the programme closes?

3.1 Sustainability foundations: To what extent has GSP established solid foundations and specified mechanisms to increase the likelihood that any outcomes and impacts produced persist after its closure?

3.2 Sustainability learning: What were the most critical ways through which the sustainability of GSP benefits was enabled or threatened, and how should a programme with similar objectives and delivery modalities mitigate these?

Lessons:

What are the lessons on how the World Bank and UNICEF engage internal staff and COs on GRSP?

What are the lessons on the programme's impact on client institutions and / or programming and policies to inform wider reforms and decision making at organisational level?

Annex 2: Change statement summaries

This Annex presents the set of outcome statements collected through the review Outcome Harvesting process. For each result, we describe the result itself, describe the strength of GSP's contribution to each result and other possible contributing factors to the results, and indicate the extent of validation we undertook as part of the review process. Each result is grouped by GSP component and the ToC. The first table presents results against identified against the immediate and intermediate outcome ToC level and the second table presents results against the ultimate and final outcome ToC level.

Table 2A: Validated GSP results at the immediate and intermediate outcome ToC level

Result	Significance of GSP contribution	Other factors
UNICEF component		
1 Significant scale up of UNICEF COs working on GRSP. UNICEF COs engaged in GRSP increased from 29 in 2019 to 136 in 2024, out of a total of 150 COs globally.	Significant/Essential: both from GRASSP but particularly via PFP who supported 50 COs with TA on GRSP, webinars, clinics etc. Internal staff user experience of TA and technical clinics very positively rated by CO staff consulted. Different intensity of support – good approach.	COVID-19 increased focus on GRSP, UNICEF's partnerships with governments, donors etc. SPIAC-B, socialprotection.org. <i>Validation: UNICEF HQ, UNICEF COs (Tanzania, Nepal, Ghana, Zambia, Ethiopia, Vietnam)</i>
2 Greater desire and ability of regional offices and COs to apply GRSP in institutional policies and practices. UNICEF provided support to all regions and reached 50 countries between 2021 and 2025.	Significant/Essential: GRASSP, PFP, development of tools like Gender Integration Continuum, placement of gender experts in ministries e.g., Ethiopia.	SPIAC-B, socialprotection.org etc. provided opportunities for knowledge exchange, INGOs like World Vision and CARE Int. <i>Validation: UNICEF HQ, UNICEF COs (see above), GIZ</i>
3 UNICEF Strategic Plans reflect commitments to GRSP. The 2022-25 and 2026-30 Strategic Plans explicitly incorporate GRSP.	Significant/Essential: GRASSP provided a robust evidence base and PFP was directly involved (Goal Area 5) and advocated for GRSP in Strategic Plan.	Partnerships and collaborations, Global and regional networks (SPIAC-B Gender WG, internal UNICEF events etc.), COVID-19. <i>Validation: UNICEF HQ</i>
4 GRASSP dissemination grant used to advocate for integration of findings into	Catalyst: (triggering change) in the case of some countries e.g., Vietnam. Workshops (Nov 2021 and Dec 2022)	Development partners' contributions, e.g., Irish Aid, funded a gender

GRSP programming. At least 25-30 COs and all 6 regional offices hosted technical GRSP workshops with SP policymakers.

contributed to integrating gender considerations into social assistance reforms (Decree 20). Research findings also integrated into Vietnam's Cash+ pilot. In Angola, government reported that GRASSP research influenced their decision to continue the Valor Criança programme. Integration into Ethiopia PSNP6 design.

assessment of Ethiopia PSNP4 which informed PSNP5 design. SPIAC-B Gender WG and CSW.

Validation: UNICEF CO Vietnam, Ethiopia

5 UNICEF has contributed to conceptualisation and application of GRSP by external stakeholders.

Evidence of impact is shown by 108 policy references to date, including citations in publications from UN Women, World Bank, EU, IMF, ILO, CGIAR, and other UN agencies.

Catalyst: (triggering change): UNICEF has produced a large body of publications on GRSP. Over 70+ high-quality publications, supported by rigorous research, have generated strong online demand. GRASSP research has contributed to important case studies and to the 2024 UN Women report 'Harnessing social protection for gender equality'.

Validation: UNICEF HQ, UN Women, citation analysis

STAAR component

1 Increased recognition of the comparative advantages of local actors, among donors and partners both at HQ and country level. Evidence prepared by STAAR showed that local partners achieved higher outreach among marginalised groups. STAAR's work on advocating for the role of national actors led to invitations for STAAR representatives to speak at high-profile events, such as FCDO's Economics Conference. Similarly, the SPIAC-B Gender Working Group Immersion Visit in Zambia and the Nepal child marriage interventions showcased the importance of local actors in advancing gender-responsive social protection.

