



**UN
VOLUNTEERS**

UNV GENDER CAPACITY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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ABBREVIATIONS

ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ExO	Executive Office
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FUs	Field Units
GAT	Gender Action Team
GEEW	Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
GSAQ	Gender Self-Assessment Questionnaire
NYO	New York Office
PMD	Performance Management Document
ROs	Regional Offices
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN-SWAP	UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNV	United Nations Volunteers Programme
VASS	Volunteer Advisory Services Section

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a UN entity, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is bound to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEEW). The commonly recognized process for achieving this – both in the UN and more broadly – is gender mainstreaming as defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in the Agreed Conclusions 1997/2.

UNV's duty to engage in gender mainstreaming is further guided by the following four frameworks:

- 1 [UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021](#)
- 2 [UNDP Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2021](#)
- 3 [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 5; and](#)
- 4 [UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women \(UN-SWAP\).](#)

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution E/2011/6 notes the need for an assessment of staff vis-à-vis gender equality and the empowerment of women as UN staff requires the capacity to fulfil the UN's gender mandate. Furthermore, the UN-SWAP Framework – a method in which UN entities report on progress towards achieving gender mainstreaming – includes a performance indicator to emphasize the need for an assessment as the first step to enhancing capacity. Since UNV is dedicated to advocating gender equality and the empowerment of women, a UNV-specific gender equality capacity assessment and capacity development strategy are integral to reflecting UNV's mandate and learning needs of all staff, including senior managers. This, in turn, will play an essential role in providing adequate gender-related capacities at all levels in order to drive progress in mainstreaming gender throughout the organization.

This report covers the findings and recommendations of the **Gender Capacity Assessment process** that UNV undertook from October 2019 to February 2020. These findings and recommendations will be the groundwork of the development of a **UNV Gender Capacity Development Plan**.

1 INTRODUCTION TO CAPACITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

UNDP defines capacity development as “the process through which individuals, organizations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time.”¹

A capacity assessment² is usually the first step in a capacity development process. A full understanding of an organization’s current capacities, performance and immediate and future capacity needs is a prerequisite before any capacity development support – with the ultimate aim to improve the capacities of the organization to function efficiently and effectively and to attain sustainable results – is provided. By stimulating reflection, learning, and dialogue, an organization’s overall strengths and weaknesses are identified, while constraints, challenges, and gaps are also examined.

2 GENDER CAPACITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT



A gender capacity assessment is a means of assessing the understanding, knowledge and skills that a given organization and individuals have relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women, and on the organization’s gender architecture and gender policy. When assessing the capacity of individuals, attention is paid to the knowledge, skills and attitudes that each person has regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women and the integration of these into their daily work.

- 1) Capacity Development Practice Note, United Nations Development Programme, October 2008, pg.4
- 2) The term capacity needs assessment is used throughout this document. However, the process was a “capacity self-assessment” as that describes better what it really is: a participatory process of collecting and analyzing data and communicating the results with the aim to identify and solve problems together.



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OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE GENDER CAPACITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The objective of the UNV gender capacity needs assessment was to facilitate a participatory engagement process by:

- 1 Enabling UNV personnel³ to gain insight in their performance on gender by assessing their knowledge and understanding of gender equality and their capacity to mainstream gender, by identifying and analyzing constraints and major capacity gaps that impede them from mainstreaming gender in their area of work;
- 2 Helping UNV to prioritize staff capacity development needs, identify capacity gaps and contribute to the development of a capacity development plan;
- 3 Using the exercise to further gather or develop UNV's approach to gender mainstreaming or tools for future reference in gender mainstreaming; and
- 4 Fostering a discussion around UNV's corporate priorities on gender.

3) UNV personnel includes UNV staff members and UN Volunteers based at UNV HQ, New York Office, Regional Offices and Field Units.

The scope of the UNV Gender Capacity Assessment was confined to assessing the existing gender capacity, gaps and barriers in systematically mainstreaming gender. It was not meant to be a comprehensive organizational gender assessment, but rather on developing an overview of the capacity needs for UNV personnel in all sections at headquarters (HQ), New York Office (NYO), Regional Offices (ROs) and Field Units (FUs).

