UN-SWAP Guidance note:
PI 14: Conducting a capacity assessment and creating a capacity development plan for gender equality
FIRST DRAFT, November 2023

PLEASE NOTE: This is a working document which has not yet been submitted for formal peer review. Please use only for guidance and suggestions at this stage, and do not share beyond the UN-SWAP gender focal point network. If you have any comments or feedback, please contact lucy.ferguson@unwomen.org

Contents

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Capacity assessment has been one of the lowest performing indicators throughout the SWAP process. In 2022, for example, a total of 32 entities were not meeting or exceeding requirements.[1] Considering the importance of capacity development for the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming, this is a concern that should be addressed as a matter of urgency. It should be noted that entities are expected to conduct a capacity assessment every five years in order to maintain their rating of meeting requirements.

A number of challenges have been identified by gender focal points in terms of meeting requirements for capacity assessment. These include:

- *Inadequate tools for developing capacity assessment questionnaire*
- *Lack of attention to the needs of different types and sizes of entities*
- *How to identify exactly what needs to be asked, and to whom*
- *How to conduct a capacity assessment without dedicated resources for capacity development, therefore generating unrealistic expectations*
- *How to produce a capacity development plan without significant resource allocation*
- *How to advocate for resources for capacity development*

In response, this guidance note has been produced, with the aim of supporting gender focal points through the process of conducting a capacity assessment exercise and producing a capacity development plan.

Planning a capacity assessment

A number of clear steps can be identified for conducting the capacity assessment:

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[1] DCO, DESA, DMSPC, DOS, DSS, ECA, ICAO, ILO, IMO, IOM, ITU, OCHA, OHRLLS, OIOS, OSRSG-CAAC, OSRSG-VAC, UN Women, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNFCCC, UN-HABITAT, UNICC, UNICRI, UNIDIR, UNON, UNOPS, UNRISD, UNRWA, UNWTO, UPU, WHO, WIPO
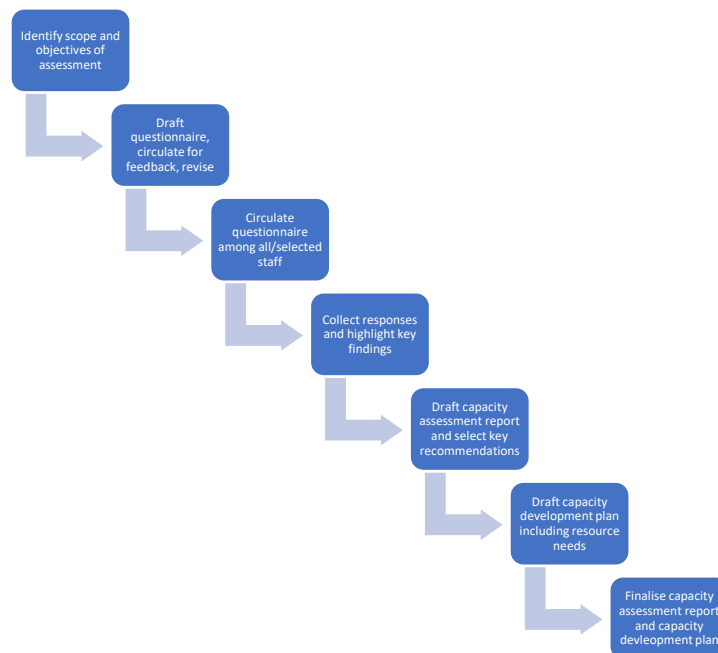
In the context of limited resources for gender mainstreaming, the capacity assessment exercise should be conducted in a strategic manner. Things to take into account at the beginning of the process include:

- *What has already been done in terms of staff surveys and capacity assessment? Make sure it is clear how this survey is different*
- *Does the entity have a gender policy? If so, how does this exercise feed into/complement that?*
- *How does this exercise relate to the strategic planning cycle of the entity? How does it fit into the budgeting cycle?*
- *How can the capacity assessment exercise be related to other aspects of the gender mainstreaming process or SWAP reporting, in order to maximise the effectiveness and impact of the activity?*

It is also important to secure senior management support for the capacity assessment. It is worth considering who sends out the questionnaire, and how this may affect the response rate and motivation of staff to complete the survey.