Catalyst: (triggering change) – STAAR prepared evidence papers and presented case studies at high-profile events. These inputs demonstrated how local actors deliver effective, sustainable outcomes, which persuaded donors and HQ staff to adjust funding frameworks in favour of local partners. STAAR's localisation lead and technical leads proactively pushed the localisation agenda, resulting in increased demand for assignments focused on localisation. For example, a framework for a localisation shift within Yemen's humanitarian portfolio influenced FCDO's trust in directly funding local NGOs within a consortium structure, in part because STAAR evidenced their ability to identify, and support the registration of, vulnerable groups at risk of exclusion, ensure equal voice and participation of men and women, and build women's opportunities and empowerment.

Global donor commitments and partnerships created a supportive environment for localisation, although progress was slow. Aid cuts by USAID and the UK underscored the cost effectiveness of local actors, while collaborations with UN agencies and GIZ amplified impact.

Validation: The Share Trust; STAAR consultants

2 Broader awareness of why SP systems need to anticipate and respond to gendered risks and vulnerabilities, and how this can be built into systems, including crisis settings. Stakeholders now recognise the importance of gender-sensitive design in SP systems.	Significant/Essential: STAAR developed guidance notes on integrating gender into shock-responsive SP and facilitated South-South exchanges with governments in crisis-affected settings. STAAR's guidance on shock-responsive SP was disseminated to over 15 government and donor representatives. South-South learning exchanges between Mozambique and Lebanon illustrated how gender considerations could be integrated into crisis responses. These practical tools and dialogues enabled UN Women and GIZ to embed gender-responsive measures in programme design, improving coverage for women and vulnerable groups during crises.	Local women's networks (e.g., ProFemmes Twese Hamwe in Rwanda, Women in Global Health Malawi) advancing advocacy, mentorship and leadership. Validation: <i>UN Women, GIZ</i>
3 GIZ MENA regional SP programme directly influenced by STAAR TA. GIZ revised its 2023-25 regional strategy to explicitly reference STAAR's recommendations on monitoring gendered risks. Workshops in Amman and Tunis introduced new training modules co-designed with STAAR advisers.	Significant/Essential: STAAR advisers conducted a joint strategy review with the GIZ regional team, incorporating gender indicators into programme frameworks. Training workshops helped GIZ staff apply these tools, ensuring recommendations were operationalised within the regional programme.	GIZ and BMZ's pre-existing commitment to gender-equitable SP systems. Validation: <i>GIZ</i>
4 Momentum for integrating SP with high-quality care and support systems. International fora such as the Global Social Protection Week in Geneva began explicitly linking care and SP following STAAR contributions. FCDO cited STAAR analysis in internal policy briefs on financing care within SP systems.	Catalyst: (triggering change) – STAAR consultants produced evidence papers on the intersection of care and SP, with examples from Latin America. These inputs informed donor debates and validated FCDO's engagement in promoting integrated approaches.	UNICEF's independent development of global and regional guidance on care and support systems. UN Women's policy dialogue workshops (e.g., Côte d'Ivoire). Regional/national initiatives (Inter-American Model Law on Care). Validation: <i>FCDO</i>
5 Greater coordination across target organisations promoted by STAAR long-term advisers. For example, STAAR advisers convened joint planning	Significant/Essential: Long-term STAAR advisers facilitated information sharing and ensured that FCDO teams had access to lessons from ongoing pilots. Their coordination role helped streamline donor engagement and reduce overlap in TA.	WFP's and UN Women's existing interest in GRSP, advanced by STAAR's embedded advisor coordinating on a gender and

workshops between FCDO and other donor-funded programmes – in Ethiopia. This led to aligned approaches to scaling up adaptive SP.

protection training programme. The SPIAC-B Gender Working Group advancing coordination on GRSP.

Validation: *FCDO*

World Bank

1 Since FY23, the WB SPL Global Practice has institutionalised gender as one of its four cross-cutting thematic areas under the four core priority areas (4x4 matrix). Gender is now embedded as a strategic cross-cutting theme in the SPL Global Practice, ensuring that gender considerations are systematically applied across its global portfolio.

Significant/Essential: The GSP co-funded SPL Gender Adviser raised GRSP visibility within the WB. Regional gender focal points can access support from the HQ Adviser. Gender has been institutionalised in SPL's four core areas: adaptive SP, employment and labour, ageing and pensions, and digital delivery. A Gender CoP was created, supporting teams to design gender-responsive/tagged operations. The 4x4 matrix integrates gender into programme design and breaks down silos (e.g., gender, climate).

Sustained donor advocacy for GRSP. WB commitment to gender equality and co-funding the SPL Gender Adviser position.

