

**REVIEW OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE NEW  
GENERATION OF COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSES (CCAs)  
AND UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE COOPERATION  
FRAMEWORKS (UNSDCFs) IN AFRICA**

**2025**



**FOR ALL  
WOMEN  
AND GIRLS**



# REVIEW OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE NEW GENERATION OF COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSES (CCAs) AND UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE COOPERATION FRAMEWORKS (UNSDCFs) IN AFRICA

2025

# CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	IV
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS .....	V
ABOUT THE REVIEW.....	VI
APPROACH .....	VI
INTRODUCTION .....	1
THE COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS (CCA).....	7
THE COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS PROCESS.....	12
CCA CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS.....	23
THE UNSDCF .....	27
THE UNSDCF PROCESS .....	31
THE UNSDCF DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION .....	35
KEY UNSDCF CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS.....	45
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	51
ANNEX 1: TERMINOLOGY .....	55
ANNEX 2: ONLINE SURVEY ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE CCA.....	59
ANNEX 3: ONLINE SURVEY ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE UNSDCF.....	63



# FOREWORD

Gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls remain central to Africa's sustainable development agenda. Despite decades of global and regional commitments, women and girls across the continent continue to face discrimination, violence, harmful practices, and barriers that limit their rights and full participation in society. These persistent inequalities hinder inclusive growth and impede the realization of the 2030 Agenda and its ambition to leave no one behind.

This joint review of gender mainstreaming within the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF) in Africa commissioned by UN Women Regional Offices (East and Southern Africa; West and Central Africa) and the United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO) comes at a pivotal moment. As the UN system undergoes reforms including the UN80 initiative, there is a renewed focus on ensuring that development cooperation is coherent, impactful, and grounded in strong gender analysis.

The review reveals important progress. Many CCAs and UNSDCFs increasingly integrate gender equality commitments, uphold human rights principles, and in some cases articulate stand-alone outcomes on gender equality and women's empowerment. Country teams are employing innovative practices and joint initiatives that demonstrate the transformative potential of coordinated action.

At the same time, the study underscores persistent gaps. Limited sex- and intersectionally-disaggregated data, uneven gender expertise within Resident Coordinator Offices, under-resourced Gender Theme Groups, and ongoing challenges integrating gender perspectives in non-traditional sectors weaken the UN system's ability to deliver truly transformative and sustainable results. These shortcomings are particularly urgent in a context where progress on SDG 5 is lagging, maternal mortality remains unacceptably high, women's representation in public life is low, and structural barriers continue to impede economic and social empowerment.

The findings of this review reinforce that gender equality is not a thematic add-on but a core measure of the UN system's credibility and effectiveness. Where gender analysis is robust, programming coherence and impact are strengthened; where it is weak, development interventions fall short. The review offers clear, actionable recommendations to strengthen analytical rigor, enhance technical capacity, bolster partnerships, and elevate collective accountability in the design and implementation of CCAs and UNSDCFs.

We call upon Resident Coordinators, United Nations Country Teams, and regional partners across the continent to utilize this review as a practical resource. By applying its lessons, the UN system can accelerate progress,

---

<sup>1</sup> Such as Nigeria. IPU data available at <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/>

<sup>2</sup> [The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2024.pdf](#)

sharpen priorities, and ensure that gender equality remains at the heart of development cooperation. Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is not only an SDG in itself but a catalyst for every other goal and a prerequisite for Africa's transformation.

Through strengthened collaboration, evidence-driven analysis, and sustained commitment, we can advance a more just, inclusive, and equitable future for all women and girls across Africa.

**Dr. Maxime Houinato**  
**Regional Director**  
**West and Central Africa**



**Anna Mutavati**  
**Regional Director**  
**East and Southern Africa**



**Yacoub El-Hillo**  
**Regional Director, United Nations Development Coordination Office**  
**Chair, Regional Peer Support Group Africa**



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This review was conceptualized by UN Women and the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) as a tool to assess the extent of gender mainstreaming in the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). It draws on multiple data-collection methods, including surveys, qualitative interviews, focus group discussions and a desk review of CCAs and Cooperation Frameworks developed in the Africa region over the past four years (2019-2023). The review also includes illustrative cases, practical suggestions and knowledge shared by a wide range of contributors. Its completion would not have been possible without the substantive contributions of UN staff across Africa.

# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CCA</b>	UN Common Country Analysis
<b>DCO</b>	Development Coordination Office
<b>ESARO</b>	Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office
<b>GEM</b>	Gender Equality Marker (UNCT-GEM)
<b>GEWE</b>	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
<b>GEAP</b>	UN System-Wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan
<b>GTG</b>	Gender Theme Groups
<b>JP</b>	Joint Programmes
<b>MGE</b>	Mainstreaming Gender Equality
<b>LNOB</b>	Leave No One Behind
<b>RCO</b>	Resident Coordinator Office
<b>PSG</b>	Regional Peer Support Group
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>ToC</b>	Theory of Change
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team A
<b>UNCT-SWAP</b>	UN Country Team System-wide action plan / Gender Equality Scorecard
<b>UN-INFO</b>	The digital inter-agency planning, monitoring, and reporting platform
<b>UNSDCF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>UNDS</b>	UN Development System
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations entity for gender equality and women's empowerment
<b>VNR</b>	Voluntary National Reviews
<b>WCARO</b>	West and Central Africa Regional Office

# ABOUT THE REVIEW

This review is designed to strengthen understanding of gender mainstreaming in Common Country Analyses (CCAs) and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) to advance gender equality in Africa. It provides Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) and United Nations country teams (UNCTs) in Africa with recommendations and guidance to strengthen gender mainstreaming across CCAs and the overall Cooperation Frameworks.

The review identifies challenges that hamper UNCTs, RCOs and Peer Support Groups (PSGs) from meaningfully integrating gender equality considerations in the new generation of CCAs and Cooperation Frameworks. It aims to facilitate dialogue across UN entities on system-wide accountability for gender mainstreaming, and to strengthen the role of UNCTs in supporting the integration of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (GEWE) across CCA and UNSDCF cycles. It also assesses whether lessons from the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard, the UNCT Gender Equality Marker (UNCT-GEM), national gender equality policies and other relevant normative frameworks and processes - including the Beijing Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) Agreed Conclusions, CEDAW concluding observations issued to States parties, the 2024 QCPR resolution,<sup>3</sup> and Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) - have informed the planning processes for CCAs and Cooperation Frameworks.

The case studies and comparative experiences presented in this review reflect both good practices and efforts that have been constrained by limited data or capacity. They provide information and guidance on approaches to achieving gender-responsive CCAs and Cooperation Frameworks.

## APPROACH

---

An international team of two consultants conducted the review with UN Women and the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO), using a phased approach to meet the stated aims in sequence, with each phase building on the previous one. Methods included:

### Document review and inception phase (including an inception report)

- a. CCAs and UNSDCFs
- b. UNCT-SWAP documents
- c. UNSDG and UN Women guidance notes and tools relevant to the assignment
- d. UNCT annual reports and UNSDCF evaluation reports
- e. Previous gender reviews of CCAs and UNSDCFs at national, regional and global levels
- f. Evaluation reports of the EU-funded Spotlight Initiative, and any other UN system-wide collaborative initiatives, including joint programmes

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://docs.un.org/a/res/79/226>

## Data and perceptions collection

**Online surveys:** Two online surveys were designed and shared with all RCO teams in Africa. The first questionnaire focused on the CCA and the second on the UNSDCF, to capture diverse and specific perspectives.

The two main objectives of the questionnaires were to:

- a. collect data and views on the level of gender mainstreaming in CCAs and UNSDCFs, enabling factors and challenges; and
- b. collect information on each country context through the variables included in the questionnaires.

The questionnaire was pre-tested with three UN staff members (RCO and UN Women) before being made available online. Annex 1 presents the questionnaire on mainstreaming gender considerations in the CCA, while Annex 2 presents the questionnaire on mainstreaming GEWE in the UNSDCF. All UNCTs in Africa were invited to respond to both questionnaires through the Microsoft survey platform, which supports multi-question surveys and enables real-time access to responses, notifications and analysis.

**In-depth interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted in countries representing different regions of Africa.<sup>4</sup> Countries were selected in consultation with UN Women and DCO, taking into account the need for a diversity of contexts, including geographic diversity, the presence of a UN Women office, post-conflict and peacetime contexts, and country income classification. This diversity was intended to bring into sharper focus challenges and any need for additional support for UNCTs working in difficult environments. The interviews also aimed to capture lessons for the UN system from different approaches and good practices in mainstreaming gender in CCAs and Cooperation Frameworks.

**Focus group discussions:** One online focus group discussion was organized on 15 January 2025 with heads of RCOs and representatives from the Programme Management Teams (PMTs). The discussion focused on challenges in mainstreaming gender considerations in CCAs and UNSDCFs and involved eight senior staff from UNCTs, RCOs and PMTs, as well as UN Women senior staff supporting regional coordination. The focus group guiding questions are provided in Annex 3.

## Analysis

Selected indicators related to the CCA and UNSDCF from the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard were key tools for assessing the level of gender mainstreaming in the CCA and the Cooperation Framework. Reviewing methodologies and documenting good practices were also essential for developing case studies and providing learning and comparative perspectives for UNCTs.

This review also builds on the 2021 gender desk review conducted by the UN Women Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa (ESARO), which identified several promising practices on gender mainstreaming in the CCA and UNSDCF cycle in eastern and southern Africa. The findings indicated progress, particularly in relation to:

---

<sup>4</sup> Algeria, Niger, Libya, Tunisia, Burundi, Chad, Mauritius and Seychelles

- a.** more systematic engagement of gender experts and Gender Theme Groups (GTGs);
- b.** use of sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data (SADD) and more extensive analysis within CCAs in most countries in eastern and southern Africa;
- c.** clearer CCA alignment between UNCT commitments and national, regional and international frameworks on gender equality;
- d.** UNSDCF roadmaps with clearer gender mainstreaming strategies and a gender-responsive theory of change (ToC); and
- e.** the inclusion, in most countries in the region, of either a stand-alone gender equality outcome or gender mainstreaming across other outcomes.

The 2021 ESARO desk review recommended a more discernible shift from gender-sensitive to gender-transformative results, as well as strengthened availability, analysis and use of sex- and sexual orientation-disaggregated data. UNCTs and RCOs were urged to invest more in technical resources to address human rights, leave no one behind (LNOB) and GEWE, while strengthening the roles and capacities of GTGs and UNCT leadership for effective gender mainstreaming.

This assessment is also cognisant of the 2025 report of the UN Development Coordination Office (UN-DCO), which shows that in 2024, 116 UNCTs submitted gender equality scorecard reports under the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, compared with 87 in 2023.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Chair of the UNSDG on the UN Development Coordination Office (2025), Page 20. Available at [https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/UNSDG%20Chair%20Report\\_20May\\_EN.pdf](https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/UNSDG%20Chair%20Report_20May_EN.pdf)

1

**INTRODUCTION**

# INTRODUCTION

The United Nations (UN) Common Country Analysis (CCA) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) were introduced as part of UN development system reform to strengthen the effectiveness of UN support at country level.

The Cooperation Framework represents the UN development system's collective offer to support countries to address key Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) priorities and gaps. It is informed by a CCA of the national development landscape and SDG priorities, including through the lens of the commitment to leave no one behind.

The UNSDCF is the primary instrument for the planning and implementation of UN development activities in each programme country. It supports national implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through a coordinated and integrated approach, under the leadership of Resident Coordinators, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 75/233<sup>6</sup> and agreed national priorities reflected in the Cooperation Framework. It seeks to enable a more coherent, efficient, effective and accountable UN development system at country level in support of SDG achievement.

The General Assembly adopted the 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) resolution (A/RES/79/226)<sup>7</sup> at its fifty-fourth plenary meeting on 19 December 2024. The 2024 QCPR guides the UN development system through 2028, covering the last full cycle before the 2030 SDG deadline. The QCPR is the main instrument providing system-wide

guidance on operational activities for development, including to support countries' efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda in a more strategic, accountable, transparent, coherent, collaborative, efficient, effective and results-oriented manner.

Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls - in accordance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of relevant UN conferences and General Assembly resolutions - is of fundamental importance and has a multiplier effect for sustained and inclusive economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development. This includes investing in the development of all women and girls; promoting their economic, social and political empowerment; enabling their full, equal and meaningful participation and equal access to leadership and representation at all levels; promoting equal access to and control over economic and productive resources, decent work, social protection, inclusive and equitable quality education, health and technology; addressing barriers to their empowerment; and ensuring the realization of their human rights, including through the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls. Gender equality is among the key cross-cutting priorities that joint programmes (JPs) and joint work plans should address, alongside human rights, environmental sustainability, institutional and partner capacities, and capacity development strategies.

In this respect, gender equality should be at the centre of programming. This requires meaningful participation by all people, including women and men, and

---

<sup>6</sup> Available at : <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/75/233>

<sup>7</sup> available at : <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/79/226>

sustained efforts to empower women and girls, in line with the minimum requirements agreed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) in the UNCT System-wide Action Plan (SWAP) Gender Equality Scorecard.

To promote continuous improvement in UN country teams' accountability for gender mainstreaming, the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard was updated in 2023. Guidance for the UNCT Gender Equality Marker (UNCT-GEM)<sup>8</sup> was also updated in 2024. The UNCT-GEM is a tool for tracking how UN country teams allocate resources to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

There are 53 UN country teams in Africa working on sustainable development and coordinating UN support on challenges that transcend national borders. Of these, 52 UN country teams have signed and are implementing a new generation of Cooperation Frameworks with governments.

UN Women regional offices (ESARO and WCARO) and the Regional Peer Support Group (PSG) undertook this gender review of CCAs and UNSDCF in Africa covering 2019-2023 to assess the level of gender mainstreaming. The review aims to support UN country teams and Resident Coordinators to strengthen gender mainstreaming and improve accountability for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls across CCA and UNSDCF cycles, in line with relevant UN corporate policies.

Five years into the UN development system reform, UN Women East and Southern Africa (ESA) and West and Central Africa (WCA) regional offices, in partnership with the Development Coordination Office (DCO), will conduct a comprehensive Africa-wide assessment

of gender mainstreaming in CCAs and UNSDCFs. The assessment will capture lessons learned and promising practices, key challenges and gaps, and opportunities to strengthen gender mainstreaming across the Cooperation Framework cycle.

A range of tools has been developed to support UN country teams and UN staff to strengthen gender mainstreaming. Key tools include the following.

### **UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard**

The UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard is an accountability framework that supports UN country teams to self-assess and report on performance related to gender equality and the empowerment of women. It draws on intergovernmental mandates and is based on review and analysis of UN country team processes.

Updated in 2023 to align with revised UNSDG guidance and protocols, and to strengthen online reporting requirements and procedures, the Scorecard comprises seven dimensions and 15 performance indicators. The seven dimensions cover key components: planning; programming and monitoring, evaluation and learning; partnerships; communications and advocacy; leadership and organizational culture; gender architecture and capacities; resources; and results. Each dimension includes minimum requirements that UN country teams are expected to meet.

### **UNCT Gender Equality Marker (UNCT-GEM)**

The UNCT Gender Equality Marker (UNCT-GEM) tracks how UN country teams allocate resources to gender equality and the empowerment of women. The tool

---

<sup>8</sup> The UNCT-GEM has been introduced in 2018 with the roll-outs of UN-INFO (the digital inter-agency planning, monitoring, and reporting platform)



helps UN country teams identify where investments are concentrated - including under which Cooperation Framework outcomes and SDGs - and where gaps remain.

In 2018, the Development Coordination Office (DCO) piloted UN INFO, a digital inter-agency planning, monitoring and reporting platform. UN INFO digitizes the Cooperation Framework (or equivalent), joint work plans (JWPs), coordination surveys and common business strategies to track UN country team contributions to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. UN INFO is mandatory for all UN country teams developing a Cooperation Framework. As part of the UN INFO rollout, UNCT-GEM was introduced as a mandatory field in the joint work plan and is applied at sub-output level. Sub-outputs are entity-specific contributions to Cooperation Framework outputs.