Capacity assessment exercise

[This questionnaire provides a draft template which can be customized according to the needs and mandate of each agency. It is not necessary to incorporate all sections or all questions. However, it is recommended that at least some qualitative questions are included, in order to gather as much information as possible from the assessment exercise.]

Introduction

[Insert relevant information for staff members. State clearly:

- ✓ Why this capacity assessment is taking place
- ✓ How this fits within the organisational mandate
- ✓ Introduction to UN-SWAP and how entity is currently performing
- ✓ The overall objective of conducting the capacity assessment
- ✓ Next steps (analysis, report, capacity development plan, etc.)]

Section 1: General information

[The objective of this section is to collect general information from all respondents that will help analyze the results. You can adapt the questions depending on the type of entity. You may consider adding questions about gender identity and other aspects of diversity, depending on whether this is relevant to the objectives of your assessment exercise.]

Q: "Please complete the following information about yourself:"

- Organization/Agency
- Unit/Department
- Functional title
- Level
- Age
- Sex
- Nationality

Section 2: Educational background and previous experiences in training for gender equality

[The objective of this section is to gather information on the educational background and previous training for gender equality experiences of respondents.]

Q: "For each educational level completed, please specify year, area or topic:"

[Consider what it is most useful for you to know about respondents' educational background here, and adapt the questions accordingly]

Educational level	Year	Topic
Secondary school		
Bachelor/undergraduate		
Post graduate level (please specify):		
Other, please specify:		

Q: "Have you participated in an introductory training or orientation on gender issues at xxx?"

[Adapt this according to the entity's policy on gender training, e.g. I Know Gender, specific orientation, etc.]

- Yes/No

[Further question for those who answer yes]

If so, please provide the following information (one for each training or capacity development activity).

- Course name
- Topic
- Date/duration
- Type of training (face-to-face, self-paced online course, virtual training, etc.)
- Training provider/organizer

Q: Please answer if you have yet to complete the mandatory training/s. Why have you not yet completed the training?

[Consider including this if you have a mandatory course with a low completion rate.]

- Too time-consuming
- Not relevant
- Other (please explain):
- N/A (I completed all the mandatory training)

[Optional follow-up question on how useful this was to their work – or whatever you would like to know about current trainings]

Q: "Have you taken gender related trainings or courses in the last two years at xxx? Please, include trainings where gender was included but not the main topic of the training, in your response."

- Yes/No

[Further question for those who answer yes]

If so, please provide the following information (one for each training or capacity development activity).

- Course name
- Topic
- Date/duration
- Type of training (face-to-face, self-paced online course, virtual training, etc.)
- Training provider/organizer

[Optional follow-up question on how useful this was to their work – or whatever you would like to know about current trainings]

Q: "Are you taking any courses on gender at the moment – either through xxx or with another organization?"

- Yes/No

[Further question for those who answer yes]

If so, please provide the following information (one for each training or capacity development activity).

- Course name
- Topic
- Date/duration
- Type of training (face-to-face, self-paced online course, virtual training, etc.)
- Training provider/organizer

[Optional follow-up question on how useful this was to their work – or whatever you would like to know about current trainings]

Q: "Have you received support from the gender unit or gender focal points in your organization for your work on which relates to gender (mentoring, coaching, detailed assignment, hiring, communication, etc.)?"

[For smaller entities, consider asking a preliminary question about whether they are aware of the unit/focal point. You may want to include the specific names of the person/people here, and adapt to the kinds of activities or support you have offered during the year, if any.]

- Yes/No

[Further question for those who answer yes]
If so, please describe your experience.

[Consider adding optional explanatory question if you would like more information on this.]

Q: "If you need information on support on a question related to gender equality, what resources do you currently use?
[Optional question for if you are trying to find out about their current sources of information. Provide a multiple choice list if you have specific resources you would like to know about.]

Section 3: Knowledge of Available Support in XXXX
[This section may be useful if you are trying to gauge how well known the gender unit/gender focal point is. This can then help you advocate for more resources/better infrastructure if necessary.]