Validation: *World Bank RSR Gender Window Team*

2 As of FY25, the ASPIRE database expanded on sex-disaggregated SP data covering 68 countries. The expansion enables gender analysis of coverage and performance of SP systems in 68 countries, creating a stronger evidence base for gender-responsive programming.

Catalyst (triggering change): RSR grant re-engineered the WB's data infrastructure by harmonising indicators and retrofitting databases to be sex-disaggregated. The enhanced system informed policy notes for Indonesia and Mongolia, used to engage governments on applying SP data for programme design.

ASPIRE co-funded by other donors.

Validation: *ASPIRE task team, evidence of ASPIRE-enabled sex disaggregated data in WB State of SP Report (2025)*

3 In Nigeria, the Gender Window grant improved financial inclusion for poor women. The grant supported development of a gender-smart digital payment system under the National Social Safety Net Project, helping poor women access and use financial services.

Significant/Essential: RSR grant funded gender assessments and guidance for a gender-smart digital payment system, making it inclusive, accessible, and secure for women. Under the National Social Safety Net Project (NSSNP), 2 million households (≈10 million people, 51% women) received cash transfers. The gender-smart system improved women's financial inclusion and resilience. While WB loan-financed, the RSR Gender Window covered essential technical design work, which loans could not. GSP supported development of sustainable GRSP systems and highlighted digital payments as safer, more secure access for vulnerable women.

NSSNP is a national programme funded by a loan from the World Bank.

Validation: *World Bank TTL, Government counterpart*

4 In Bangladesh, the Gender Window grant supported the implementation of the 2021 Child Daycare Act. The support helped operationalise the Act in ways that better meet the needs of low-income women, improving access to affordable childcare.	Significant/Essential: RSR Gender Window grant funded analytical groundwork for WB policy dialogue with the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs on childcare for low-income mothers. Evidence generated shaped rules and regulations for implementing the 2021 Child Daycare Act, creating a framework for government-run centres that better meet the needs of low-income women.	Legal and institutional reform momentum from the 2021 Child Daycare Act created entry points for policy dialogue with government. Validation: <i>Bangladesh WB Task Team</i>
5 In Fiji, the Gender Window supported the development of a gender-responsive adaptive SP strategy. The grant helped design an interoperability framework with measures to promote inclusivity in decision making, strengthening Fiji's SP system.	Significant/Essential: RSR Gender Window supported design of gender-transformative adaptive SP measures linking COVID-19 recovery to resilience. Analytical work and community engagement ensured that 81% of participants in Jobs for Nature 2.0 were rural indigenous iTaukei women, strengthening inclusion in public works and climate resilience.	Government commitment to gender equality created an enabling environment, with strong representation from the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and women's organisations. Validation: <i>Fiji WB Task Team; Government counterpart</i>
6 In Jamaica, the Gender Window grant supported the development of a case management information system prototype. The prototype strengthens delivery of case management services to poor women and children at risk of violence, exploitation and severe neglect.	Significant/Essential: RSR Gender Window financed analysis and TA for development of a Case Management Information System (CMIS) prototype, later refined and linked to the national SP Information System. The CMIS reduces administrative burden, strengthens referrals, and improves service delivery for vulnerable women and children, with a referral catalogue now fully developed.	Government of Jamaica, social workers, service providers, policymakers, and data teams enabling CMIS design, use, and integration into the SP system. Validation: <i>Jamaica WB Co-Task Team Leads; Government counterpart</i>

Table 2B: Validated GSP results at the ultimate and final outcome ToC level

Result	Significance of GSP contribution	Other factors
1 Between FY18 and FY24, the RSR Gender grants have influenced over 63 WB IDA/IBRD operations, mobilising \$9.6bn in financing towards GRSP. Ultimate Outcome: Increased resourcing allocated to GRSP	Catalytic/triggering change: The \$9.6 billion represents the total volume of funding on SP for these 63 operations. The Gender window grants did not necessarily increase bank financing for social protection, but rather the grants influenced the design and orientation of these safety net programmes. Some operations were gender blind before, so the grants have reoriented teams to adapt existing programmes to make them more gender responsive. Rather than increasing resources for GRSP, the grants supported the Bank's huge SP investment package to be more gender responsive. There was a significant increase in funding for SP since COVID with funding increasing from \$3bn in 2019, \$6bn in 2020 and \$9bn in 2020/21. Because the grants did not lead to new additional funding for GRSP, but rather made existing funding more gender responsive the contribution of GSP is rated medium.	WB has dedicated SP team members at country level. <i>Validation: World Bank RSR Gender Window Grants HQ Team</i>
2 Gender window grants have reached 108.6 million individuals globally with GRSP, of whom 56.6m are women and girls. Final Outcome: Reach of GRSP programming	Catalytic/triggering change: This result is connected to Change 1 (reported above) in that increased access to GRSP is linked to the influence of the grants on 63 operations. There has been a growth in the number of Bank SP and Jobs operations that have been gender tagged meaning – projects have a results chain by linking gender gaps identified in analysis to specific actions tracked in a results framework. % of SP and Jobs operations that are gender tagged has increased from 56% in 2019 to 100% in 2025. The rating of medium contribution is due to existing programmes (which reach 108.6 m people) becoming more gender responsive rather than expanding reach to include more individuals.	WB has dedicated SP team members at country level. <i>Validation: World Bank RSR Gender Window Grants HQ Team</i>