In 2021, the UN system established a financial threshold for UN country team resource allocations to gender equality, reported annually in the UN Secretary-General's report on gender mainstreaming and the QCPR.

### **Internal Guidance<sup>9</sup> and Consolidated Annexes for the Cooperation Framework Guidance<sup>10</sup> (UNSDG principals endorsed in May 2019)**

These documents provide guidance for UN country teams as they plan, finance, deliver and evaluate support to countries to achieve the SDGs. They recognize gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as integral to achieving the 2030 Agenda and all SDGs.

The Cooperation Framework guidance calls for gender equality to be placed at the centre of programming, driving meaningful participation and sustained efforts to empower women and girls, in line with UNSDG minimum requirements. It also notes that gender analysis within the CCA should follow the guiding principles set out in the Consolidated Annexes, including root cause analysis of development challenges, data disaggregation, integrated (causal) analysis, forward-looking analysis and consideration of institutional capacity gaps.

### **Operationalizing Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) Guide**

Produced in 2022, this guide supports UN country teams and experts across the UN system to assist countries to operationalize the leave no one behind pledge in development planning.

The guide outlines five operational steps that can be understood as minimum standards for adopting a LNOB approach. This approach includes reaching those furthest behind first, and addressing discrimination and widening inequalities. It requires data disaggregation to identify who is excluded or discriminated against, and how and why this occurs.<sup>11</sup> Leave no one behind is at the core of the SDGs and is reinforced in the Secretary-General's report Our Common Agenda, which commits to placing women and girls at the centre of efforts to accelerate SDG achievement. This commitment is also reflected in the Pact for the Future, adopted in September 2024, which emphasizes protecting the needs and interests of present and future generations.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> [UN Cooperation Framework Internal Guidance -- 1 June 2022.pdf](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Consolidated Annexes to the Cooperation Framework Guidance.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Operationalizing LNOB - final with Annexes 090422.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> Pact of the future available: [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/soft-pact\\_for\\_the\\_future\\_adopted.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/soft-pact_for_the_future_adopted.pdf)

## Handbook on Gender Mainstreaming for Gender Equality Results<sup>13</sup>

Produced in 2022, this handbook promotes understanding of gender mainstreaming and outlines the gender-responsive policies and practices required for its implementation across all areas, including gender analysis. It provides an overview of key concepts that underpin gender mainstreaming, including “gender”, “gender equality” and “mainstreaming”. It also explains related concepts commonly used in gender mainstreaming practice, including “gender-responsive”,

“gender-transformative” and “intersectionality”. Clear and consistent use of these concepts is important for this review.

In addition to these resources, the Resident Coordinator provides leadership and support to the UN country team in defining the UN strategic response to government priorities, and in promoting UN values and standards, including respect for and protection of human rights and gender equality, and advocacy for the SDG commitment to leave no one behind.

---

<sup>13</sup> [Handbook-on-gender-mainstreaming-for-gender-equality-results-en.pdf \(unwomen.org\)](#)

## BOX 1

### Gender mainstreaming in development: General background

Mainstreaming gender equality (MGE), commonly referred to as gender mainstreaming, is a strategy for ensuring that gender equality considerations are systematically integrated into policies, programmes and institutions, and across all stages of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Gender mainstreaming aims to ensure that gender-based inequalities are identified and addressed, and that all people can benefit equitably from development efforts.

Gender mainstreaming gained global recognition in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. At the conference, 189 State representatives agreed that the meaningful participation of women and men in development processes is essential to achieving equitable and sustainable development outcomes.

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly established UN Women - the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women - as part of the UN reform agenda to strengthen impact through a dedicated focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. UN Women's main role is to:

- ▶ support intergovernmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in developing policies, global standards and norms;
- ▶ support Member States to implement these standards, including by providing technical and financial support upon request and by fostering effective partnerships with civil society; and
- ▶ support accountability across the UN system for its commitments on gender equality, including through regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

In this context, UN Women coordinates and promotes UN system-wide efforts to advance gender equality across deliberations and agreements linked to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The entity works to position gender equality as fundamental to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and to building more inclusive societies.

# 2

## THE COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS (CCA)

# THE COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS (CCA)

The United Nations (UN) Common Country Analysis (CCA) is the UN system's independent, impartial and collective assessment and analysis of a country context for internal use, to inform the development of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). It examines progress, gaps, opportunities and bottlenecks in relation to a country's commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN norms and standards, and the principles of the UN Charter, as reflected in the Cooperation Framework guiding principles.

The CCA is a core analytical function of the UN development system that assesses the national context and the regional and global dynamics shaping prospects for sustainable development.

The new generation of CCAs is expected to provide integrated, forward-looking and evidence-based joint analysis of the context for sustainable development and progress towards the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The CCA identifies SDG areas and entry points with potential for accelerated progress. It also includes a root cause analysis of the factors contributing to exclusion and vulnerability, identifying population groups at risk of being left behind, supported by the most up-to-date data available.<sup>14</sup>

Accordingly, the CCA places greater emphasis on multidimensional and cross-pillar analysis, including the root causes of crises, to inform prevention and

resilience-building. It focuses on opportunities and gaps in achieving the SDGs by 2030; the integrated and interdependent nature of the SDGs; and the UN norms and standards underpinning the 2030 Agenda. It also gives effect to the promise to leave no one behind and to reach those furthest behind first. In addition, the CCA includes analysis of cross-border and regional dynamics that influence a country's development trajectory. The CCA process also supports stronger stakeholder analysis in relation to the 2030 Agenda and helps lay the foundation for expanded and more strategic partnerships.

---

## **A gender-responsive CCA is the first step towards developing a gender-responsive Cooperation Framework**

---

The CCA provides a critical opportunity to apply a gender perspective throughout the analysis to inform UN programming, advocacy and partnerships on a continuous basis. Gender analysis should be integrated across all sector assessments and situational analyses to ensure that interventions do not reinforce or exacerbate gender inequalities and discrimination, and that they contribute, where possible, to more equal and just gender relations.<sup>15</sup>

A gender-responsive CCA supports the identification of gender-transformative outcomes by examining norms, cultural practices, power relations and other

---

<sup>14</sup> [CCA-Thematic Bonds-For sharing.pdf](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Gender Equality Glossary \(unwomen.org\)](#)

structural drivers of inequality and discrimination. This requires the systematic use of disaggregated data and analysis across key areas, including: social norms and power structures; legal and policy frameworks affecting participation and representation; institutional mechanisms for advancing equality; gendered economic conditions (including poverty, inflation and the differential impacts of crises); unpaid care and domestic work; access to and control over resources and opportunities (including land, mobility, education and employment); participation in decision-making; differential needs and vulnerabilities; and violence against women and girls.

It is therefore essential that the CCA captures the factors that perpetuate gender inequality, discrimination and exclusion, and examines how opportunities and constraints differ for women, men, girls and boys, taking into account intersecting forms of discrimination.

Gender analysis also informs decision-making by governments, development partners and the UN system. It strengthens UN advocacy and partnership-building and supports strategic positioning and agility. A gender-responsive CCA is a critical foundation for a gender-responsive Cooperation Framework and enables subsequent assessment of whether resources and services are equitably distributed across sectors. This, in turn, supports more effective targeting of development assistance and stronger use of resources to advance gender equality.

The purpose of identifying gender-related factors is to assess how they influence access to, control over and benefit from resources, opportunities and services. Key questions include: What needs and opportunities exist to increase women's access to and control over resources? How do these needs and opportunities relate to broader national and sectoral priorities? Were women and men consulted directly in identifying these needs and opportunities? Who has access to resources, who controls their use, and who ultimately benefits at household, community and societal levels?

For example, in some contexts women may have access to elected assemblies - as in Senegal - but have limited influence over agendas, deliberations or final decisions. Control over a resource or process ultimately shapes decision-making power.

Following the 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) of UN operational activities for development, the General Assembly reaffirmed that achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is fundamental to progress on the SDGs. It called on the UN development system to mainstream gender through full implementation of the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.<sup>16</sup> The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in 2020 further slowed progress towards the SDGs, and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) urged renewed efforts to accelerate gender mainstreaming in policies and programmes.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> General Assembly resolution 75/233 of 21 December 2020

<sup>17</sup> UN ECOSOC resolution E/RES/2021/7

## BOX 2

### What makes a CCA gender-responsive?<sup>18</sup>

#### Preparation and consultations

- ▶ Identify the resources and expertise required to conduct a robust gender analysis.
- ▶ Ensure the Gender Theme Group (or an equivalent coordination mechanism) provides substantive inputs to the CCA, in line with the UNSDG Gender Theme Groups Standards and Procedures.
- ▶ Designate a gender focal point within each thematic area of the CCA technical team, in consultation with UN Women.
- ▶ Ensure that UN Women and/or gender experts participate in CCA preparation meetings.
- ▶ Compile the most recent and relevant sex-disaggregated data in advance, drawing on multiple credible sources.
- ▶ Consult civil society organizations, including women's rights and feminist organizations, on the status of women's rights: what has worked, what has not worked, key challenges and priorities for change over the next four years, to strengthen the relevance of findings.
- ▶ Review recent reports on women's rights in the country, as well as national gender equality policies and commitments, in consultation with the ministry responsible for gender equality and the national women's machinery (or equivalent entity).
- ▶ Engage national experts and researchers to gather perspectives on trends, risks and forward-looking projections.

#### Development and drafting

- ▶ Integrate a gender perspective across all thematic areas and SDGs, including an in-depth analysis of gender inequalities and discrimination, and reference relevant national, regional and international commitments.
- ▶ Use sex-disaggregated data consistently across all thematic areas, drawing on multiple credible sources. Where relevant, highlight key indicators, including: proportion of women and men in the population; poverty rates by sex; unemployment rates by sex; prevalence of gender-based violence; representation of women in government and parliament; and enrolment rates by sex across all levels of education, including tertiary education.
- ▶ Compare sex-disaggregated trends across sectors to identify and explain gender gaps and structural barriers. Examples include: higher enrolment of women in tertiary education alongside lower access to decent work; women's high share of the population alongside under-representation in elected decision-making; and women's significant participation in agriculture alongside limited coverage of social protection for women working in agriculture.

---

<sup>18</sup> Based on the online staff survey results and the focus group conducted in the context of this review

- ▶ Analyse gender differences in access to and control over resources, services and decision-making, including who makes decisions and who benefits. For example, in some contexts women may have representation in elected bodies but limited influence over agendas, deliberations or final decisions. Control over resources and decision-making processes shapes power and outcomes.
- ▶ Assess the gendered impacts of key thematic issues, including climate change and public finance, and identify risks associated with gender-blind budgeting.
- ▶ Ensure that UN Women and/or gender experts participate in the CCA validation workshop.

### **Review and finalization**

- ▶ Verify that data and analysis are consistent, coherent and clearly linked to the priorities identified.
- ▶ Ensure tables, annexes and datasets are sex-disaggregated, and include annexes and tables that present key gender equality findings.
- ▶ Share the near-final draft with the Gender Theme Group for quality assurance and with UN Women and/or gender experts for technical review before finalization.

# 3

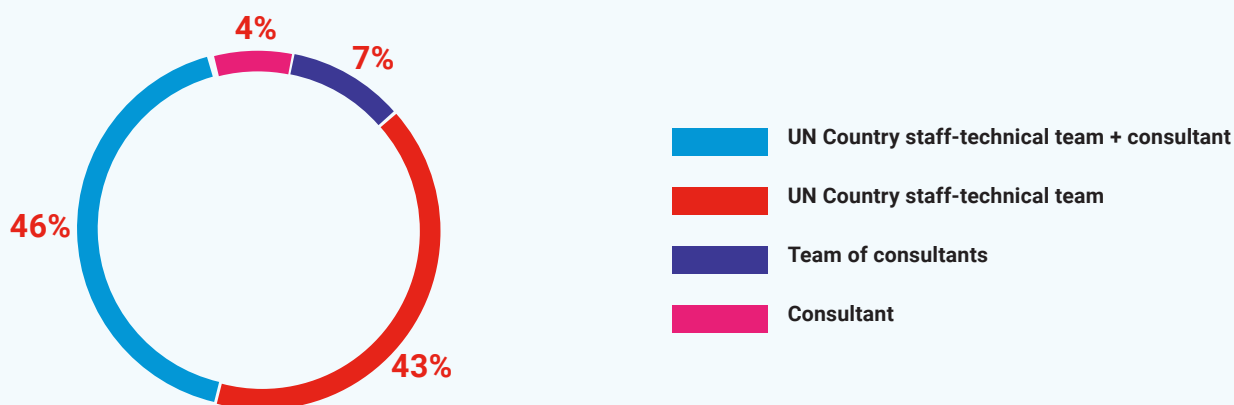
## THE COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS PROCESS

# THE COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS PROCESS

Between 2019 and 2023 (the review period), most United Nations country teams (UNCTs) in Africa produced at least one Common Country Analysis (CCA), and many undertook regular annual updates. In most cases, UNCTs have a standing analytical team that brings together colleagues from across UN entities with diverse expertise and knowledge.

According to the CCA survey<sup>19</sup> conducted for this review, 43 per cent of CCAs were developed by UNCT teams, while 46 per cent were developed by UNCT teams with support from an external consultant (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: CCA Drafting (Survey Results)**

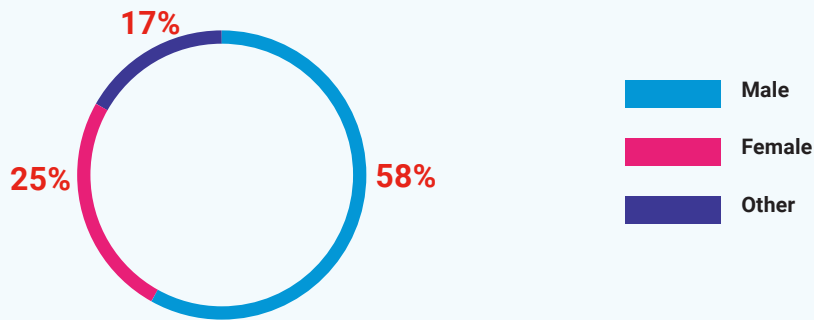


UNSDG guidance allows the engagement of external consultants and notes that consultants may be hired to facilitate the process. While a consultant's gender does not, in itself, determine whether a

CCA is gender-responsive, it is noteworthy that UN country teams in Africa reported a tendency to engage male consultants to support CCA facilitation and development: 58 per cent of UNCTs recruited a male consultant (Figure 2).

<sup>19</sup> 28 UN teams in Africa responded to the questionnaire made available online at: [https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?origin=NeoPortalPage&subpage=design&id=RAfNKxiefUjFw8mjJSIL6KZCsGP\\_3glMtxmvdXVehNFUOExTWVk0WINaSlhSMVBRTI-ZLUEdPTIJXSC4u&analysis=true](https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?origin=NeoPortalPage&subpage=design&id=RAfNKxiefUjFw8mjJSIL6KZCsGP_3glMtxmvdXVehNFUOExTWVk0WINaSlhSMVBRTI-ZLUEdPTIJXSC4u&analysis=true)

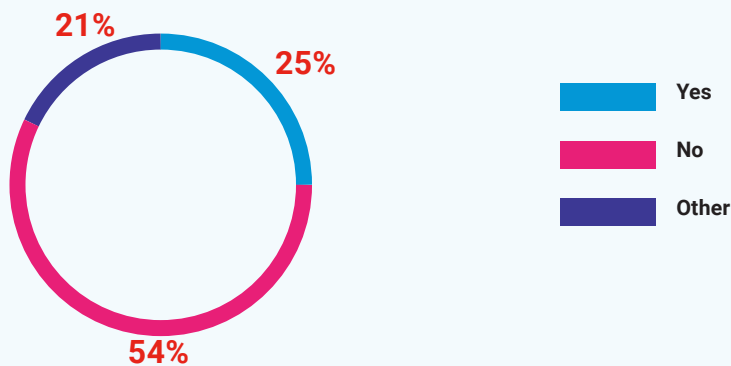
**Figure 2: CCA Consultant Gender (Survey Results)**



Moreover, according to 54 per cent of respondents, most Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) - which lead and coordinate the CCA process - do not have substantive gender expertise. A further 21 per cent reported

that their RCO has partial expertise or is in the process of strengthening it. Only 25 per cent indicated that their RCO has substantive gender expertise (Figure 3).