The results of this capacity assessment will be used for the formulation of a Gender Capacity Development Plan. This plan will aim to increase the ability of UNV’s personnel to effectively and efficiently mainstream gender and therefore support UNV in its active commitment towards GEEW. A number of mixed methods and approaches were used to obtain information for the capacity assessment process. The methodologies used were based mainly on

4 METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS OF THE CAPACITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

qualitative techniques most suitable in capturing information required for the development of a gender capacity development plan. The capacity assessment followed the model of the Gender Equality Capacity Assessment Tool developed by the UN Women training center.⁴ The methods and approaches used included:

A) ONLINE GENDER SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE (GSAQ)

An online GSAQ was sent to all UNV personnel in November 2019 and aimed to assess staff capacity in three areas regarding gender: (1) knowledge; (2) skills and competencies; and (3) access to learning and support. The online GSAQ addressed 24 questions by using close-ended questions and open-ended questions and was based on the GSAQ designed by the UN Women training

center.⁵ A total of 327 UNV personnel received the questionnaire (257 UNV staff, 70 UN Volunteers based in UNV ROs and FUs) and 119 (36%) responded. The following table shows a summary of the respondents’ demographics.

Table 1

CATEGORY	NUMBER	QUESTIONNAIRE	% RESPONDENTS
ALL UNV PERSONNEL	327	119	36%
FEMALE	147 Staff 33 UN Volunteers 180	81	68%
MALE	110 Staff 37 UN Volunteers 147	38	32%

4) UN Women training center (May 2016), “Gender Equality Capacity Assessment tool: Tool for assessment of capacity in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women for the UN system and other partners”. https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/RESOURCES_LIBRARY/Resources_Centre/2_Manual_Gender_Equality_Capacity_EN.pdf

5) IBID., 44-49.

B) SENIOR MANAGEMENT INTERVIEWS

Three semi-structured interviews were conducted with the UNV Senior Management – with the Executive Coordinator, the Deputy Executive Coordinator and the Director of Management Services, respectively. The interviews aimed to acquire greater understanding of how gender is strategically integrated in the UNV Strategic Framework 2018-2021, to understand challenges faced and to discuss gender entry points from a senior management perspective.

C) FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDS)

In total, nine Focus Groups were conducted (face-to-face and online), with a total of 35 participants (26 Females and 9 Males). The participants included UNV personnel from all sections at HQ, ROs and NYO. The facilitation of FGDS was guided by a [questionnaire](#) and attempted, on one hand, to further explore the opportunities and challenges related to gender, and on another hand, to discuss the [results report of the Self-assessment questionnaire](#) in depth.



5 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This section provides the findings from the Gender Capacity Assessment process. Despite the commendable efforts by the UNV Gender Action Team (GAT) to support UNV's reporting for the UN-SWAP, the needs assessment identifies several challenges that still hinder UNV's personnel to efficiently mainstream gender in their respective areas of work.

The key results of the overall assessment can be summarized as follows:

Characteristics of Respondents

» The Gender Capacity Assessment targeted UNV personnel globally (147 men and 180 women) from all sections, regions and among all staff categories represented at UNV. A total of 119 respondents participated in the GSAQ while an additional 35 participated in the FGDs. The percentage of female participation (68.1%) in the gender assessment process was higher than male participation (31.9%). The participants' reflections during the FGDs revealed the existence of gender conscious and unconscious bias⁶ among male staff, which could be a factor influencing male participation in different gender awareness activities.

» Another notable issue was the low participation of the UNV Management Team, principally at HQ, as only 3.3% of the Managerial staff responded to the questionnaire and only five Chiefs of Sections at HQ attended the FGDs and two Regional Managers attended the online FGDs. In addition, FGDs showed that knowledge and competency levels on gender vary among Managers, from basic knowledge to strong capacity and leadership. To ensure the staff's engagement in gender mainstreaming, the commitment to gender equality at UNV must be driven by Managers as first to champion GEEW. Therefore, UNV Management Team's understanding of gender concepts, their implementation and monitoring should be prerequisites to supporting capacity building initiatives for staff.