3 In Zambia, the WB funded GEWEL project has increased the financial independence of over 145,000 poor rural women by providing productive grants and skills training, enabling them to start and sustain income generating activities. The project also contributed to lower school drop-out rates among poor adolescent girls in households receiving targeted cash transfers, allowing more girls to remain at school. Reach: 148,161 across 65 districts. Final Outcome: Reach of programmes	Significant/essential: Funding from the RSR Gender Window supported technical assistance and analytical research to support the Government of Zambia in improving the GEWEL programme, specifically the livelihoods components. As a result, the livelihoods component of the GEWEL programme increased the financial independence of poor rural women while protecting them from gender-based violence. Funding from the RSR Gender Window funded technical assistance and analytical research to support the Government of Zambia in improving the GEWEL programme, specifically the 'Keeping Girls in School' components. The analytical work informed adaptations to Social Protection systems so they can be more responsive to risks faced by young girls, in turn keeping them safe and in school for longer. As a result, as of Dec 2023, approx. 148,161 female students across 65 districts in all 10 provinces were enrolled in secondary school and receiving regular support for school fees and other payments. A total of 2,926 girls in three districts benefited from the empowerment pilot aimed at addressing school-related GBV. RSR report Oct 2024). The GBV analytical assessment also significantly contributed to the Bank's Safety-First Toolkit, which is now in implementation in multiple countries including Cameroon and Zambia.	RSR activities contributed to inform the successful scale up of GEWEL 2. The analytical work provided necessary understanding to inform bespoke design and targeting approaches, which in turn contributed to the strong performance of the programme. Validation: <i>Zambia Task Lead, UNICEF Country office</i>
4 In Indonesia, the adaptation and piloting of the KLIK PEKKA model empowered female-headed households and low-income women to obtain legal identity documents. Final Outcome: Reach of GRSP programming	Catalytic/triggering change: The RSR Gender Window grant funded the adaptation, testing and scaling of the KLIK PEKKA model across 80 villages. The model initiated by PEKKA a national-scale NGO aimed at empowering women. Through the grant advocacy efforts were initiated for the replication of the model in national systems. As a result of this initiative women were able to access legal identity documents and thereby access social protection.	Strong partnerships with local government and community-based organisations. Validation: <i>TTL World Bank (external validation not possible due to linguistic reasons)</i>
5 In Niger, under the Refugee and Host Communities project, over 31K refugees and host community women have been economically	Catalytic/triggering change: RSR grant financed a mobile cash transfer diagnostic which shaped the design and deployment of a gender responsive smart digital payment system aimed at supporting refugee and host community livelihoods. By project closure it had	Wider Niger infrastructure programme. Context note: military coup in Niger (3 months before the end of the