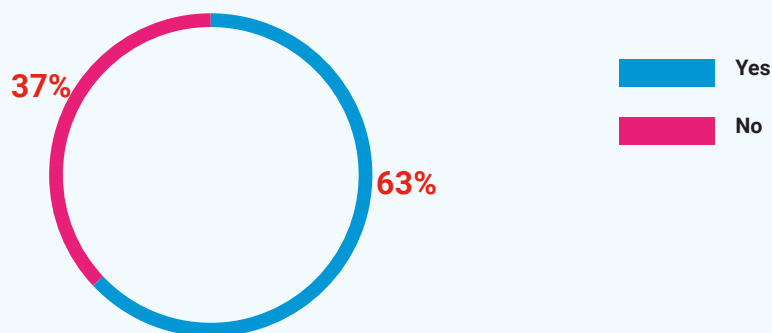
**Figure 3: RCO Gender Expertise (Survey Results)**



In addition, 63 per cent of respondents reported difficulties in mainstreaming gender perspectives in the CCA (Figure 4) and noted that available guidance

is not sufficient. Respondents identified the following areas where technical support is needed:

**Figure 4: Difficulties in mainstreaming gender (Survey Results)**



Respondents identified several priority needs, including capacity development, policy advocacy and technical support to apply the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard, alongside deeper analysis and evaluation of gender mainstreaming in key planning documents (CCA, UNSDCF and joint work plans (JWPs)). Respondents also noted that an updated gender profile for the country could be highly beneficial. The need for additional financial and human resources was raised repeatedly.

Selected examples include:

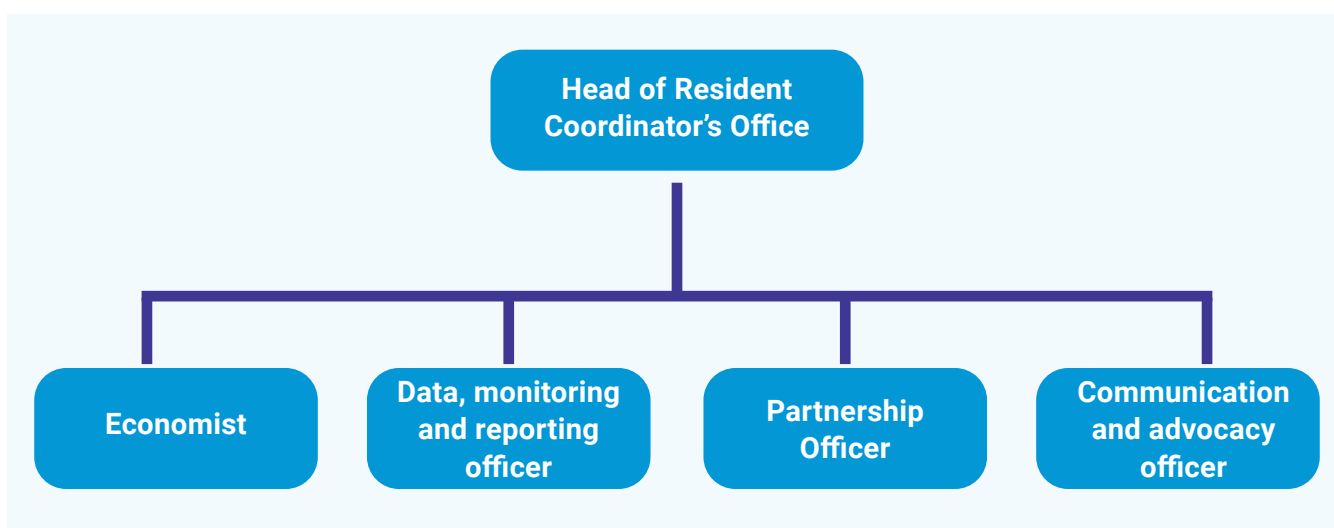
- ◆ “We don’t have a gender advisor/expert in the RCO to guide substantive work on gender mainstreaming.” (Libya and Eswatini)
- ◆ “We need funding to sustain the gender advisor position in the RCO; training and TOT for relevant RCO staff on gender-sensitive M&E, communications, procurement and human resources to help cascade to inter-agency groups.” (Guinea-Bissau)
- ◆ “As RCO gender focal point, I need capacity building to be able to address the tasks I am in charge of.” (Algeria)
- ◆ “We need technical support for conducting the Gender Scorecard, along with an in-depth analysis and evaluation of gender mainstreaming in planning documents (CCA, UNSDCF, JWP). An updated analysis of the country’s gender profile could also be highly beneficial.” (Chad)
- ◆ “We do have the required gender expertise through the gender advisor, but we do lack sufficient resources (financial) for her to fulfil her role completely.” (Comoros)
- ◆ “The RCO lacks sufficient gender expertise, and there is a need for both a national gender advisor and an international gender expert to support the UN Country Team (UNCT) in advancing gender initiatives.” (Sierra Leone)
- ◆ “DRC needs more than just having the word women in every activity. It should be mainstreamed and interconnected. The RCO without dedicated expertise can’t ensure correctly this part. Regarding our context and the size of the country, the gender group should play this role.” (Democratic Republic of the Congo)
- ◆ “The lack of adequate knowledge on available tools and guidance documents designed to enhance gender parity certainly hinders the

ability to address gaps in the mainstreaming of gender equality across the UN’s activities within the Cooperation Framework.” (Burundi)

- ◆ “Capacities need to be strengthened in mainstreaming gender in analysis and monitoring gender integration in activities and budgeting.” (Cote d’Ivoire)

In general, RCOs are supported by five core professional staff positions, and gender advisors are not included among the standard functions (Figure 5). RCOs and UNCTs may nevertheless prioritize additional GEWE capacity, depending on national needs and priorities, including through the engagement of gender advisors and/or peace and development advisors.

**Figure 5: RCO five core professional staff**



In this context, UN Women West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO) appointed four gender advisors/specialists between 2022 and 2025 in four African countries where UN Women does not have an in-country presence: Chad, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Gabon. This arrangement helps ensure that Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) and United Nations country teams (UNCTs) have reliable and timely access to UN Women technical support. The review identified early improvements associated with these advisory services, including strengthened support to RCOs and UNCTs and contributions to the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard exercise.

Respondents also noted that financial constraints are a major barrier to expanding UN Women presence and technical capacity across the continent.

In addition, survey findings suggest that the role and contribution of Gender Theme Groups (GTGs) remains uneven. Respondents reported almost equally that GTGs had limited involvement and active involvement in CCA development and drafting (Figure 6). Those who reported limited involvement cited reasons such as a “dysfunctional group”, the perception that GTG engagement is “not mandatory” or “not explicitly reflected in CCA guidance”, and the fact that the GTG was newly established.

A sample of 22 Common Country Analyses (CCAs)<sup>20</sup> produced during 2019-2023 was reviewed by a UN Women consultant to assess the extent to which they mainstream gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (GEWE). The review was grounded in two UNSDG tools: the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard and the Cooperation Framework guidance, in particular Annex 2 of the Consolidated Annexes to the Guidance Note.<sup>21</sup>

Analysis of the CCA introduction sections indicates that 38 per cent of UN country teams (UNCTs) used internal technical teams to develop the CCA, while 24 per cent combined internal expertise with support from external consultants (Figure 5). However, the CCA documents reviewed do not consistently indicate whether gender expertise was a key criterion in selecting external consultants or in establishing internal technical teams.

As noted in the *Handbook on Gender Mainstreaming for Gender Equality Results*:

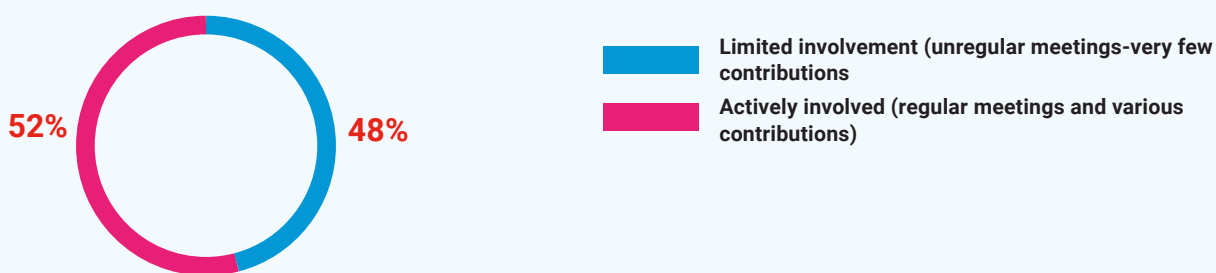
“From the outset, it is important to identify appropriate sources of gender expertise, to enable gender

perspectives to be integrated into the common country analysis and to involve relevant stakeholders in the process. This could include UN gender experts in country, or from regional UN sources of support, including from specialized agencies, in addition to experts from government bodies and women’s rights organizations.”<sup>22</sup>

The CCA process provides a valuable opportunity to engage a diverse range of stakeholders and apply an inclusive lens in the analysis, particularly in contexts where data are limited or scarce. Consultations were conducted in 94 per cent of cases reviewed (desk review of anglophone countries) and took various forms, including in-person workshops, online meetings, retreats and, in some cases, digital tools such as conversational bots. These modalities can create space for collective reflection, learning and innovation, and for identifying creative solutions.

However, findings from interviews suggest that consultations often remain largely internal, primarily within UNCTs, reflecting a perception among some staff that the CCA is an internal UN document (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: GTG Involvement (Survey Results)**



<sup>20</sup> Angola, Botswana, Djibouti, Eswatini, The Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

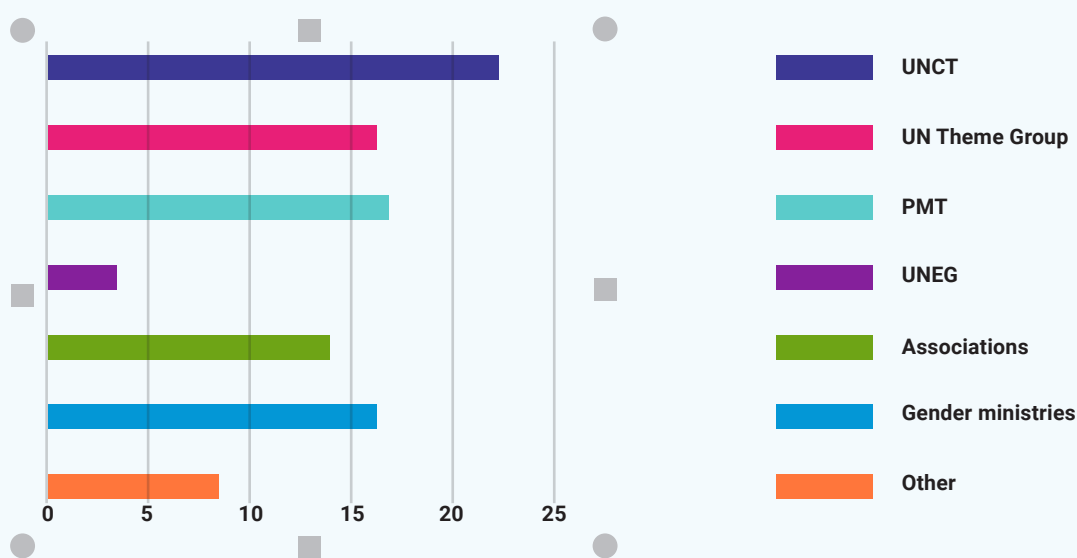
<sup>21</sup> Annex 2: Outline of the UN CCA Report for the Cooperation Framework, “Consolidated Annexes for Cooperation Framework Guidance, 24 May 2019”, <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/Consolidated%20Annexes%20to%20the%20Cooperation%20Framework%20Guidance.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> UNSDG (2018) Resource Book for Mainstreaming Gender in UN Common Programming at the Country Level, P. 18, <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/resource-book-mainstreaming-gender-un-common-programming-country-level>

Furthermore, 46 per cent of the desk-reviewed CCAs<sup>23</sup> indicate that consultations were undertaken. Stakeholders consulted included representatives of population groups in vulnerable situations, including women, as well as civil society organizations (CSOs), development partners and government institutions. However, the CCAs reviewed provide a mixed picture regarding the depth of consultation and the extent to which stakeholders with GEWE expertise - particularly women's rights organizations and gender experts - were meaningfully engaged.

Only 8 per cent of the reviewed CCAs explicitly state that they benefited from consultations with CSOs working on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (GEWE). A further 38 per cent report consultations with civil society organizations but do not specify whether the organizations consulted included those with gender analysis expertise (Figure 7). Such details are important elements of UNCT accountability for gender mainstreaming.

**Figure 7: Consultations (Survey Results)**



The latest UNSDG guidance notes that consultation processes should remain flexible to adapt to different country contexts. However, it refers - in a footnote - to the requirement that, "to meet the requirements of the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard (performance indicator 3.2), women's rights and gender equality civil society organizations should engage meaningfully throughout the Cooperation Framework cycle, including in the UN Common Country Analysis."<sup>24</sup>

This limited treatment underscores a broader gap: the UNSDG guidance for the CCA process and development does not sufficiently articulate expectations and minimum standards for integrating gender equality considerations. In addition, to meet the requirements of the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard, the national women's machinery (or an equivalent entity) should participate in consultations for the UNSDCF cycle, including for the CCA (performance indicator

<sup>23</sup> Angola, Botswana, Djibouti, Eswatini, The Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

<sup>24</sup> Page 9, footnote 7

3.1). This requirement is not clearly reflected in the UNSDG guidance. Beyond consultation requirements, deeper analysis is needed to demonstrate an understanding of the complex and often multidimensional root causes of gender inequality and the factors that perpetuate the marginalization of women

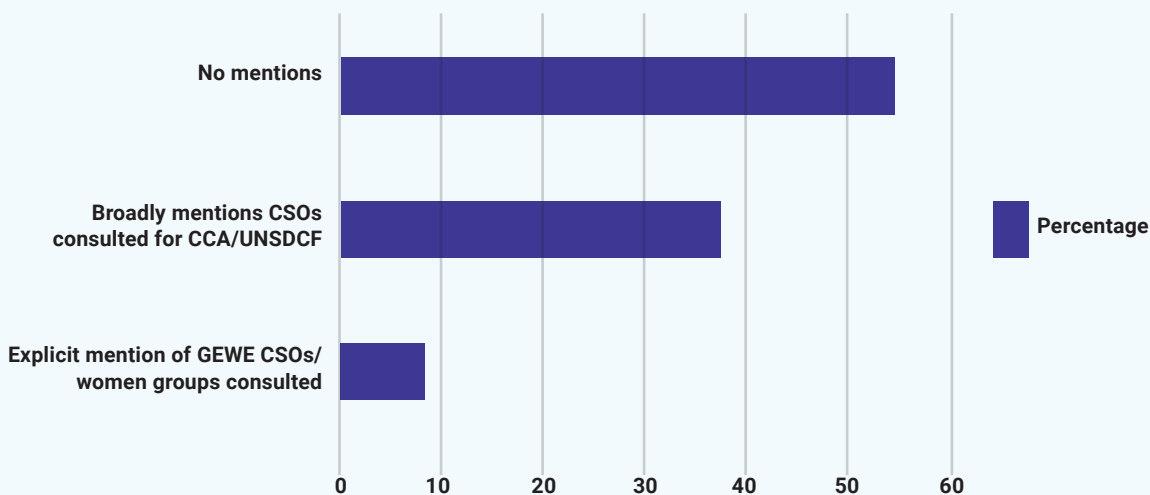
and girls. For example, discriminatory legal and policy frameworks, weak enforcement mechanisms and limited access to justice can sustain gender inequality and undermine the realization of rights for women and girls.