Q: Are you aware of the Gender Unit and who leads the Gender Unit in xxx?
- Yes/No

Q: Are you aware of who the gender focal point is in your unit?
- Yes/No

Q: Are you aware of who the gender advisor is in your unit?
- Yes/No

Q: Have you received support from the gender unit or gender focal points in UNDOS for work relating to gender?
- Yes/No

If so, what was the support in relation to? (Please check as many boxes as relevant)
- Mentoring
- Coaching
- Detailed Assignment
- Hiring
- Communication
- Other (Describe)

Q: Please describe your experience with the Gender Unit/Gender Focal Point
[Consider adding this if you would like to know more]

Q: What additional support would you like from the Gender Unit/Gender Focal Point?
[Consider adding this if you would like to know more]

Section 4: Knowledge on gender mainstreaming in xxxx

[The objective of this section is to assess the level of knowledge of gender mainstreaming in your entity. You can also use this section to assess staff attitudes towards the relevance of gender mainstreaming to the work of the entity, and to their own work specifically.]

Q: "In your opinion, how relevant is gender to the mandate of your agency/organization?"
- Not relevant at all
- Relevant to a limited degree
- Very relevant
- Gender is the main focus
- Not applicable

[Consider adding an optional explanatory question to get more information on this.]

Q: "Are you familiar with the following international conventions on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women?"

[Adapt this to the relevant conventions for the entity, including sector-specific issues. You may want to list the conventions and ask which they are familiar with, or include a separate question for each.]
- E.g. CEDAW
- E.g. UNSCR 1325
- E.g. sector-specific policy or agreement

Q: "Are you familiar with the following xxxx at the entity level?"

[Here you can include any relevant policies, strategies, action plans, programmes or initiatives related to gender equality in the entity. You can include programmatic and/or operational level.]
- E.g. Entity level gender policy
- E.g. Gender mainstreaming target in the entity strategic plan
- E.g. programme on women's empowerment in the sector

Q: "Are you familiar with the UN-SWAP, the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women?"

[Optional question, but this may provide you with some useful information.]
- Yes/No/Not sure

[Optional question for additional information]

"If so, please describe your knowledge or involvement with the UN-SWAP process".

Q: "Are you clear about the difference between gender mainstreaming and gender parity?

[You may find this useful if your entity has a strong gender parity programme. You can also add more questions related to specific aspects of your entity. E.g. a large programme on gender equality or women's empowerment, a new sexual harassment policy, etc.]
- Yes/No/Not sure

[Optional question for additional information]

Q: "In your understanding, what is the difference between gender parity and gender mainstreaming?"

Section 5: Core capacities and competences for gender equality

[The objective of this section is to understand whether staff are able to identify gender issues in their own work, and to what extent they are equipped to address these. This is very useful for identifying the key skills and knowledge gaps among staff, and how they can best be supported. You can adapt this section based on the size and type of your entity.]

Q: "In your opinion, to what extent is gender equality relevant to the work of your division/unit?
- Not relevant at all
- Relevant to a limited degree
- Very relevant
- Gender is the main focus
- Not applicable

[Consider adding an optional explanatory question to get more information on this.]

Q: "In your opinion, to what extent is gender equality relevant to your everyday work?"
- Not relevant at all
- Relevant to a limited degree
- Very relevant
- Gender is the main focus
- Not applicable

[Consider adding an optional explanatory question to get more information on this.]

Q: "Are you able to identify opportunities to advance gender equality in your day-to-day work?"
- Yes/No/Not sure

[Optional question for additional information]

Q: "Do you currently have the skills and knowledge to advance gender equality in your day-to-day work?"
- Yes/No/Not sure

[Optional question for additional information]

Q: "Please select the core capacities that are relevant to your work"

[Staff can select the categories that are relevant to them, then go directly to the specific capacities for that category. You may decide that you want to assess the capacity of some staff in all areas (e.g. senior management, gender focal points). In this case, you can set the questionnaire so that all questions need to be answered. Alternatively, they can select all that apply. Please note: an alternative is to structure the core competences around the UN-SWAP framework - Results-based management; Oversight; Accountability; Human and financial resources; Capacity; Knowledge communication and coherence. This is an ongoing question for discussion.]

- Gender analysis and strategic planning
- Gender-responsive programming, budgeting and implementation
- Knowledge management, communication and gender-responsive M&E
- Effective partnerships and advocacy on promoting gender equality
- Innovation in gender transformative approaches

[Please note: an alternative is to structure the core competences around the UN-SWAP framework - Results-based management; Oversight; Accountability; Human and financial resources; Capacity; Knowledge communication and coherence. This is an ongoing question for discussion.]