	empowered through digital cash plus initiatives, enabling them to start businesses, increase their incomes and strengthen economic resilience. Final Outcome: Reach of GRSP programming	successfully supported 77, 847 beneficiary refugees, IDPs and host community members of which 31,074 were women via cash transfers preceded by a training package on micro entrepreneurship, financial and life skills. This support led the beneficiaries developing income-generating activities. For example, women in Diffa city processed raw corn into corn flour which enabled them to sell the product at a higher price. Women beneficiaries also benefited from the wider community infrastructure programme, for example, by accessing water closer to home they were able to cut the time taken by water chores, which helped them in finding time to develop crafts and produce they could sell at markets.	programme) halted all operations in the country. In-country engagement restarted in spring of 2024, relationships are in the process of being reinstated, with the new government honouring the previous loan. Validation: <i>Niger Task Team Lead (former – now in a new location). Government validation not possible due to political context.</i>
6	UNICEF has significantly increased resource mobilisation for GRSP work, including the acquisition of funding for the GRSP post and portfolio and country and regional programming Ultimate Outcome: Increased resourcing allocated to GRSP	Significant/essential: The number of new grants to this portfolio of work (6 new donors) has increased resourcing allocated to GRSP work. It signals growing donor commitment to sustained investment in gender equality within social protection systems and highlights how targeted funding is enabling governments and partners to scale up inclusive, gender-transformative interventions for vulnerable populations. Six new donors are providing USD 5 million in additional funding for GRSP work including a UK-based private sector donor, Hewlett Foundation, GIZ/BMZ, DFAT, Sida.	This funding reflects increased donor confidence and commitment to addressing the unique vulnerabilities of women, girls, and adolescent girls within social protection systems. This achievement was made possible through strong partnerships with international donors, alignment with global agendas on gender equality and social protection, and sustained advocacy efforts by UNICEF and its partners to prioritize women and girls' needs in national development plans. Validation: <i>UNICEF HQ, GIZ</i>
7	GRASSP research played a pivotal role in influencing the design of PSNP 6 (Ethiopia) Ultimate outcome: New and strengthened evidence GRSP	Catalytic/ triggering change: Key improvements to the design of PSNP 6 include explicit policy objectives targeting gender-specific risks including maternal health and early pregnancy, enhanced access to education, reduction of child marriage, reduction of GBV and promotion of women's access to economic markets. GRASSP findings	STAAR was also involved in enhancing the capacity of Government partners through research and technical w/shops Validation: <i>UNICEF CO Ethiopia.</i>

		incorporated into thematic reports that influenced national social policy reformulation.	
8	The government of Nepal demonstrated a strong and increasing commitment to gender-responsive social protection, particularly in addressing child marriage. The redesign of the "<i>Beti Padhau-Beti Bachao</i>" (BPBB) programme in Madhesh Pradesh, supported by STAAR, aimed to reduce early marriage and promote girls' education. This redesign was also informed by a review conducted by UNICEF with UKAID support in 2021. Ultimate outcome: Strengthening government GRSP systems	Significant/essential: "<i>Beti Padhau-Beti Bachao</i>" (BPBB) is a flagship programme in Madhesh Pradesh, started by Nepal's Chief Minister. It aims to empower girls by reducing early marriage and promoting their education. In 2021, UNICEF, with UKAID support, conducted a review of the BPBB programme. The review recommended that BPBB be redesigned to make it more effective and ensure a better impact. STAAR provided technical assistance to the Provincial Government of Madhesh Pradesh, supporting the Ministry of Education in redesigning and implementing the BPBB programme and also developed a roadmap for using social protection to tackle child marriage in Nepal, which was well-received by stakeholders and highlighted as a key reference point for shaping programme direction, particularly regarding financing and coordination. STAAR also facilitated provincial roundtables and learning events, which sustained momentum and supported the government's commitment to addressing child marriage through social protection.	The Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare in Nepal collaborated on the design and implementation of social protection measures to address child marriage. The SPIAC-B Gender Working Group facilitated discussions on gender-responsive social protection. Despite staff turnover within FCDO Nepal, the work remained a priority, with the incoming Social Development Adviser collaborating closely with STAAR to sustain momentum for systemic change. Validation: <i>FCDO, STAAR consultants, UNICEF CO</i>
9	The Government of Côte d'Ivoire introduced a new parental leave policy that extended maternity leave for public civil servants to six months and paternity leave to 30 days. The policy reflects a significant institutional change in the country's approach to parental leave, embedding gender-responsive principles into national policies. Ultimate outcome: Strengthening government GRSP systems.	Significant/essential: Côte d'Ivoire has adopted a new decree to extend maternity and paternity leaves for public civil servants. GSP's STAAR workstream, played a pivotal role in influencing the development of this policy. STAAR contributed by amplifying UN Women's advocacy efforts on the importance of gender-responsive social protection and by facilitating national care policy dialogues. STAAR also provided technical assistance and evidence-based recommendations that informed the policy's design, ensuring the policy addressed gendered risks and vulnerabilities. The programme's contribution was further enhanced by its collaboration with UN Women.	UN Women was a key actor in this reform, advocating for GRSP and providing TA to the Ministry of Social Protection. UN Women's longstanding relationship with the Ministry and its sustained advocacy efforts since 2023 were important in achieving this policy change. Other international organisations, including UNICEF, collaborated with STAAR through inter-agency coordination mechanisms and dialogues, which supported the development of the parental leave policy. Validation: <i>GIZ, STAAR consultants</i>

Annex 3: Stakeholders consulted

This Annex presents a list of stakeholders that were engaged in semi-structured interviews as part of the review process.