---

**The CCAs for Madagascar and Angola identify harmful social norms and practices as contributing factors that limit girls' access to education and contribute to early marriage and adolescent pregnancy. The Madagascar CCA also notes that the continued application of customary law in some rural areas can widen the gap between formal legal frameworks and their implementation, which in turn can limit women's access to justice. The Zambia CCA integrates a human rights-based approach to gender analysis by highlighting the country's efforts to domesticate the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Maputo Protocol, including through the Gender Equity and Equality Act of 2015. This domestication reflects a national commitment to embedding international human rights standards in domestic law and to advancing gender equality through legal and policy frameworks aimed at transforming discriminatory gender norms and practices.**

---

**Figure 8: Consultations with CSO during CCA process (desk review results)**



There is a general need for CCAs to strengthen and deepen gender analysis by going beyond descriptive statistics to examine the underlying and intersecting drivers of the gender gaps identified in each sector and for different groups of women and girls. Such analysis is essential for UN country teams (UNCTs) and governments to design targeted and context-specific interventions, increasing the likelihood of measurable impact and sustained progress in reducing gender inequalities.

Desk review findings indicate that all CCAs reflected the leave no one behind (LNOB) principle, either through a dedicated chapter or section identifying groups at risk of being left behind. However, most CCAs did not consistently apply an intersectional lens to analyse multi-layered forms of discrimination and exclusion. Several CCAs acknowledged the intersection of gender inequality with other forms of marginalization - such as age, disability or HIV/AIDS - but the depth of analysis and the specificity of recommendations to address these intersections varied. The Kenya CCA provides an example of good practice by presenting gender disparities that illustrate the gendered and multidimensional nature of poverty. For example, young women are more likely to experience multidimensional poverty than young men: 50 per cent of young women are multidimensionally poor, compared to 47 per cent of young men.<sup>25</sup>

Overall, CCAs demonstrate an intention to integrate principles of gender equality, human rights and LNOB in their analysis. Many CCAs identify specific groups facing marginalization and analyse factors contributing to vulnerability. The reports draw on relevant normative and policy frameworks, including national vulnerability assessments, international human rights treaties ratified by countries, and recommendations from human rights mechanisms such as the Universal

Periodic Review (UPR). Most CCAs include dedicated chapters on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (GEWE), human rights and LNOB.

Several CCAs also provide detailed lists of groups experiencing marginalization, reflecting an understanding of diverse vulnerabilities within national contexts. For example, the Mozambique CCA provides a comprehensive list of 20 LNOB groups with indicative population figures, a feature not commonly found in other CCAs. The groups identified vary across countries and regions depending on context-specific risks and patterns of exclusion. The Botswana CCA applies an intersectional lens and uses sex-disaggregated data in its "People and Social Inclusion" chapter to examine the differentiated experiences of groups facing marginalization. The Malawi CCA identifies persons with albinism among the groups at risk of being left behind.

Likewise, the extent to which the three principles - gender equality, human rights and leave no one behind (LNOB) - are integrated and operationalized varies across CCAs. While intersectionality is acknowledged in several reports, it is not consistently addressed across SDG areas. This limits the ability of CCAs to analyse how overlapping and intersecting forms of discrimination shape inequalities and development outcomes for different population groups.

Some CCAs include promising analysis that could be strengthened and expanded. For example, the Djibouti CCA links harmful social norms and patriarchal power structures to gender gaps in decision-making at multiple levels, including within households, and to the heightened risk of gender-based violence (GBV) experienced by women and girls. Similarly, the Madagascar CCA links poverty and social norms to the prevalence of GBV, including sexual exploitation

---

<sup>25</sup> p.1 Kenya CCA 2023

of children and sexual exploitation linked to tourism. These examples show how structural and social factors can reinforce gender inequality and compound risks for women and girls.

It is also important to note that specific UN guidance on operationalizing LNOB<sup>26</sup> has been developed, but requires broader dissemination and more consistent use.

### BOX 3

#### Good practice: Gender mainstreaming in the Tunisia CCA (2024)

Tunisia's CCA was drafted in 2024. The Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) established 12 thematic groups to draft the CCA sections. UN Women assigned a staff member to each group as a strategic measure to help ensure that gender perspectives were integrated across all CCA sections, according to the UN Women Representative in Tunisia.

While the RCO recruited a consultant to compile, edit and finalize the CCA, UN Women recruited an international gender expert to support the process. The expert provided technical input to strengthen gender analysis across sections, participated in the CCA workshop and followed up on finalization.

During the drafting process, the UN Women gender expert prepared and shared three technical notes with the RCO and the consultant to inform drafting and finalization:

1. LNOB note
2. SDG 5 progress and challenges note
3. Climate change and gender note

The UN Women expert and senior staff participated in the two-day CCA workshop and highlighted missing gender perspectives in each session and presentation. This included, for example, the gendered impacts of climate change and the need for additional research, sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis in selected sections.

As noted by the UN Women Representative in Tunisia: "Ensuring that gender equality issues are analysed, that sex-disaggregated data are included, and that the priorities and challenges of women and girls are reflected across all thematic areas of the CCA is a critical foundation for a gender-responsive UNSDCF."

The first draft of the CCA submitted to the UNCT in December 2024 already reflected a strong gender perspective in many sections. The subsequent technical review conducted by the UN Women gender expert helped consolidate analysis and data, strengthening the overall gender responsiveness of the CCA.

<sup>26</sup> UN WOMEN guidance available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/how-do-governments-ensure-that-no-one-is-left-behind-an-audit-framework-for-supreme-audit-institutions-en.pdf> and UNSDG guidance available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/Operationalizing%20LNOB%20-%20final%20with%20Annexes%20090422.pdf>

---

Uganda dedicated a chapter to identifying LNOB groups and the factors underlying their vulnerabilities, thereby highlighting the importance of LNOB principle in the CCA assessment.

Sierra Leone developed a separate LNOB report complementary to the CCA. Examples like these illustrate the dedication that most countries exhibited to the LNOB principle.

---



Photo: Fethi Belaid/Reuters

# 4

## CCA CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

# CCA CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

UN staff face multiple challenges in mainstreaming gender perspectives in CCAs and addressing structural barriers that limit women's participation and leadership in development processes. Obstacles to gender mainstreaming include, among others: limited availability and use of sex-disaggregated data; insufficient gender expertise and tools for gender analysis; institutional resistance to change; harmful social norms and practices; and inadequate or declining organizational resources.

## 1. DATA GATHERING, ACCESSIBILITY, DISSEMINATION AND USE

One of the key challenges for developing a gender-responsive CCA is the limited availability of gender data, including data disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant characteristics.

Gender mainstreaming requires gender analysis grounded in sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics. When up-to-date, reliable and sufficiently disaggregated data are unavailable, it becomes difficult to analyse gender dynamics across sectors, identify gender gaps, or assess the differential impacts of policies and programmes on women, men, girls and boys. Limited sex-disaggregated data and limited analysis of intersecting forms of discrimination can also constrain efforts to advance gender equality, non-discrimination and inclusion. Data availability and quality also vary significantly across countries.

In addition, some national data systems are not sufficiently equipped to capture gender-related information, resulting in incomplete assessments of gender inequalities. Technical constraints can limit the production and use of gender statistics required to inform regional and country-level interventions. Many datasets lack adequate disaggregation by sex, age, disability and other characteristics, making it difficult to identify specific needs and disparities.

A further challenge is the fragmentation of gender data production across sectors and the limited development of administrative data systems.

**Solution:** CCA technical teams should allocate time and resources for additional research and use diverse and credible data sources, including research institutions, think tanks, civil society organizations and UN entities.

Sex-disaggregated data are essential, but not sufficient on their own. An intersectional approach is required to understand the drivers of inequality and exclusion. Additional efforts are needed to integrate gender analysis across all thematic areas.

## 2. LIMITED GENDER EXPERTISE

Insufficient gender expertise is a significant constraint. Underinvestment in gender expertise within Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) can have a disproportionate impact on the quality of gender analysis and the gender responsiveness of CCAs and related planning documents.

Without adequate technical capacity, it is difficult to integrate a gender perspective across all thematic areas or to design interventions that respond to different needs, vulnerabilities and roles of women and men in sustainable development. Limited capacity is often particularly evident in non-traditional sectors, such as climate change, where gender expertise may be limited across institutions.

**Solution:** RCO staffing structures should include a dedicated gender professional post. In addition, consultants recruited to support or facilitate the CCA process should have demonstrated expertise in gender equality and gender analysis.

### 3. GUIDING DOCUMENTS

A review of UNSDG CCA guidance indicates that gender mainstreaming is not addressed in a sufficiently systematic way across sections. A stand-alone gender chapter, on its own, does not make a CCA gender-responsive.

Clearer, gender-responsive guidance would support more consistent integration of gender analysis across UN processes and thematic areas.

**Solution:** UNSDG guidance should include at least one dedicated chapter on gender equality, alongside systematic integration of gender considerations throughout the guidance.

### 4. COUNTRY GENDER PROFILE

A country gender profile provides an evidence-based overview of national progress and challenges in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It analyses social, political and economic issues through a gender lens, drawing on available data, case studies, surveys and other evidence. It can serve as a core input to country analysis, supporting priority-setting and the identification of objectives and actions.

**Solution:** RCOs and UNCTs should produce and regularly update country gender profiles to ensure that relevant gender analysis and data are readily available to CCA technical teams. Gender profiles have traditionally been produced by UN Women, and the UN System-wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan (GEAP)<sup>27</sup> recommended making them a shared UNCT responsibility.

### 5. RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

Institutional resistance to change, alongside deeply entrenched discriminatory norms and biases, can constrain efforts to mainstream gender and challenge unequal power relations. In some contexts, restricted access can also limit the ability to engage women and girls directly, weakening stakeholder participation and the quality of analysis. In some instances, governments may restrict the use of the term “gender”, complicating efforts to translate gender equality commitments into policy and institutional mechanisms.

**Solution:** The 2030 Agenda recognizes gender equality as both a stand-alone goal and a cross-cutting priority. CCAs should reflect the interlinkages across the SDGs and demonstrate how progress across targets contributes to outcomes for women and girls, even in restrictive contexts, by grounding analysis in agreed commitments and standards.

### 6. CCA CONSULTATIONS

Although CCAs are published on the UNSDG platform, interviews conducted for this review indicate that some staff continue to view the CCA as an internal document. As a result, consultation processes may be limited, particularly with external stakeholders.

**Solution:** To meet UNCT-SWAP requirements, consultations should include women’s rights and gender equality CSOs and national women’s machineries (performance indicators 3.1 and 3.2). Clear guidance for UN staff on the purpose and importance of consultations during CCA preparation should be strengthened.

<sup>27</sup> More information of GEAP available here: <https://www.un.org/en/gender-equality-acceleration-plan>

## 7. GTG ROLE AND EFFECTIVENESS

The role of Gender Theme Groups (GTGs) in CCA development remains limited in many contexts. However, the *Gender Theme Groups Standards and Procedures*<sup>28</sup> encourages GTGs to “prepare a briefing note on the key gender equality issues identified in the CCA and the related interventions required to address these issues and make this available as a background paper for Cooperation Framework workshops and discussions”. The UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard also requires that GTGs make substantive inputs into the CCA (performance indicator 5.1).

**Solution:** Advancing GEWE is a system-wide responsibility. At country level, the leadership of Resident Coordinators and heads of UN entities is critical in ensuring meaningful GTG engagement, whether or not UN Women is present in-country. Strengthening staff capacity and ensuring adequate technical support - including dedicated gender expertise within RCOs - are essential to improving gender mainstreaming within UNCT processes.

---

<sup>28</sup> Available here: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/gender-theme-groups-standards-and-procedures>

5

THE UNSDCF

# THE UNSDCF

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) is “the most important instrument for planning and implementation of UN development activities at country level in support of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda)”.<sup>29</sup> Also referred to as the Cooperation Framework (CF), it guides the full programme cycle, shaping planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of collective UN support to advance the 2030 Agenda.

The Cooperation Framework is nationally owned and anchored in national development priorities, the 2030 Agenda and the principles of the UN Charter. It articulates the contributions of the UN development system, as identified by national stakeholders, to accelerate progress towards the SDGs in an integrated manner, grounded in the commitment to leave no one behind, human rights and other international standards and obligations.

The Cooperation Framework is therefore a partnership with the Government, aligned with national development priorities and planning cycles. It serves as a core accountability tool between the UN country team (UNCT) and the host Government, and among UNCT members, for collectively owned development results. The framework is supported by mandatory independent, high-quality evaluations and corresponding management responses.

The UN Resident Coordinator (RC) plays an enhanced leadership role throughout the Cooperation Framework cycle, in line with General Assembly resolution 72/279 and the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF).

The Cooperation Framework reflects the UN development system’s commitment to: (a) supporting national development goals and targets, with a focus on leaving no one behind; (b) supporting the development of national indicator frameworks aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the global SDG indicator framework; (c) ensuring that those at risk of being left behind are included throughout the Cooperation Framework cycle, across processes and programmes; (d) applying accountability mechanisms appropriate to different contexts; (e) making up-to-date information on the Cooperation Framework, expected results and progress publicly available; and (f) enabling meaningful participation in development processes, particularly by people and groups in vulnerable situations.<sup>30</sup>

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are among the Cooperation Framework guiding principles, alongside leaving no one behind and the human rights-based approach.

Internal UN guidance calls on UN development entities to put gender equality at the centre of programming, enabling the meaningful participation of all people,

---

<sup>29</sup> General Assembly resolution 72/279

<sup>30</sup> [UN Cooperation Framework Internal Guidance -- 1 June 2022.pdf](#)

including women and men, and advancing the empowerment of women and girls, in line with the minimum requirements agreed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) in the UNCT System-wide Action Plan (SWAP) Gender Equality Scorecard.

UNCT-SWAP reporting is conducted once per Cooperation Framework cycle against all 15 performance indicators, and annually against a minimum of five performance indicators to track progress in implementing the UNCT-SWAP action plan. UN Women serves as the secretariat for UNCT-SWAP, and an online reporting platform supports UNCT-SWAP reporting.

#### **BOX 4**

### **The six transitions:<sup>31</sup> A new opportunity for gender mainstreaming?**

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by world leaders as an integrated agenda for a sustainable future that benefits all people. The SDGs are interconnected: progress on one goal can accelerate progress on others. This interdependence requires integrated policy approaches that manage synergies and trade-offs.

In September 2023, SDG-related scholarship converged around a set of transformative entry points - often referred to as key transitions - that can have catalytic and multiplier effects across the SDGs and a disproportionate impact on accelerating progress. These transitions include: (1) food systems; (2) energy access and affordability; (3) digital connectivity; (4) education; (5) jobs and social protection; and (6) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

This framing can support stronger convergence around high-impact entry points for SDG acceleration, increase donor engagement, and improve alignment across investments and actions undertaken by countries, companies, civil society, cities and local actors, with support from development finance.

Critically, success for these transitions should be measured by how they deliver for all people. These must be just and equitable transitions, with human rights, gender equality and the commitment to leave no one behind as core design principles. For example, food systems transitions must measurably reduce food insecurity that disproportionately affects women and people living in rural areas. Universal health coverage should be a hallmark of the jobs and social protection transition. Energy can only be considered accessible and affordable when it is reliably available to groups facing the greatest disadvantage.