Gender analysis and strategic planning

[You can adapt these questions based on the specific context of your entity and what you specifically want to find out about staff capacity in each area. Some sample suggestions are provided.]

- Understand & explain gender concepts and frameworks for analysis
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Understand & explain gender-responsive data to inform new research
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Analyse gender dynamics within given context: (1) organization, (2) thematic area (policies, rules, programmes, etc.)
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Argue & advocate for gender analysis and strategic planning
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Sensitize or train others on gender analysis and tools
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Design and conduct gender analysis for given context of strategic planning for thematic or organizational context
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Research for gender-responsive data and use data collection tools
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Develop and apply strategies that address gender dynamics in planning processes
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this

Gender-responsive programming, budgeting and implementation

[You can adapt these questions based on the specific context of your entity and what you specifically want to find out about staff capacity in each area. Some sample suggestions are provided.]

- Translate research outcomes to define gender- responsive programmes or budgets
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Develop gender-responsive programmes, budgets or plans
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this

- Understand the need for actions towards a more gender-responsive organization, including adjustments of internal policies, procedures, business plans, etc.
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- e communities or organizational units on gender issues for programming
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Ensure that women and men staff benefit equally from programmes and funds used
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Lobby and advocate for the use of funds in a gender-responsive manner at community, political or organizational level
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Implement gender-responsive programmes as planned, in line with thematic or organizational goals
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Mainstream gender throughout all programmes, divisions and units
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Mainstream gender throughout operations
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Allocate financial and human resources for to ensure programmes that are gender-responsive work
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this

Knowledge management, communication and gender-responsive M&E
[You can adapt these questions based on the specific context of your entity and what you specifically want to find out about staff capacity in each area. Some sample suggestions are provided.]
- Understand the data collection tools to obtain sex-disaggregated data for tracking progress (M&E) of work towards gender equality
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Understand the gender dynamics of communication and how to best place information
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Ability to have an influence on knowledge and communication products and/or platforms for gender equality
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Train others on gender-responsive M&E systems and ability to use them

- I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Lobby and advocate for the use of gender- responsive research & its results
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Collect, interpret and report on sex-disaggregated data for tracking progress (M&E) on gender programmes or policies
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Produce quality documentation on gender for use on knowledge & communication platforms
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this

Effective partnerships and advocacy on promoting gender equality

[You can adapt these questions based on the specific context of your entity and what you specifically want to find out about staff capacity in each area. Some sample suggestions are provided.]

- Understand the needs and dynamics for building / maintaining effective partnerships to lobby for gender equality
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Understand and know coalitions' and partners' needs in order to maintain coalitions with all stakeholders needed, including research, government, CSO and business sector partners
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Ability to build effective partnerships with key partners based on gender & partnership knowledge
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Ability to influence & advocate to include gender equality in coalitions
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Develop joint gender advocacy materials with other organizations using research outcomes/other material
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this

Innovation in gender transformative approaches

[You can adapt these questions based on the specific context of your entity and what you specifically want to find out about staff capacity in each area. Some sample suggestions are provided.]

- Understand and recognize gender transformative approaches
  - I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Understand and recognize gender transformative outcomes and results

- o I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Capacity to learn from gender transformative approaches and results
  - o I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Capacity to advocate for innovative and gender transformative approaches
  - o I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Ensure that gender transformative approaches are used by others and scaled up
  - o I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Capacity to apply new and gender transformative approaches to thematic or organizational work
  - o I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this
- Capacity to analyse, use and document gender transformative approaches
  - o I don't know about this/I know about this/I am confident enough to use this in my everyday work/I am confident enough to lead work on this

Section 5: Learning styles and needs

[The objective of this section is to gather information on the training needs and preferences from the respondent's perspective. You may want to tailor this to your entity, based on size, location of staff, etc.]

Q: "Would you like to participate in capacity development activities to support you to advance gender equality in your work?"

[You can adapt this question to fit your entity, or delete it if not appropriate. If you find this a useful question, you can add an optional question for additional information.]

Q: "What kind of capacity development activities would be most useful to support you to advance gender equality in your work?"