Table 3A: List of stakeholders consulted through the review

Name	Organisation	Stakeholder category
Rachel Mason	FCDO	FCDO GSP
Jenny Carlen	FCDO	FCDO SPT
Sally Duncan	FCDO (BEK)	FCDO complementary programme and policy leads
Louisa Lippi	DAI	STAAR / DAI
Anita Ghimire	STAAR consultant	STAAR / DAI
Sarah Blin	STAAR consultant	STAAR / DAI
Alexandra Barrantes	STAAR consultant	STAAR / DAI
Dr Yao Kouakou Albert	STAAR consultant	STAAR / DAI
Sarah Selby	The Share Trust	STAAR / DAI
Khadija	STAAR consultant	STAAR / DAI
Buumba Chityaba	STAAR consultant	STAAR / DAI
Megan Smith	DAI	STAAR / DAI
Charlotte Maugham	DAI	STAAR / DAI
Shan Ni	UNICEF Eswatini	UNICEF / Innocenti
Lauren Whitehead	UNICEF	UNICEF / Innocenti
Nyasha Tirivayi	UNICEF	UNICEF / Innocenti
Christiana Gbedemah	UNICEF	UNICEF / Innocenti

Getachew Berhanu Kebede	UNICEF	UNICEF / Innocenti
Jennifer Matafu	UNICEF	UNICEF / Innocenti
Frank Eetaama	UNICEF	UNICEF / Innocenti
Thakur Dhakal	UNICEF	UNICEF / Innocenti
Nguyen Thi Trang	UNICEF	UNICEF / Innocenti
Tayllor Spadafora	UNICEF	UNICEF / Innocenti
Jenn Yablonski	UNICEF	UNICEF / Innocenti
Mattias Lundberg	World Bank	World Bank
Callistus Agbaam	World Bank	World Bank
Jose Chavez	World Bank	World Bank
Afra Al-Ahmadi	World Bank	World Bank
Claudia Rodriguez	World Bank	World Bank
Nadia Selim	World Bank	World Bank
Ubah Thomas Ubah	World Bank	World Bank
Enurlaela Hasanah	World Bank	World Bank
Sabine Beddies	World Bank	World Bank
Amer Ahmed	World Bank	World Bank
Kenia Parsons	World Bank	World Bank
Sandor Karacsony	World Bank	World Bank
Briana Wilson	World Bank	World Bank
Ludovica Cherchi	World Bank	World Bank
Francisca Atuluk	Government Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection, Ghana	TA recipient

Mohammed Danlami Abdullahi	National Cash Transfer Office (Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction), Nigeria	TA recipient
Anne-Marie	Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Jamaica	TA recipient
Eric Martey	Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection, Ghana	TA recipient
Rozia Bi	Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection, Fiji	TA recipient
Mark Johnson	FAO	Other donors and in-country stakeholders
Matthew Walsham	FAO	Other donors and in-country stakeholders
Jacqui Powell	DFAT	Other donors and in-country stakeholders
Silke Staab	UN Women	Broader SP and gender actors
Esther Schuering	GIZ	Broader SP and gender actors
Tina Fahm	Fahm & Co	Broader SP and gender actors
Jacinta Okwaro	UN Women	Broader SP and gender actors

Annex 4: Documents reviewed

This Annex presents a list of documents that were reviewed as part of the review process.

Programme-level

- GSP Evaluation Inception Report to EQUALS 04.05.21 clean
- GSP Midline review - November 2022
- GSP Baseline review - December 2021
- GSP Evaluation Theory of Change
- Gender-Responsive Social Protection Programme, Annual Review 2019
- Gender-Responsive Social Protection Programme, Annual Review 2020
- Gender-Responsive Social Protection Programme, Annual Review 2021
- Gender-Responsive Social Protection Programme, Annual Review 2022
- Gender-Responsive Social Protection Programme, Annual Review 2023
- Gender-Responsive Social Protection Programme, Annual Review 2024
- Gender-Responsive Social Protection, Annual Review 2025 - offline copy
- GSP Partners Dissemination Plans 25
- EMAIL: [info] Truncated handover info_docs - external partnerships (SPIAC-B)
- EMAIL: [info] Truncated handover info_docs - KEL, capacity-building
- EMAIL: [info] Truncated handover info_docs - strategy, guidance & work with sectors