---

<sup>31</sup> [UNSDG | Six Transitions: Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs](#)

## BOX 5

### What makes an UNSDCF gender-responsive?<sup>32</sup>

- ◆ Gender analysis is the foundation of gender mainstreaming, as recognized in the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the agreed conclusions of the UN Economic and Social Council (1997). Accordingly, gender analysis in the CCA is a foundational requirement for integrating gender equality perspectives into the UNSDCF.
- ◆ Meaningful consultation with women's rights organizations and other CSOs with GEWE expertise is essential to ensure the UNSDCF reflects lived realities and adopts effective approaches. Such stakeholders should be engaged not only in general consultations, but also in shaping outcomes, outputs and implementation modalities.
- ◆ A stand-alone outcome or output on gender equality can be valuable. However, the systematic integration of gender perspectives across the entire framework is essential for a gender-responsive UNSDCF.
- ◆ Move beyond isolated "women's activities" to strategic, gender-transformative and interconnected interventions that demonstrate measurable change in the lives of women and girls. The shift from practical to strategic interventions depends on the extent to which an intervention addresses structural barriers and strengthens women's agency and decision-making power.
- ◆ Use sex-disaggregated data systematically in baselines, indicators and results monitoring, and disaggregate further where relevant (for example, by age, disability, location and other characteristics) to reflect intersecting inequalities.
- ◆ Ensure access to gender expertise, including through dedicated gender adviser posts where feasible, and through regular engagement with UN Women regional and country offices and other sources of technical support.
- ◆ Ensure Gender Theme Groups (GTGs) are functional and adequately resourced, in line with UNSDG guidance.
- ◆ Strengthen understanding of the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard requirements relevant to the CCA and the UNSDCF.

---

<sup>32</sup> Based on the questionnaire results and the focus group conducted in the context of this review

# 6

## THE UNSDCF PROCESS

# THE UNSDCF PROCESS

The timeline for preparing the UNSDCF has decreased from a global average of 14.5 months to approximately six to nine months. The Resident Coordinator plays an enhanced leadership role throughout the Cooperation Framework process, in line with General Assembly resolution 72/279 and the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF).

The Cooperation Framework is finalized through open and inclusive dialogue between the host Government and the UN development system, facilitated by the Resident Coordinator. This process aims to ensure an appropriate configuration of UN support in-country, strengthen coordination, transparency, efficiency and impact, and align UN development activities with national policies, plans, priorities and needs.<sup>33</sup>

There are 53 UNCTs in Africa working on sustainable development and coordinating UN support on challenges that transcend national borders. Of these, 52 UNCTs have signed UNSDCFs with governments and are implementing a new generation of Cooperation Frameworks, typically for a four-year period, as recommended. Shorter-term Cooperation Frameworks may be used in exceptional circumstances, including contexts affected by armed conflict.

According to the survey conducted for this review, most teams (75 per cent) responsible for UNSDCF preparation and development were gender-balanced. The UNSDCF is developed in close collaboration with governments, which in most cases (96 per cent) nominate a focal point, with exceptions in a small number of countries affected by conflict (for example, Sudan). However, government focal points were most often men: during the review period (2019-2023), only 32 per cent of government focal points were women.

General Assembly resolution 72/279 and relevant UN guidance emphasize the consultative nature of the UNSDCF process. They underscore the importance of engagement with Member States to identify country development priorities and long-term needs, and to shape the Cooperation Framework (formerly the United Nations Development Assistance Framework) in line with the principles of the UN Charter and UN norms and standards.

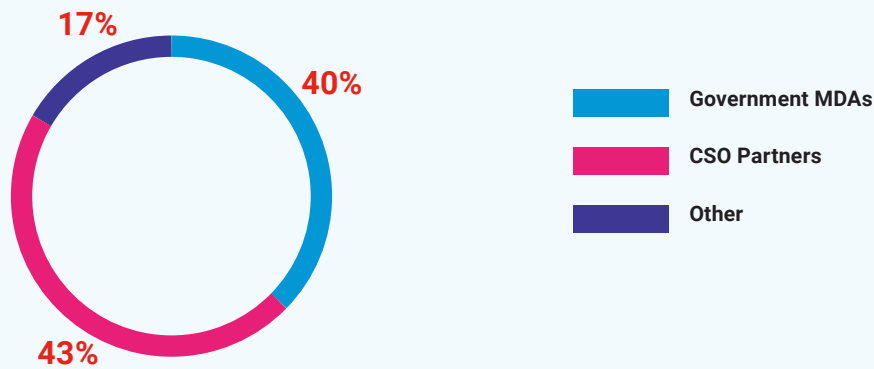
Consultations are therefore central to the UNSDCF process. According to the survey conducted<sup>34</sup> for this review, the groups most frequently consulted on gender-related issues in Africa were civil society organizations (CSOs) (43 per cent) and government institutions (40 per cent) (Figure 9).

---

<sup>33</sup> General Assembly Resolution 72/279

<sup>34</sup> 26 UN teams in Africa responded to the online questionnaire (survey) available at: [https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?origin=NeoPortalPage&subpage=design&id=RAfNKxiefUiFw8mjJSIL6KZCsGP\\_3glMtxmvdXVehNFUQIM5UThSWENXQ0pNukJPSE-FUVU0yUVNDTi4u&analysis=true](https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?origin=NeoPortalPage&subpage=design&id=RAfNKxiefUiFw8mjJSIL6KZCsGP_3glMtxmvdXVehNFUQIM5UThSWENXQ0pNukJPSE-FUVU0yUVNDTi4u&analysis=true)

**Figure 9: UNSCF Consultations (Survey Results)**



Best practices identified through the survey suggest that early and meaningful engagement of women’s rights and gender equality organizations strengthens the quality and continuity of participation across the Cooperation Framework cycle. For example, one respondent noted that “the involvement of gender specific organisations at the design phase allowed their participation in the planning, the implementation

and the reporting” (Comoros). Another respondent emphasized that consultations are more effective when they include diverse groups and reflect the perspectives of different population groups, noting that engagement was strengthened when consultations involved “various groups representing both women and men” (Zimbabwe).

**BOX 6**

**Consultations with government are central but challenging: Libya case**

In 2023, Libya’s House of Representatives approved two fatwa decisions reportedly banning the use of the terms “gender” and “gender equality” in official documents, with penalties for non-compliance. Prior to the adoption of these decisions, and during negotiations for the most recent Cooperation Framework, the Ministry of Planning had already requested the removal of references to gender equality, as well as refugees, from the Cooperation Framework.

In response, UN Women developed a lexicon of alternative terms to support continued engagement on gender equality in this restrictive context. UN Women also provided guidance to other UN entities and partners on the use of context-appropriate terminology.

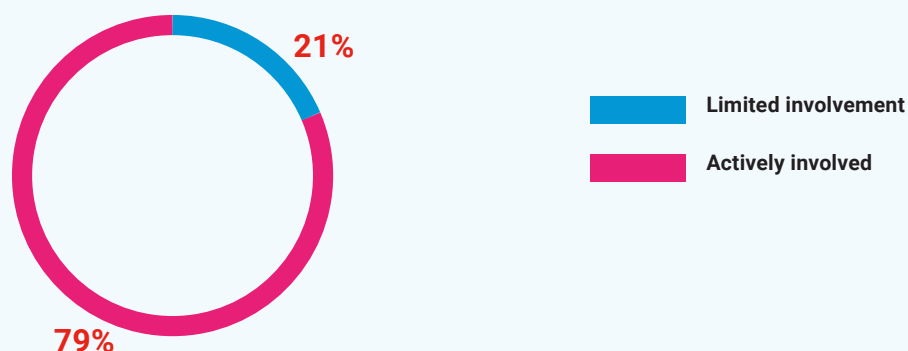
As noted by Jesse Forsythe, UN PMO Libya: “UN compromised on terminology, and dealt with obstinance and, sometimes literal, roadblocks when working on gender issues. However, through focus on quality interventions, identifying champions, and persistence of efforts, our gender-related activities continue in Libya.”



In relation to Gender Theme Group (GTG) engagement, and in contrast to the CCA process, survey findings suggest that GTGs play a more significant role in the

UNSDCF process. Overall, 79 per cent of respondents reported that the GTG was actively involved during UNSDCF preparation.

**Figure 10: GTG Involvement (Survey Results)**



In Algeria, early engagement of the Gender Theme Group (GTG) supported the integration of gender perspectives in the Cooperation Framework process. Nigeria similarly reported that “the GTG was central in the cooperation framework formulation. The GTG ensured that gender was mainstreamed and integrated into all stages during the development process of the CF, from consultations to finalization and approval towards more equitable and inclusive sustainable development outcomes”.

However, survey findings also indicate that GTG effectiveness varies across contexts. In Eritrea, for example, a respondent noted that the GTG’s impact and involvement were limited because it was integrated within the leave no one behind (LNOB) initiative and multiple thematic areas. In Burundi, respondents reported that the GTG was not properly established, which constrained its ability to play an effective role.

# 7

## THE UNSDCF DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

# THE UNSDCF DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

As with the CCA process, a majority of respondents<sup>35</sup> (60 per cent) reported difficulties in incorporating gender perspectives into the UNSDCF during the design and development phase. Challenges ranged from formulating gender-responsive outcomes and outputs to developing meaningful gender indicators.

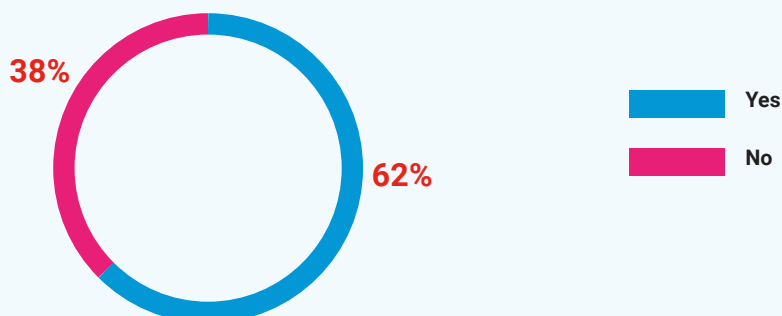
Respondents highlighted several constraints, including:

- ▶ “Inadequate capacities in gender mainstreaming across UN agencies as some agencies do not have gender focal points and utilization of the

gender marker is also limited due to inadequate capacities and possibly different approaches by UN agencies.” (Zimbabwe)

- ▶ Eswatini cited “lack of capacity, limited involvement and leadership from UN Women and lack of funding”.
- ▶ Uganda highlighted insufficient “capacity in gender analysis and gender transformative programming in non-traditional sectors and to accurately apply the UNCT-GEM to the CF JWPs.”

**Figure 11: Difficulties in mainstreaming gender in CF (Survey Results)**



In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a respondent noted that “no outcome focusing on gender equality and women’s empowerment has been formulated and indicators in the UNSDCF do not adequately

measure changes in gender equality. Furthermore, our joint programs lack a mechanism to ensure gender mainstreaming, which should have been formally integrated into the validation process.”<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup>26 UN teams in Africa responded to the online questionnaire (survey) available at: [https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?origin=NeoPortalPage&subpage=design&id=RAfNKxiefUiFw8mjJSIL6KZCsGP\\_3glMtxmvdxVehNFUQIM5UThSWENXQ0pNUkJPSE-FUVU0yUVNDTt4u&analysis=true](https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?origin=NeoPortalPage&subpage=design&id=RAfNKxiefUiFw8mjJSIL6KZCsGP_3glMtxmvdxVehNFUQIM5UThSWENXQ0pNUkJPSE-FUVU0yUVNDTt4u&analysis=true)

<sup>36</sup> DRC response to the survey questionnaire

Uganda reported pushback on the need to explicitly reference women and girls in outcomes, with a preference in some discussions to subsume them under broader categories such as “vulnerable and marginalized groups”. Respondents also highlighted limited capacity for gender analysis and gender-transformative programming in non-traditional sectors. They noted challenges in articulating the value of a stand-alone gender equality outcome while also ensuring that gender is mainstreamed across other outcomes without duplication. Uganda further cited limited availability of gender statistics for inclusion in the results framework, and limited capacity to apply the UN country team gender equality marker (UNCT-GEM) accurately within Cooperation Framework joint work plans (JWPs).

In Libya, respondents reported that government counterparts opposed integrating gender into the UNSDCF, citing cultural norms. As a result, the term “gender” was reportedly rejected and a compromise was reached by referring instead to “women and girls”. Respondents also noted that few women participated in consultations with government counterparts, limiting the extent to which women’s perspectives were reflected in the results framework.

In Nigeria, respondents cited challenges related to the availability of reliable sex-disaggregated and sector-specific gender data, as well as limited technical capacity within sector ministries to integrate gender considerations into planning documents.

In Algeria, respondents reported that initial results formulation did not adequately reflect gender perspectives, citing limited understanding of gender equality issues among programme managers. Integrating gender perspectives in areas such as environmental sustainability was reported as particularly challenging.

Somalia reported difficulties in clearly identifying resources allocated to gender equality and in integrating gender-sensitive indicators throughout the UNSDCF results chain.

In Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Gabon, Senegal, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti and Seychelles, respondents highlighted similar challenges, including limited availability of qualitative and quantitative data; uneven understanding of gender equality among UN staff and stakeholders; and, in some contexts, the absence of a gender focal point within the Resident Coordinator Office (RCO).

Cote d’Ivoire reported difficulty integrating gender perspectives across all results, noting that a dedicated gender result had been included, alongside challenges in allocating resources to gender equality.

Burundi highlighted that gender outcomes and outputs were constrained by the need to align closely with national priorities - a point that was also echoed during the focus group discussion held on 15 January 2025 as part of this review.

## Good practices in UNSDCF development

- ▲ **Burundi:** A one-day training on the application of gender and human rights markers was organized for focal points.
- ▲ **Cabo Verde:** Strategic dialogue on gender equality was convened with key national stakeholders.
- ▲ **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Establishment of an active, engaged UN gender team within the UNCT.
- ▲ **Zimbabwe:** Consultations engaged diverse groups, including women and men.
- ▲ **Cameroon:** The UNCT committed to mainstream gender perspectives and LNOB throughout the UNSDCF. As a result, most outcomes explicitly reflect gender perspectives, and one outcome is dedicated to gender equality.
- ▲ **Algeria:** Early engagement of the GTG, including through gender analysis within the CCA, supported integration of gender perspectives in the UNSDCF process.

### INDICATOR 1.2 | GENDER EQUALITY MAINSTREAMED IN UNSDCF OUTCOMES

Approaches Minimum Requirements	Meets Minimum Requirements	Exceeds Minimum Requirements
<p><b>a.</b> Gender equality and the empowerment of women is mainstreamed across the majority of UNSDCF outcomes in line with SDG priorities including SDG 5.</p>	<p><b>a.</b> Gender equality and the empowerment of women is mainstreamed across all UNSDCF outcomes in line with SDG priorities including SDG 5 or</p> <p><b>b.</b> One UNSDCF outcome specifically targets gender equality in line with UNSDCF Theory of Change and SDG priorities including SDG 5</p>	<p><b>a.</b> Gender equality and the empowerment of women is mainstreamed across all UNSDCF outcomes in line with SDG priorities including SDG 5 and</p> <p><b>a.</b> One UNSDCF outcome specifically targets gender equality in line with UNSDCF Theory of Change and SDG priorities including SDG 5</p>

### INDICATOR 1.3 | UNSDCF INDICATORS MEASURE CHANGES ON GENDER EQUALITY

Approaches Minimum Requirements	Meets Minimum Requirements	Exceeds Minimum Requirements
<p>Between one-fifth and one-third (20 - 33 per cent) of UNSDCF outcome (and output) indicators measure changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women in line with SDG targets including SDG 5.</p>	<p>Between one-third and one-half (33 - 50 per cent) of UNSDCF outcome (and output) indicators measure changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women in line with SDG targets including SDG 5.</p>	<p>More than one-half of UNSDCF outcome (and output) indicators measure changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women in line with SDG targets including SDG 5.</p>

**Figure 12: Indicator 1.2 and 1.3**

It was noted that UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard performance indicator 1.3 (Figure 12) enables UN country teams (UNCTs) to self-assess at either outcome level or output-indicator level. Tracking both levels is important: outcome-level indicators capture longer-term changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (GEWE), while output-level indicators track shorter-term deliverables and implementation progress. Defining output-level indicators and baselines can also help drive the allocation of appropriate resources and enable more consistent measurement of progress towards GEWE. Some UNCTs demonstrate this understanding, and their UNSDCF results frameworks include both outcome- and output-level indicators, as reflected in the findings.