[Consider adding options that are relevant to your entity. You may want to make this a ranking exercise, to be able to identify preferences and priorities. Another option is to make this an open-ended question.]

- E.g. Introduction to gender equality
- E.g. Short informative workshops
- E.g. Gender-budgeting
- E.g. Sector-specific training
- E.g. Coaching and one-to-one support

Q: "What is your preferred mode for learning?"

[This can depend on what kinds of activities you might have available. One option is to rank, or select all that apply. Alternatively, you could ask an open question here.]

- Self-paced online courses
- Virtual live training courses over
- In-person training courses
- Coaching and one-to-one support

- Ad-hoc support from gender focal points or gender specialists

[You could include an additional open question here. It might be interesting to find out their experiences and thoughts about different learning modes.]

Capacity assessment report

Once the questionnaire deadline has passed, the results can be analysed and the draft report produced. In order to be effective, the report should be seen as an advocacy tool and a vehicle for leveraging senior management support for investment in capacity development. As such, it is recommended that that the report includes the following:

- *Reference to broader mandates for capacity development for gender equality in the UN system*
- *A clear link to the specific needs and mandate of the entity*
- *A strong narrative which demonstrate how and why the findings are important/concerning for the entity*
- *Clear recommendations (2-3 key action points) that feed in to the capacity development plan*

[This structure can be adapted according to the scope of the capacity assessment, and the specific objectives of the exercise.]

Introduction

[Context, rationale, current SWAP performance, why now?]

Methodology

[How staff were selected, why questions were chosen, how questionnaire was developed. How many responded, breakdown of respondents by gender, department, etc.]

Key Findings

[Most important findings here. Include quotations from qualitative questions to illustrate most relevant points.]

Analysis of staff capacity for gender mainstreaming

[Full results, picking out main messages to reiterate key findings]

Recommendations

[Identify biggest capacity gaps – by topic, staff group, etc. Be strategic when developing recommendations, considering that these will feed into the capacity development plan.]

Annex

[Include capacity assessment questionnaire and any other relevant documents.]

Capacity development plan

In order to meet requirements, entities need to produce a capacity development plan every 5 years. To exceed requirements, this should be done every three years. The plan should reflect the key findings and recommendations of the capacity assessment report, with clear activities dedicated to each of these. It is important to include the following aspects in the plan:

- *Type and number of staff to be reached by the intervention/training programme*
- *Costs of activity (if to be delivered by Gender Unit, this should be highlighted as a cost, rather than considered "free of charge")*
- *Clear responsibility for resources allocated to each activity*
- *Timeframe (e.g. Year 1, Year 2, Year 3)*
- *A gradual progression from Year 1 activities to Year 3 activities, to ensure a clear and consistent learning journey*

[Sample table – this can be adapted according to the needs of the entity and the findings and recommendations of the capacity assessment.]

Objective 1: Increase senior management capacity for gender mainstreaming					
Activity	**Target audience**	**Delivery**	**Costs**	**Funding Source**	**Time frame**
E.g. gender-responsive leadership programme	*E.g. senior management P5 and above*	*E.g. external and internal trainers, virtual*	*Estimated cost per participant, total cost*	*E.g. Senior managers individual learning budget*	*Year 1*

Objective 2: Strengthen gender equality architecture through increasing gender focal point capacity					
Activity	**Target audience**	**Delivery**	**Costs**	**Funding Source**	**Time frame**
E.g. training of trainers for gender focal points	*E.g. gender focal points*	*E.g. external trainers, virtual and in person*	*Estimated cost per participant, total cost*	*E.g. Entity learning and development fund*	*Year 2*

Checklist

At the end of the process, the following documents should be available:

✓ Capacity assessment questionnaire
✓ Capacity assessment report
✓ Capacity development plan

Good practice examples

UNV Gender Capacity Assessment Report

https://erc.undp.org/api/download?filePath=%2Fdocuments%2F9220%2Fmgmtrespons
e%2Fkeyaction%2Fdoc_717252958037635045UNVGenderCapacityAssessmentReport.p
df

UNV Gender Capacity Development Plan

https://erc.undp.org/api/download?filePath=%2Fdocuments%2F9220%2Fmgmtrespons
e%2Fkeyaction%2Fdoc_3232877714168692067UNVGenderCapacityDevelopmentPlan20
20.pdf