UNICEF

- Evidence generation from the gender and nutrition sensitive 1,000 Days in Social Cash
- Transfer pilot, Final Report 2025
- Evidence generation from the gender and nutrition sensitive 1,000 Days in Social Cash
- Transfer pilot, Executive Summary of Final Report 2025
- Power Her Potential Ghana: Unlocking pathways for at-risk adolescent girls in Ghana, 2024
- GRASSP Research Uptake Concept Note: Top Up Proposal, 2024
- A synthesis of what we know works to prevent and respond to child marriage: Evidence Paper, 2024
- The ELEVA Foundation & UNICEF: A Vision for the Future, 2024/25
- External ToR of programme-funded post (SP and Gender Lead)
- UNICEF 2024 CSI
- Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection (GRASSP) Research Programme: Progress Update, 2023
- Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection (GRASSP) Research Programme
- 2018-2023: Progress Update 1, 2019
- Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection (GRASSP) Research Programme
- 2018-2023: Progress Report, 2019
- Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection (GRASSP) Research Programme
- 2018-2023: Progress Update, 2020
- Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection (GRASSP) Research Programme
- 2018-2023: Progress Report, 2020
- Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection (GRASSP) Research Programme
- 2018-2023: Progress Report, 2022
- Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection (GRASSP) Research Programme
- 2018-2023: Progress Report, 2021

- Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection (GRASSP) Research Programme
- 2018-2023: Progress Report, 2021
- Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection (GRASSP) Research Programme
- 2018-2023: Progress Report, 2022
- Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection (GRASSP) Research Programme: Final Report, 2024
- GSP Annual Review Partner Template – UNICEF, 2025
- Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection: A conceptual framework, UNICEF Office of Research | Innocenti Working Paper, 2020
- Evidence on Policymaking, Programme Implementation and Impacts for Women and Girls, UNICEF Innocenti, 2024
- UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022–2025
- We Deserve Better, UNICEF Report, 2023
- Post-intervention gendered impacts and moderating factors of a government cash plus intervention for adolescents in Tanzania, 2025
- Playing fair: Gender responsive social protection Infographic
- Global Annual Results Report 2023: Goal Area 5, 2024
- UNICEF-GRASSP-Angola-Report-2024
- UNICEF-GRASSP-Climate-Crisis-2023
- UNICEF-GRASSP-DRC-Report-2024-EN
- UNICEF-Innocenti-GRASSP-ANGReport-RS3-EN-2024
- UNICEF-Innocenti-GRASSP-BurkinaFaso-Report-2024
- UNICEF-Innocenti-GRASSP-Cost-effectiveness-EN-2024
- UNICEF-Innocenti-GRASSP-Design-Guidelines-2024
- UNICEF-Innocenti-GRASSP-ETHReport-RS2-2024
- UNICEF-Innocenti-GRASSP-ETHReportRS3-2024
- UNICEF-Innocenti-GRASSP-Gender-Institutionalize-2024
- UNICEF-Innocenti-GRASSP-MaliEndlineReport-2025
- UNICEF-Innocenti-GRASSP-MEASURES-REPORT-2024
- UNICEF-Innocenti-GRASSP-MexicoReport-December-2024
- UNICEF-Innocenti-GRASSP-Synthesis-Report-2024
- UNICEF-Innocenti-GRASSP-URUReport-EN-2024
- UNICEF-Innocenti-GRASSP-VietNam-Report-2024-EN.pdf
- UNICEF-Mainstreaming-Gender-Social-Protection-Strategies-Programmes-2021
- UNICEF-Promoting-Gender-Transformative-Change-Report-2022
- UNICEF-Rapid-Review-Economic-Policy-Social-Protection-Responses-2020
- UNICEF-Ujana-Salama-Cash-Plus-Model-Baseline-Report-2018
- UNICEF-Ujana-Salama-Cash-Plus-Model-Round-2-Report-2020
- UNICEF-Ujana-Salama-Cash-Plus-Model-Round-3-Report-2020
- UNICEF-Ujana-Salama-Cash-Plus-Model-Round-4-Report-2024

STAAR

- STAAR QPR Oct-Dec 2024
- STAAR QPR Jan-Mar 2025
- STAAR 24_25 and 25_26 Log frame
- STAAR GSP Annual Review inputs 2025
- STAAR QPR Jan-Mar 2025 Annexes V1/Annex A_Assignment information_Jan - March 2025
- STAAR QPR Jan-Mar 2025 Annexes V1/Annex B_Progress against AR and Evaluation recommendations_Jan-March 2025
- STAAR QPR Jan-Mar 2025 Annexes V1/Annex C_Stories of Change-Jan-March 2025