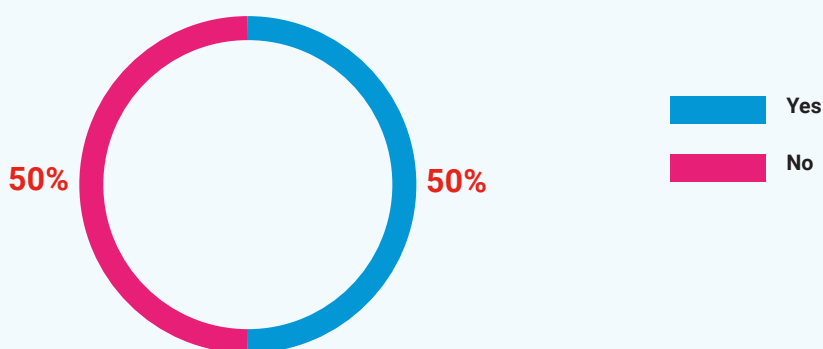
A desk review of 23 anglophone<sup>37</sup> countries found that only 22 per cent of the reviewed UNSDCFs met

the minimum requirements by either mainstreaming gender across 100 per cent of UNSDCF outcomes or including a stand-alone GEWE outcome. Only 4 per cent of UNSDCFs both mainstreamed gender across all outcomes and included a dedicated outcome on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.<sup>38</sup>

A desk review of 29 lusophone and francophone countries,<sup>39</sup> including North African countries (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia), found that 11 UNSDCFs developed between 2019 and 2023 mainstreamed gender across all outcomes (39.9 per cent), while 17 UNSDCFs included a dedicated outcome on gender equality (58 per cent).

In relation to UNSDCF implementation, 50 per cent of respondents also reported difficulties in operationalizing gender-related initiatives.

**Figure 12: Challenges in terms of gender during UNSDCF implementation (Survey Results)**



<sup>37</sup> Angola, Botswana, Djibouti, Eswatini, Ethiopi, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, The Gambia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

<sup>38</sup> IBID

<sup>39</sup> Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Capo Verde, Cameroun, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, RDC, Djibouti, Egypt, Guinee Equatorial, Eritrea, Gabon, Guinea, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Tunisia, Togo

Challenges in UNSDCF implementation are closely linked to issues identified during design and development, and are further compounded by limited financial resources and insufficient access to qualified human resources - concerns raised by a majority of respondents in the survey conducted for this review.

Cote d'Ivoire specifically highlighted challenges in tracking resources allocated to gender equality. Respondents from Eswatini, Djibouti, Madagascar and Uganda identified limited funding as a major constraint. Uganda reported that "funding for advancing GEWE was not commensurate with the commitments made in the UNSDCF, with the gender outcome the least funded of the five Outcome areas." Uganda further noted that monitoring and evaluation posed a significant challenge due to limited collection of data for gender-sensitive indicators. Respondents also highlighted limited capacity to mainstream gender across UN programming, particularly in non-traditional areas such as climate change, macroeconomic policy and governance.

Similar constraints were raised by Zimbabwe: "Inadequate capacities on gender mainstreaming across UN agencies as some agencies do not have focal persons for Gender. And utilisation of the Gender Marker is limited due to inadequate capacities and possibly different approaches by the UN agencies".

Gabon emphasized that "a proactive, systematic and structured approach to gender is needed", alongside stronger coordination mechanisms. The Democratic Republic of the Congo similarly highlighted the need to revitalize the Gender Theme Group (GTG).

In conflict-affected contexts such as Libya and Sudan, respondents also cited restricted access to geographic areas and communities, as well as government-imposed constraints, as factors limiting effective implementation and engagement.

### Good practices in UNSDCF implementation

- ▲ **Libya:** Maintaining a focus on quality interventions, identifying champions and sustaining engagement over time.
- ▲ **Seychelles:** Applying a gender equality marker in the joint work plan to support monitoring and documentation of gender-related results.
- ▲ **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Providing capacity development for programme management teams (PMTs) and monitoring and evaluation staff; promoting knowledge sharing through the UN gender team; and recognizing progress by UN entities through awards.

## BOX 7

### Best practice: Gender-responsive outcomes in the UNSDCF for Cameroon (2022-2026) and Liberia (2022-2024)

Best practice: Gender-responsive outcomes in the UNSDCF for Cameroon (2022-2026) and Liberia (2022-2024)

#### Cameroon<sup>40</sup>

**Outcome 1:** By 2026, more people - especially youth, women and groups in vulnerable situations - including refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), benefit equitably from increased opportunities in a green, diversified, transformative, resilient and inclusive economy that creates decent work in productive sectors (SDGs 1, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 17).

**Outcome 2.1:** By 2026, more people - including the most vulnerable, disaggregated by age - including refugees and IDPs, access and use quality basic social services equitably and sustainably to realize their full potential and enhance their social and economic well-being (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17).

**Outcome 2.2:** By 2026, gaps in critical socio-economic indicators are reduced, reflecting increased gender equality and progress in the empowerment of youth, women and girls, and other groups in vulnerable situations, including those affected by humanitarian settings (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17).

**Outcome 3:** By 2026, youth, women, groups in vulnerable situations and persons with disabilities - including refugees and IDPs - actively contribute to the effectiveness of policies and the performance of public institutions at national, regional and local levels, and enjoy their rights fully (SDGs 5, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17).

**Outcome 4:** By 2026, people living in different agro-ecological zones - including youth, women and groups in vulnerable situations - live in a healthier environment, sustainably manage natural resources, including biodiversity, and are more resilient to climate- and disaster-related shocks (SDGs 5, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17).

#### Liberia<sup>41</sup>

**Outcome 1:** By 2024, groups that are most vulnerable and excluded have improved quality of life, with rights-based, gender-responsive, inclusive and equitable access to and use of essential social services, in an environment free from discrimination and violence, including in humanitarian settings.

<sup>40</sup> From page 25 available at: <https://uninfo.org/documents>

<sup>41</sup> From page 22 available at: <https://uninfo.org/documents>

**Outcome 2:** By 2024, Liberia sustains diversified and inclusive economic growth driven by investments in agriculture, food security and job creation, and strengthens resilience to climate change and natural disasters.

**Outcome 3:** By 2024, Liberia consolidates and sustains peace and enhances social cohesion, with strengthened formal and informal institutions that provide inclusive, effective and equitable justice and security services, and that promote and protect the human rights of all people.

**Outcome 4:** By 2024, people in Liberia - especially those in vulnerable and disadvantaged situations - benefit from strengthened institutions that are more effective, accountable, transparent, inclusive and gender-responsive in delivering essential services at national and subnational levels.



# Joint Statement and Signature Page

The Government of Liberia and the United Nations in Liberia commit to engage in a strategic partnership to improve the lives of people in Liberia, especially those most marginalized. We shall work closely with all stakeholders for the achievement of the Medium-Term Development Plan- the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development, the Sustainable Development Goals and the progressive realization of internationally agreed development frameworks and treaty obligations. In pursuing these goals, we will ensure the transparent and accountable use of the resources made available to us for this purpose.

The **United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework** ("Cooperation Framework") will guide the work and collaboration of the Government of Liberia and the United Nations as envisaged in the UN vision 2030- "To support Liberia become a reconciled, transformed and prosperous nation anchored on accountable institutions and equitable, inclusive and sustainable development."

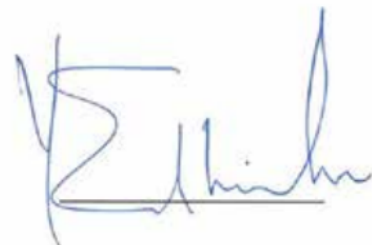

In this spirit, the **United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework** for Liberia, for the period 2020-2024, is hereby jointly signed:



**On behalf of Government of Liberia**  
Hon. Samuel D. Tweah, Jr  
**Minister of Finance and Development Planning**  
Government of Liberia



**On behalf of the UN System in Liberia**  
Mr. Yacoub El Hillo  
**Assistant Secretary-General/UN Resident Coordinator**



## BOX 8

### Spotlight Initiative:<sup>42</sup> A successful programme integrated within the UNSDCF

The Spotlight Initiative is a high-impact global programme to end violence against women and girls in 26 countries. As a model aligned with United Nations development system reform, the Spotlight Initiative sought to leverage the comparative advantages of multiple UN entities to address a complex development challenge. It was implemented through partnerships among UN entities, governments, regional bodies, civil society and other stakeholders, including academia, the media, the private sector and faith-based institutions, to advance a whole-of-society approach to ending violence against women and girls.

Spotlight Initiative 1.0 (2017-2023) was implemented through country programmes, five regional programmes, one thematic regional programme and two civil society grant-making programmes, in partnership with the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund.

The initiative provided an innovative model for delivering large-scale programming that reached and supported an estimated 21 million women.<sup>43</sup> In Africa, Spotlight Initiative 1.0 was implemented in Liberia, Mali, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Mozambique, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

In Uganda, respondents attributed success to "the strategic advisory role played by CSOs in supporting the UNCT and the government throughout the different phases of the UNSDCF, including planning and formulation, and resource allocation."<sup>44</sup>

In Malawi, respondents noted that "the ministry responsible for gender was able to work closely with the UNCT and the different sector ministries to strengthen government ownership and leadership of the programme and ensure broader stakeholder engagements, including with donors and CSOs."<sup>45</sup>

In Liberia, respondents reported that "Spotlight 2 is now integrated into the new UNSDCF. UN Women is actively contributing to ensure the government fully owns and integrates gender-responsive budgets for preventing and responding to violence against women and girls from the framework's inception."<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> More information is available at: [www.spotlightinitiative.org](http://www.spotlightinitiative.org)

<sup>43</sup> More information is available at <https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/impact>

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Kemi Ndieli, Deputy Representative, UN Women Uganda and Angela Nakafeero, Commissioner for Gender, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development

<sup>45</sup> Interview Letty Chiwara, Country Representative, UN Women

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Comfort Lamptey, Country Representative, UN Women

# 8

## KEY UNSDCF CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

# KEY UNSDCF CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

The 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) resolution (A/RES/79/226), Beijing+30 and the UN System-wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan (GEAP), launched by the Secretary-General on 8 March 2024, are key frameworks for accelerating progress on gender equality across the UN system and placing women and girls at the centre of inclusive development. The UNSDCF should harness these interlinkages and demonstrate how implementation across outcomes and targets contributes to gender equality results.

## RESISTANCE TO GENDER-RELATED TERMINOLOGY

Over recent years, campaigns opposing feminist movements, gender studies, and sexual and reproductive health and rights - as well as the rights of sexual and gender minorities - have increased in parts of Africa. These campaigns seek to undermine gender mainstreaming efforts and stall gender equality and LGBTQI+ rights policies and frameworks.

Several countries, including Nigeria and Senegal, have stated - including in UN forums - that they object to certain gender-related terminology. The Libya case study presented in this review illustrates the extent of resistance that can emerge in some contexts.

**Solution:** UNCTs should analyse the drivers and narratives underpinning anti-gender arguments, assess the level of understanding and acceptance of gender equality concepts within national contexts,

and develop context-specific strategies to guide UN interventions and implementation of gender equality commitments. These strategies should be grounded in robust analysis in the CCA, as a foundation for UNSDCF development.

## INTEGRATING GENDER IN NON-TRADITIONAL SECTORS

Survey respondents reported significant capacity gaps in integrating gender perspectives in emerging and less traditional thematic areas, including climate change, climate-smart agriculture, new technologies, disaster risk reduction and insurance.

The 2019 Secretary-General's report, drawing on reporting under the UN-SWAP accountability framework, also noted persistent gaps in sectors such as infrastructure, energy and new technologies - areas where gender equality may not be systematically considered, despite their potential to reduce gender inequalities.

**Solution:** Effective gender mainstreaming requires robust evidence and data, including through gender analysis. UN Women has produced practical guidance on Gender Analysis in Non-Traditional Sectors to support development interventions and engagement with partner governments, including in UNSDCF processes. The guidance includes practical steps, checklists and examples of good practice, and should be more widely disseminated and applied<sup>47</sup> by UN staff in Africa.

<sup>47</sup> [Gender-analysis-in-non-traditional-sectors-en.pdf](#)

## STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES, INDICATORS AND ACCESS TO EXPERTISE

Many respondents cited limited gender expertise, weak or insufficient gender-sensitive indicators, and challenges in reporting on results due to limited sex-disaggregated data and capacity constraints.

In 2019, UNSDG identified key imperatives for effective gender mainstreaming, including the availability and use of sex-disaggregated data; gender analysis to inform programming; an adequate understanding of country context; meaningful participation; and clear gender equality outcomes, targets and indicators. These remain essential requirements.<sup>48</sup>

**Solution:** RCO staffing structures should include dedicated gender professional posts to address capacity and expertise gaps. This need is also reflected in the 2024 report of the Secretary-General on implementation of General Assembly resolution 75/233 on the QCPR, which notes that country teams require capacities to advance gender equality, including Gender Theme Groups, gender advisers and/or focal points.

Capacity development for specialists and gender focal points to strengthen gender analysis and the use of gender indicators should be prioritized. The focus

group discussion convened for this review highlighted the need for training not only for staff, but also for GTG members. GTGs - which tend to be more active in UNSDCF development - can provide an effective platform for capacity development within annual joint planning processes.<sup>49</sup>

In addition, a 2024 synthesis of 298 UN evaluations emphasized that gender mainstreaming is the responsibility of all personnel, not only gender officers or advisers.<sup>50</sup> However, in many contexts, participation in GTGs is delegated to more junior staff who may lack the influence or technical expertise required to shape decisions across the Cooperation Framework cycle.<sup>51</sup>

## MOBILIZING AND ALLOCATING ADEQUATE FINANCIAL RESOURCES

According to the 2024 report of the Secretary-General,<sup>52</sup> 28 UN entities met at least 75 per cent of all indicators under the UN-SWAP in 2023. However, financing for gender equality remains insufficient and must increase, in line with the commitments of the UN System-wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan (GEAP).

**Solution:** Transforming gender relations and shifting power requires adequate and predictable financing, aligned with evidence-based priorities and results.

---

<sup>48</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/gender-mainstreaming>

<sup>49</sup> 2024 Report of the Secretary-General summary available here <https://ecosoc.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/2024-QCPR-SG-report-summary.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> Ibid at pages 74-75

<sup>51</sup> UNSDG (2021), Gender Theme Groups: Standards and Procedures at page 6, [https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/GTG\\_Standards%20and%20Procedures-%202023.pdf](https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/GTG_Standards%20and%20Procedures-%202023.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

**BOX 9****UN evaluation findings on SDG 5 and gender mainstreaming**

A 2024 synthesis of 298 UN evaluations provides a snapshot of progress on SDG 5 and its targets, and identifies factors that enable progress or act as obstacles.

The synthesis indicates that, while efforts to mainstream gender are widespread, effectiveness and impact vary. Almost all UNCTs include at least one outcome related to gender equality. Progress has been reported in gender awareness, access to and analysis of sex-disaggregated data, and strengthened internal guidance. While Gender Theme Groups and gender focal points exist in many contexts, they are often under-resourced and “not well understood”. However, where GTGs are led by senior staff, they can influence UNCT policy, programming and reporting.<sup>53</sup>

From the evaluations reviewed, key enablers for gender mainstreaming include:

**Table 1 Enablers and obstacles to progress on SDG 5 targets<sup>54</sup>**

Enabling factors	Obstacles
Political will, together with technical and institutional capacity, supports the adoption, implementation and enforcement of laws, policies and programmes that advance gender equality.	Harmful social norms that legitimize and perpetuate discrimination and violence against women and girls.
Adequate investment of financial and human resources to achieve SDG 5 targets.	Crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, undermined efforts to eliminate violence against women, increased poverty, and intensified women’s unpaid care and domestic work.
Strong managerial commitment and accountability. UN personnel have a sound understanding of gender equality and gender mainstreaming. Adequate technical capacity and resources to address gender equality issues within technical areas and sectors. Integration of gender analysis within theories of change, including at outcome and impact levels. Gender needs assessments to inform programme design and targeting.	

<sup>53</sup> Ibid at page 74

<sup>54</sup> Adapted from Are we Getting there? A synthesis of UN system evaluations of SDG 5, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/are-we-getting-there-a-synthesis-of-un-system-evaluations-of-sdg-5-en.pdf>

**BOX 10**

**UNCT-SWAP reporting is increasing in Africa and where UN Women has a presence**

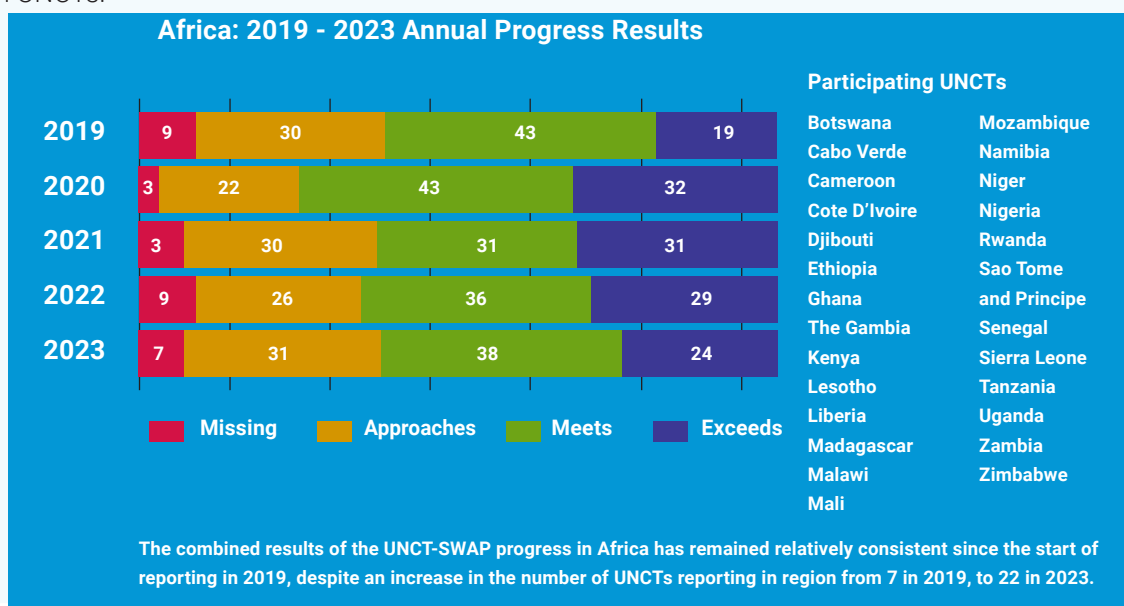
Although some stakeholders consider UNCT-SWAP reporting complex, time-consuming and lengthy, most UN country teams (UNCTs) globally have undertaken the exercise. In 2023, 97 UNCTs submitted a UNCT-SWAP report, compared to nine in 2018.

UNCT-SWAP reporting has increased year on year, driven in part by the introduction of annual reporting in 2019, which complements comprehensive reporting. Between 2018 and 2023, UNCT-SWAP reporting increased almost tenfold. Overall, 112 of 132 UNCTs completed a comprehensive report, representing 85 per cent of UNCTs. The number of UNCTs submitting an annual report increased from 17 in 2019 to 77 in 2023, with additional UNCTs joining each year and others either continuing with annual reporting or transitioning to prepare their next comprehensive report.

However, Africa has remained among the lowest regions in terms of reporting. As of December 2024, six UNCTs in Africa had not yet undertaken the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard: Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Congo and Eswatini. By March 2025, only four UNCTs had not yet completed the Scorecard, following completion by Burkina Faso and Chad with support from UN Women.

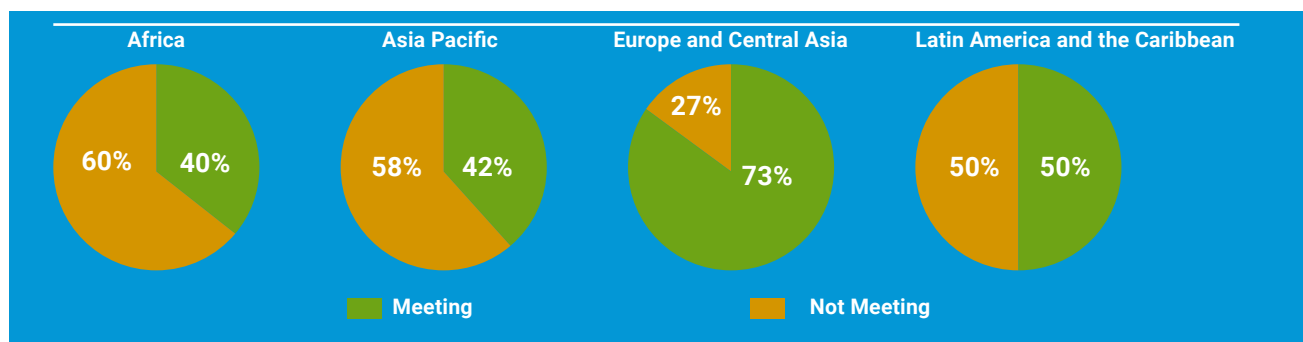
While UN Women regional offices provide support to countries without an in-country UN Women presence, additional efforts are needed to ensure UNCTs are aware of available technical assistance, including through regional coordination specialists and the technical secretariat helpdesk. In addition, Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) should designate a UNCT-SWAP focal point and ensure timely completion of annual and comprehensive reporting.

In terms of performance, in 2023 UNCTs in Africa met minimum requirements for 38 per cent of indicators, compared to 36 per cent in 2022. The proportion of indicators rated as “exceeds” was 24 per cent in 2023, compared to 29 per cent in 2022, which may reflect increased participation in reporting across African UNCTs.



## 2023 UNCTs Comprehensive report: Comparative perspectives

Compared with other regions, Africa has the highest proportion of UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard indicators rated as “does not meet requirements”, at 60 per cent. This compares with 50 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 58 per cent in Asia and the Pacific, and 27 per cent in Europe and Central Asia. These results underscore the slower pace of progress towards SDG 5 in Africa.



# 9

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2030 Agenda takes a holistic approach to sustainable development and recognizes gender equality as both a stand-alone goal and a cross-cutting priority. Progress across the SDG framework contributes to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Accordingly, the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) should consistently integrate gender perspectives and demonstrate how implementation of targets across the framework contributes to gender equality outcomes.

## Adequacy of guidance for gender mainstreaming in the CCA and UNSDCF

The United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) provides UN country teams (UNCTs) with a range of tools to support development and implementation of the Cooperation Framework cycle. These include: the *Internal Guidance*<sup>55</sup> and *Consolidated Annexes for the Cooperation Framework Guidance* (May 2019);<sup>56</sup> the *Resource Book for Mainstreaming Gender in UN Common Programming*; the *Handbook on Gender Mainstreaming for Gender Equality Results* (2018);<sup>57</sup> the *Operationalizing Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) Guide* (2022); *Gender Analysis in Non-Traditional Sectors: Climate and Disaster Risk Finance and Insurance* (2022); and the UNCT System-wide Action Plan (SWAP) Gender Equality Scorecard.

The 2019 Internal Guidance provides limited explicit direction on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (GEWE), although it urges UNCTs to generate evidence and data disaggregated not only by income, gender, geography and age, but also by other grounds of discrimination prohibited under international law, in line with the LNOB commitment.<sup>58</sup> Annex 1, which sets out the Cooperation Framework roadmap, does not clearly specify when GEWE-related data should be gathered, when consultations on GEWE should take place, or how gender perspectives should be mainstreamed across each stage of the roadmap. This is inconsistent with the *Resource Book for Mainstreaming Gender*, which calls for every action in the roadmap to be guided by, and to mainstream, GEWE principles and analysis.<sup>59</sup>

There is a need for UNSDG to provide UNCTs with a consolidated Cooperation Framework guidance package that brings together the tools required to develop CCAs and UNSDCFs to the required standards, including clear and practical guidance on mainstreaming gender equality, human rights and LNOB. Where existing tools are insufficient to support UNCTs to meet their obligations, UNCTs should draw on regional support mechanisms and, where appropriate, engage external gender expertise. This aligns with Part B of the Cooperation Framework roadmap, which prioritizes “capacity development for the UNCT to engage effectively in the new Cooperation Framework process”.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> [UN Cooperation Framework Internal Guidance -- 1 June 2022.pdf](https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/UN%20Cooperation%20Framework%20Internal%20Guidance%20-%201%20June%202022.pdf), <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/UN%20Cooperation%20Framework%20Internal%20Guidance%20-%201%20June%202022.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> [Consolidated Annexes to the Cooperation Framework Guidance.pdf \(un.org\)](https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/UN%20Cooperation%20Framework%20Internal%20Guidance%20-%201%20June%202022.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> [Handbook on gender mainstreaming for gender equality results-en.pdf \(unwomen.org\)](https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/UN%20Cooperation%20Framework%20Internal%20Guidance%20-%201%20June%202022.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> UN Cooperation Framework Internal Guidance -- 1 June 2022.pdf (supra) at p. 35,

<sup>59</sup> Handbook (Supra) at page 12.

<sup>60</sup> Annex 1 of the Internal Guidance Note.

## UN leadership and gender expertise

UN leadership and commitment to gender equality, together with the availability of gender expertise within UNCTs and Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs), significantly influence the quality and consistency of gender mainstreaming in CCAs and UNSDCF. Where leadership prioritizes GEWE and gender expertise is available, gender analysis tends to be more intentional, more robust and more consistently integrated across sectors.

Examples from this review illustrate the importance of these factors. Malawi's CCA benefited from active UN Women engagement in drafting several chapters and leading on selected thematic areas. Botswana's CCA highlights the contribution of the RCO in drafting a "gender issues paper" and supporting quality assurance on gender equality throughout the process. In Tunisia, the RCO recruited a consultant to compile and finalize the CCA, while UN Women recruited a gender consultant to support the UNCT to review thematic papers through a gender lens, participate in the CCA workshop and follow up through finalization.

UNCTs should be recognized for progress made in mainstreaming gender perspectives across the Cooperation Framework cycle, in line with their mandates. Many CCAs and UNSDCFs acknowledge that gender inequality is interconnected with broader development challenges and therefore requires gender

mainstreaming across the SDGs. While the depth of gender mainstreaming varies across sectors, many CCAs include gender perspectives in selected areas, particularly within social sectors. CCAs also demonstrate commitment to LNOB, including by identifying groups at risk of being left behind and analysing factors driving vulnerability. Some reports draw on national vulnerability studies, international human rights treaties ratified by States, and recommendations from human rights mechanisms and processes, including CEDAW and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

However, UNCTs need to further strengthen technical capacities to mainstream gender throughout Cooperation Framework processes - from planning and design to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. As reflected in the 2024 synthesis of UN evaluations on SDG 5, UNCTs must ensure that "gender mainstreaming is the responsibility of all personnel, not just gender officers or advisers."<sup>61</sup> Strengthening the effective participation of gender experts, Gender Theme Groups and civil society organizations with GEWE expertise at all stages of the Cooperation Framework cycle - beginning with the CCA - is essential. This includes the meaningful participation of women's rights organizations and other GEWE CSOs in the design, implementation and monitoring of UNSDCFs.

---

<sup>61</sup> Are we Getting there? A synthesis of UN system evaluations of SDG 5, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/are-we-getting-there-a-synthesis-of-un-system-evaluations-of-sdg-5-en.pdf> at pages 74-75

## Availability and use of sex-disaggregated data

All reviewed CCAs recognize the importance of sex-disaggregated data and strong national statistical systems. UNCTs with access to data disaggregated by sex, age and other characteristics were better positioned to analyse diverse experiences and vulnerabilities of women and girls. Many CCAs call for increased investment in data collection, strengthened capacity of national statistical institutions, enhanced collaboration among governments, UN entities and other stakeholders, and the use of complementary data sources, including citizen-generated data where appropriate.

However, gender mainstreaming requires more than presenting sex-disaggregated statistics. Deeper analysis is needed to identify complex and multidimensional root causes and the factors that perpetuate gender inequality and the marginalization of women and girls. Such analysis enables UNCTs and governments to develop targeted interventions, increasing the likelihood of positive impact and sustained progress in narrowing gender gaps.

In addition, many UNSDCFs include limited gender baselines and targets, even where gender is reflected in outcomes and indicators. This points to persistent constraints related to data availability, technical capacity and, in some cases, insufficient consultation with GEWE stakeholders. Many UNSDCFs emphasize partnerships with government institutions and the private sector, but provide limited reference to women's rights organizations and other GEWE CSOs, including gender experts. This raises concerns regarding accountability for inclusiveness and LNOB across the UNSDCF cycle.

In some cases, the absence of output-level indicators may weaken resource allocation and limit the ability to monitor progress. Conversely, where outcome indicators are missing, UNCTs face constraints in tracking longer-term change. UNCTs should undertake an early capacity assessment to confirm whether they have the required technical expertise - including for effective gender mainstreaming - prior to initiating CCA and UNSDCF processes. Where gaps are identified, UNCTs should adopt clear strategies to address them, including through capacity development and technical support.

UNCTs should also strengthen investment in national data systems to improve the systematic collection, production, analysis and disaggregation of data. Gaps in the availability of high-quality sex-disaggregated data remain evident across many CCAs and UNSDCFs.

## Monitoring Gender Equality Scorecard action plans

Progress has been made in assessing UNCT performance on gender mainstreaming through the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard in Africa. Action plans are routinely developed following completion of the Scorecard to strengthen performance across indicators. However, interviews conducted for this review suggest that implementation and monitoring of action plans require additional effort and resourcing. As one respondent noted, "RCOs and UNCTs are often very interested in completing the Gender Scorecard exercise and complying with reporting requirements. However, more effort and resources are needed to implement and monitor action plans to improve performance."<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Views from RCOs gender advisors in Chad and Burkina Faso, 2025

## Backlash against the use of the term “gender”

Several countries, including Chad, Mauritania and Libya, have reportedly restricted or opposed the use of the term “gender” in official contexts. Other countries, including Nigeria and Senegal, have expressed concerns in UN forums about gender-related terminology. Sexual and reproductive health and rights have also faced increased contestation in some contexts. In some narratives, the concept of “gender” is misrepresented as threatening social structures or as inherently linked to issues beyond agreed mandates.

In this context, it is important to monitor these trends, respond to misinformation, and clarify terminology in line with UN mandates and internationally agreed standards. UN Women defines gender as the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a society considers appropriate for women and men, and as the relationships among women and men, girls and boys, including the distribution of power and resources. These roles and relationships are socially constructed and learned through socialization processes.

# ANNEX 1: TERMINOLOGY<sup>64</sup>

## ◆ Access to and control over resources

This concept comprises three elements: resources, access and control. Resources include economic resources (for example, household income); productive resources (for example, land, equipment, tools, employment and credit); political resources (for example, leadership, information and organization); and time. Access refers to the ability to use and benefit from resources, while control refers to the ability to make decisions about the use of resources and to determine who benefits. For example, women's control over land includes the ability to use land, hold legal title and decide whether to sell or lease it. Access to and control over resources is a key dimension of women's empowerment and, by extension, the achievement of gender equality.<sup>65</sup>

## ◆ Agency

Agency refers to the ability to make decisions about one's own life and to act on those decisions to achieve desired outcomes. Gender-based differences in agency - typically to the disadvantage of women and girls - exist across contexts.<sup>66</sup>

## ◆ Discrimination against women

"Discrimination against women" means any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex that has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the

recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of women and men, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.<sup>67</sup>

## ◆ Diversity

Diversity refers to differences in values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, skills, knowledge and life experiences among individuals and within groups.<sup>68</sup>

## ◆ Equal opportunity

Equal opportunity refers to the absence of discrimination and the right to be treated without discrimination, including on the grounds of sex, race or age.