- STAAR QPR Jan-Mar 2025 Annexes V1/Annex D_Risk Matrix_Jan-March 2025
- GSP Assignments + Costs
- UNHCR: Human rights dimension of care and support, 2025
- STAAR Assignment Feedback Log
- STAAR 24/25 Logframe
- GSP Annual Review Partner Template - STAAR
- The Role of Local Actors in Social Protection in Crisis Contexts, Synthesis Report, 2025
- Strengthening the Role of Local Actors in Social Protection, Afghanistan Summary Report, 2024
- Strengthening the Role of Local Actors in Social Protection: Kena Summary Report, 2024
- Strengthening the Role of Local Actors in Social Protection, Lebanon Summary Report, 2025
- Strengthening the Role of Local Actors in Social Protection: Myanmar Summary Report, 2024
- Strengthening the Role of Local Actors in Social Protection: Nepal Summary Report, 2024
- Strengthening the Role of Local Actors in Social Protection: Sudan Summary Report, 2025
- The Role of Local Actors in Gender Responsive and Inclusive Social Protection Systems: ANNEX COMPENDIUM, 2025
- STAAR GSP assignment tracker
- STAAR ICF KPI15 Transformational Change Assessment, 2025
- The Role of Local Actors in Gender Responsive and Inclusive Social Protection Systems: Synthesis Report, 2025
- Strengthening the Role of Local Actors in Social Protection in Crisis Context Policy Brief
- Strengthening the Role of Local Actors in Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Social Protection (GRISP) Policy Brief
- STAAR QPR Jan to Mar 2025
- STAAR QPR Oct to Dec 2024
- Women's Leadership Component: Programme Design, Methodology and Implementation Guide, 2025

World Bank

- Brown Family Journey After CMIS
- Brown Family Journey Before CMIS
- Connecting the Dots - Toward a Social Protection Interoperability Framework in Fiji
- One Click to Power Change: Transforming Case Management in Jamaica, 2025
- Evaluating Tanzania's Productive Social Safety Net: Findings from the Midline Survey, 2019
- Fiji National Adaptive Social Protection Strategy and Implementation Plan, 2024-2029
- The Rapid Social Response Adaptive and Dynamic Social Protection Umbrella Program Report 2019-2022: Gender Window, 2023
- Community of Practice (CoP) on Social Protection and Gender (CoP-SPG): Terms of Reference, 2024
- Lessons From A School-Related Gender-Based Violence Prevention Intervention In Zambia, 2025
- Implementation Completion And Results Report for the Niger Refugees and Host Communities Support Project, 2024
- Job description: Sr Social Protection Specialist
- Gender Window Review Report, 2024
- Insights and Lessons from Social Norms Interventions, 2024
- Insights and Lessons from Women's Economic Empowerment Interventions, 2024
- Smith Family Journey After CMIS
- Smith Family Journey Before CMIS
- State Of Social Protection Report 2025: The 2-Billion-Person Challenge
- Supporting Women's Livelihoods at Scale: Evidence from a Nationwide Multi-Faceted Program, 2024

- Vakavakarau Vata (Getting Prepared Together): Key Lessons For Fiji From Recent Experiences On Adaptive Social Protection And A Way Forward
- Gender Strategy 2024-2030: Accelerate Gender Equality to End Poverty on a Liveable Planet
- GSP Annual Review Partner Template – World Bank
- Flexibility and pragmatism: improving access to public services and economic opportunities for refugees, internally displaced people and host communities in Niger, 2024
- Leaving no parent behind: Lessons from family friendly policies in Nepal, 2025
- Activity Completion Summary (ACS) RSR 17 - Empowering Women Through Digital Cash Payments And Mobile Phones (Id: P174489) - Liberia (Western And Central Africa)
- Baseline Survey - Key Findings: Liberia Social Cash Transfer Impact Evaluation
- Behavioral Insights For Women's Sector Choice in Liberia's Youth Opportunities Project
- Delivering Digital G2P Payments To Urban Informal Populations: Lessons And Future Policy Implications From Covid-19 Response
- Social Protection for the Elderly in Liberia
- Positive and Playful Parenting Flipchart, Liberia, 2024
- Rapid Social Response Adaptive And Dynamic Social Protection (RSR-ADSP) Umbrella Program: RSR-Gender And RSR-Classic Trustee Accounts, Round 19 – Green, Resilient And Inclusive Recovery Social Protection Guidance Note For World Bank Group Task Teams
- Rapid Social Response Adaptive And Dynamic Social Protection (RSR-ADSP) Umbrella Program: RSR-Gender And RSR-Classic Trustee Accounts, Covid-19 Call, Round 18 Guidance Note For World Bank Group Task Teams
- Rapid Social Response-Adaptive And Dynamic Social Protection (RSR-ADSP) Umbrella Program Round 20: Green, Resilient, Inclusive, And Transformative Social Protection Guidance Note For World Bank Group Task Teams
- The World Bank Social Cash Transfer Project: Baseline Data Collection Report, 2022

Annex 5: Light-touch country case studies

This Annex presents the four light-touch country case studies that were completed as part of the review process.

Double click the Microsoft Word icons to open each case study

Tanzania Case study



Ethiopia Case Study



Nepal case Study



Zambia Case Study