## ◆ Gender

Gender refers to socially constructed identities, attributes and roles for women and men and the social and cultural meanings attributed to biological differences. These meanings shape power relations and the distribution of rights and resources, often disadvantaging women and girls.<sup>69</sup> Gender does not replace the term "sex", which refers to biological differences.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Annex 1 of the UNDG Resource Book for Mainstreaming Gender in UN Common Programming at the country level (hereinafter called the Resource Book) provides basic concepts relevant to Gender mainstreaming. Additional concepts or explanations from other UN sources are added to enrich the glossary. This approach demonstrates the wealth of gender technical resources within the UN development system.

<sup>65</sup> UN WOMEN, <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=search&hook=control&fullsearch=1>

<sup>66</sup> The World Bank, <https://digitalforwomen.worldbank.org/glossary-terms>

<sup>67</sup> Art. 1 CEDAW; Art. 1(f), Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa,

<sup>68</sup> UNESCWA, Statistical Terms Glossary, <https://www.unescwa.org/sd-glossary/access-and-control-over-resources>

<sup>69</sup> CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 28 (2010), section 5, CEDAW/C/GC/28

<sup>70</sup> UNDP, Gender approaches in conflict and post-conflict situations, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/gendermanualfinalBCPR.pdf>

### ◆ Gender analysis

Gender analysis is a critical examination of how gender roles, activities, needs, opportunities and rights affect women, men, girls and boys in specific contexts. It examines relationships between women and men and their access to and control over resources, as well as constraints relative to one another. Gender analysis should be integrated across sector assessments and situational analyses to avoid exacerbating inequalities and to support more equal and just gender relations.<sup>71</sup>

### ◆ Gender-based violence

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women defines gender-based violence as violence directed against a woman because she is a woman, or that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that cause physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women further specifies that violence against women includes, but is not limited to: (a) violence occurring in the family; (b) violence occurring within the general community; and (c) violence perpetrated or condoned by the State.<sup>72</sup>

### ◆ Gender blindness

Gender blindness refers to failure to recognize that roles and responsibilities of women and men, girls and boys are shaped by social, cultural, economic and political contexts. Gender-blind policies and programmes do not account for these differences, tend to maintain the status quo and do not support transformation of unequal gender relations.<sup>73</sup>

### ◆ Gender equality (equality between women and men)

Gender equality refers to equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men and for girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities do not depend on whether they are born female or male. Gender equality requires that interests, needs and priorities of all genders are considered, recognizing diversity within groups. Gender equality is a human rights issue and a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.<sup>74</sup>

### ◆ Gender equity

The preferred terminology within the United Nations is **gender equality**, rather than **gender equity**. The term *gender equity* is sometimes used to describe interpretations of social justice that may be grounded in tradition, custom, religion or culture, and such interpretations are often applied in ways that disadvantage women. For this reason, the use of equity in relation to advancing women's rights has been considered inappropriate within the UN context. At the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, it was agreed that the term **equality** would be used.

This position was later reaffirmed by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) in General Recommendation No. 28: "States parties are called upon to use exclusively the concepts of equality of women and men or gender equality and not to use the concept of gender equity in implementing their obligations under the Convention.

---

<sup>71</sup> Source: UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women. "[Gender Equality, UN Coherence and You](#)

<sup>72</sup> Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993), General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>73</sup> UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women. "[Gender Equality, UN Coherence and You](#)" <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=G&sortke>

<sup>74</sup> UN Women, [OSAGI Gender Mainstreaming - Concepts and definitions](#)- (same link above)

The latter concept is used in some jurisdictions to refer to fair treatment of women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment, or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.<sup>75</sup>

### ◆ Gender gap

The gender gap refers to differences between women and men in any area, including levels of participation, access to resources, rights, power and influence, and remuneration and benefits.<sup>76</sup>

### ◆ Gender indicators

Gender indicators are used to assess gender-related change in a given condition and to measure progress over time towards gender equality. Indicators may be quantitative (for example, numbers and statistics) or qualitative (for example, perceptions, experiences and reported change).<sup>77</sup>

### ◆ Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming requires that the priorities, needs and contributions of women and men are explicitly considered in all stages of development interventions - including planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation - to advance gender equality, women's rights and the empowerment of women and girls.

Effective gender mainstreaming depends on understanding the underlying power relations and structural drivers of gender inequality, discrimination and exclusion. It also requires identifying the key stakeholders who need to be influenced, engaged and supported to build sustained commitment to change. Gender mainstreaming brings gender perspectives into "mainstream" decision-making and resource allocation through, for example, gender analysis and the use of sex-disaggregated data, with the aim of shifting priorities, resources and attention to achieve measurable gender equality results.

Gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself.<sup>78</sup> It is a strategy for achieving results. Therefore, a clear focus on outcomes and measurable change in the areas where the strategy is applied is essential.<sup>79</sup>

### ◆ Gender norms

Gender norms are the socially constructed standards that define what is considered acceptable and appropriate (and unacceptable and inappropriate) for women and men in a given society. They are embedded in formal and informal institutions and are reproduced through social interaction.<sup>80</sup> Gender norms shape expectations about how women and men should behave and the roles they should perform. Internalized early in life, these norms often reinforce gender socialization and stereotyping across the life course.<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> UN Women, [OSAGI Gender Mainstreaming - Concepts and definitions](#); Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2010), General recommendation No. 28 on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/sd-glossary/gender-gap>

<sup>77</sup> UNICEF Glossary <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/1761/file/Genderglossarytermsandconcepts.pdf>

<sup>78</sup> UN Women, Handbook on Gender Mainstreaming for Gender Equality Results, at p. 12, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Handbook-on-gender-mainstreaming-for-gender-equality-results-en.pdf>

<sup>79</sup> UN Women, *ibid* note 15, p. 13.

<sup>80</sup> The World Bank, <https://digitalforwomen.worldbank.org/glossary-terms>

<sup>81</sup> UNICEF, *supra* note 3, p. 4

## ◆ Gender parity

Gender parity refers to the equal representation of women and men in a given area, for example in organizational leadership or higher education. Advancing gender parity (equal representation) is an important component of achieving gender equality and is one of two complementary strategies, alongside gender mainstreaming. A **gender perspective** is an approach to analysing or examining an issue that considers how women and men may be affected differently, including as a result of gender roles, norms and power relations. This is often described as applying a **gender lens** - a way of viewing an issue that brings into focus real or potential gender differences and how these shape people's opportunities, social roles and interactions. Applying a gender perspective supports gender analysis and, in turn, helps integrate gender considerations into the design of programmes, policies and organizational strategies.<sup>82</sup>

## ◆ Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how multiple and overlapping forms of inequality and discrimination - such as those related to gender, age, disability, race, ethnicity, class, migration status and sexual orientation, among others - shape people's lived experiences and access to rights and opportunities. It recognizes that intersecting identities can create distinct patterns of disadvantage and privilege.<sup>83</sup>

## ◆ Sex

Sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that distinguish females and males.<sup>84</sup>

## ◆ Sex-disaggregated data

Sex-disaggregated data are data that are classified by sex and presented separately for women and men, and where relevant, for girls and boys. Such data help describe the different situations, roles and conditions of women and men in society. Examples include literacy rates, education attainment, employment, wage differences, access to credit, land ownership and time use. Without sex-disaggregated data, it is more difficult to identify inequalities and assess differential impacts. Sex-disaggregated data are essential for effective gender analysis.<sup>85</sup>

## ◆ Gender stereotyping

Gender stereotyping involves attributing certain characteristics, roles or behaviours to people based on gender. Stereotypes may be negative (for example, "women are poor drivers") or seemingly positive (for example, "women are naturally better caregivers"), but both can be harmful when they limit choices and opportunities, including education, employment and leadership pathways. Stereotyping can also be compounded when combined with bias related to other characteristics, such as disability, ethnicity or socioeconomic status.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> UNODC (2013), Gender mainstreaming in the work of UNODC, <http://www.unodc.org/documents/Gender/UNODC-GuidanceNote-GenderMainstreaming.pdf>

<sup>83</sup> Multiple source including UN WOMEN tool: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Intersectionality-resource-guide-and-toolkit-en.pdf>

<sup>84</sup> Un women: <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=S&sortkey=&sortorder=asc>

<sup>85</sup> Ibid and UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women. "Gender Equality, UN Coherence and You"; UNESCO (2003) Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Framework

<sup>86</sup> UNICEF supra note 3, p. 5.

# ANNEX 2: ONLINE SURVEY ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE CCA

This questionnaire is designed to determine to what extent CCA was gender responsive. The consulting team will review the CCA of every country and might come back to you for clarifications. The person in charge of completing/finalizing this questionnaire is the head of the RC office in consultation with the RC, the Gender Thematic Group focal point, M&E team and the Inter-Agency Team Assessment of Indicators (IAT).

She/He is kindly requested to rigorously review the CCA and UNCT SWAP indicators before and during completion of the survey.

1. What is the situation of your country?

Non-Conflict  Conflict  Post Conflict  Other .....

2. Is UN WOMEN represented in the country?

Yes  No  Other .....

3. If Yes, please indicate the nature of UN Women presence in the country:

Country office headed by a Representative  International Gender advisor in RCO   
National Gender advisor in RCO  Other (Explain) .....

4. Please indicate No. of staff with gender expertise in:

- a. RCO ..... staff
- b. UN Agencies (other than UN Women) with a physical presence in the country .....

5. UN Agencies (other than UN Women) without a physical presence in the country

.....

6. Please indicate the year of your recent CCA

19 ..... 20 .....

7. Please indicate the last update of the CCA

20 .....

8. Is your last CCA available on UNSDG platform?

Yes  No  Other .....

If yes, please share a link or a copy with us: [soulef.guessoum@unwomen.org](mailto:soulef.guessoum@unwomen.org) and [Florence.butegwa@unwomen.org](mailto:Florence.butegwa@unwomen.org)

9. Who developed your last CCA?

Consultant  Team of consultants  UN Country staff-technical team

If Consultant, please specify the consultant's gender

Male  Female  Other .....

If Team of consultants specify the gender of the team leader (and/or percentage of female, male, other)

If UN Country staff-technical team, please specify if team was gender-balanced?

Yes  No  .....% Women

10. Was the CCA development process consultative in relation to gender?

Yes  No

11. If yes, please specify the different groups consulted in relation to gender

UNCT  UN Theme Group  PMT  UNEG  Associations  Gender ministries

12. Is there a Gender Thematic Group?

Yes  No

13. If yes, to what extent was the Gender Thematic Group involved during the CCA preparation and development?

Limited involvement (unregular meetings-very few contributions)

Actively involved (regular meetings and various contributions)

14. If limited involvement, please explain why:

.....

15. Did you face any challenges in terms of incorporating gender during the CCA preparation and development?

Yes  No

16. Please list up to three main challenges in incorporating gender

.....  
.....  
.....

17. Does the CCA include an analysis on gender inequalities?

.....

18. Is there a specific section in the CCA on gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE)?

.....

19. Does the CCA refer to any of key normative standards for gender equality including CEDAW, Maputo Protocol, Regional Conventions, relevant CSW Agreed Conclusions, latest national/regional review of SDG5...?

Yes  No  Other .....

20. Does the CCA refer to key national policy/strategic and national legal frameworks for gender equality?

Yes  No

21. Does the CCA include gender statistics and/or sex-disaggregated data as part of the analysis in all sections?

In one or two sections  In more than three sections  In all sections

22. Is the lack of sex disaggregated data an issue in the country?

Yes  No

23. How did you overcome the lack of sex disaggregated data?

.....

24. Was the lack of sex disaggregated data highlighted in the CCA?

.....

25. Were the implications of lack of sex disaggregated data discussed?

.....

26. Did the CCA included an LNOB section?

Yes  No

27. If yes, were women and girls included in LNOB analysis?

Yes  No

28. If yes, were women and girls included in LNOB data?

Yes  No

29. In your view are the existing UN guidelines adequate to enable the UNCT to mainstream gender in the CCA?

Yes  No

If No, please indicate 1- 3 aspects in which additional guidance is required.

a) .....

b) .....

c) .....

30. Please select one of the three indicators to assess your CCA based on your rigorous review of the CCA and the description below of every indicator (please refer to the UNCT SWAP SCORECARD p 21-Indicator 1.1)

- Approaches Minimum Requirements
- Meets Minimum Requirements
- Exceeds Minimum Requirements

**Approaches Minimum Requirements**

- a. Gender analysis across at least 50 percent of sections including underlying causes of gender inequality and discrimination in line with SDG priorities including SDG 5;
- b. Some sex-disaggregated and gender sensitive data.

**Meets Minimum Requirements**

- a. Gender analysis across at least 80 percent of sections including underlying causes of gender inequality and discrimination in line with SDG priorities including SDG 5;
- b. Consistent sex-disaggregated and gender sensitive data.

**Exceeds Minimum Requirements**

Meets minimum requirements and CCA includes:

- c. Targeted gender analysis of those furthest behind.

31. Please provide details justifying the indicator selected

.....

32. Please list at least three lessons learned from the CCA preparation and development

.....  
.....  
.....

33. Please tell us three things that are needed in the future to make CCA more gender sensitive

.....  
.....  
.....

34. Any additional comments?

.....



# ANNEX 3: ONLINE SURVEY ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE UNSDCF

This questionnaire is designed to determine to what extent the CF was gender sensitive. The consulting team will review the CF of every country and might come back to you for clarifications. The person in charge of completing/finalizing this questionnaire is the head of the RC office in consultation with the RC, the Gender Thematic Group focal point, M&E team and the Inter-Agency Team Assessment of Indicators (IAT).

She/He is kindly requested to rigorously review the CF and UNCT SWAP indicators before and during completion of the survey.

1. What is your current CF cycle?

From 20XX to 20XX

2. What was the main recommendation in terms of gender of your last CF evaluation, if any?

.....

3. Was the UN team in charge of the CF drafting gender balanced?

Yes  No  .....% Women

4. Were the government groups consulted during the CF development gender balanced?

Not applicable  Yes  No  .....% Women

5. If it was only one person, was the CF focal point from the government male or female?

Not applicable  Male  Female  Other .....

6. Please specify the percentage of the UN team in charge of drafting the CF had gender expertise.

.....

7. Was the CF development process consultative in relation to gender?

Yes  No

8. If yes, please specify the groups consulted in relation to gender

Government MDAs  CSO partners  Others  Specify .....

.....

9. Is there a Gender Thematic Group or an equivalent group?

Yes  No

Please specify:.....

10. To what extent was the Gender Thematic Group involved during the CF preparation and development?

Limited involvement  Actively involved

11. If Limited involvement, please explain

.....

12. Did you face any challenges in terms of incorporating gender during the design, implementation and reporting of the CF ?

Yes  No

13. Please list at least three challenges

.....  
.....  
.....

14. Does the CF include a specific outcome or output on gender?

Yes  No

15. Please identify a good practice in terms of mainstreaming gender developed during the development process of the Cooperation Framework that you would like to duplicate or share:

.....

16. Please identify a good practice in terms of mainstreaming gender developed during the implementation process of the Cooperation Framework that you would like to duplicate or share:

.....

# UN WOMEN EXISTS TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS.

As the lead UN entity on gender equality and secretariat of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, we shift laws, institutions, social behaviours and services to close the gender gap and build an equal world for all women and girls. Our partnerships with governments, women's movements and the private sector coupled with our coordination of the broader United Nations translate progress into lasting changes. We make strides forward for women and girls in four areas: leadership, economic empowerment, freedom from violence, and women, peace and security as well as humanitarian action.

UN Women keeps the rights of women and girls at the centre of global progress – always, everywhere. Because gender equality is not just what we do. It is who we are.

East and Southern Africa Regional Office  
UN Gigiri Complex, UN Avenue;  
Block M, Ground Floor  
P.O. Box 30218-00100 Nairobi, Kenya  
Tel: +254 20 762 4778  
Email Address: [esaro.publications@unwomen.org](mailto:esaro.publications@unwomen.org)

[www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)  
[www.facebook.com/unwomen](https://www.facebook.com/unwomen)  
[www.twitter.com/un\\_women](https://www.twitter.com/un_women)  
[www.youtube.com/unwomen](https://www.youtube.com/unwomen)  
[www.flickr.com/unwomen](https://www.flickr.com/unwomen)