6) Unconscious or implicit gender bias is defined as unintentional and automatic mental associations based on gender, stemming from traditions, norms, values, culture and/or experience. Neubeck, J. & Glasberg, D. S. (2005) *Sociology: Diversity, Conflict, and Change*. McGraw Hill, Boston.

Knowledge and understanding of gender related concepts

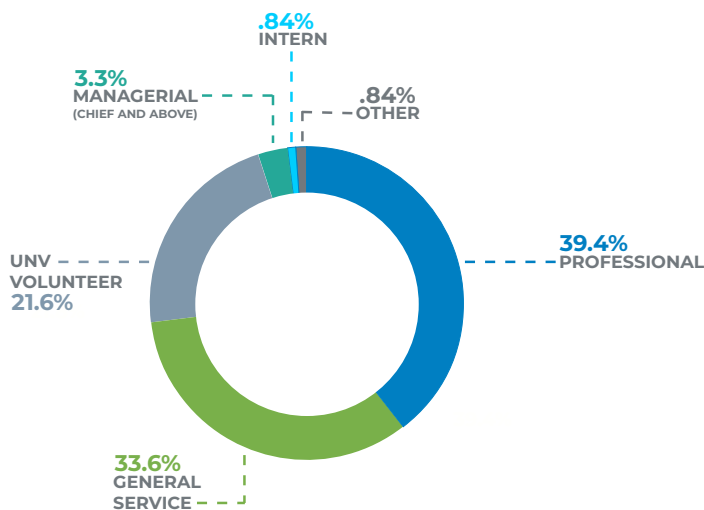
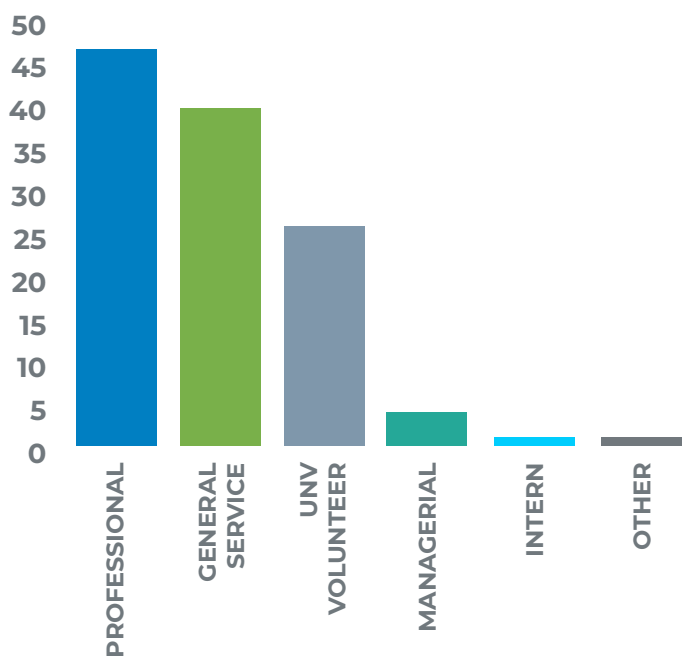
» Findings from the GSAQ showed that despite having taken the UNDP online mandatory training on gender, “The Gender Journey”, only 26.9% of the respondents understand the gender term and are able to provide the accurate definition.⁷ The questionnaire results also revealed that 60.5% of the respondents understand the concept of gender mainstreaming and 72% are unsure of the difference between gender mainstreaming and equal representation of women. During the FGDs, participants emphasized that the gender definition provided was difficult to translate or to apply in their respective work. The lack of clarity on the difference between gender mainstreaming and equal representation of women might be due to UNV personnel generally being unclear of the institutional definition of gender mainstreaming and in many cases, as the results of the GSAQ showed, gender mainstreaming or gender equality are often understood in the narrow sense to mean only gender parity.

Knowledge and implementation of Gender Mainstreaming Policies

» As highlighted in the Executive Summary, UNV has a strong normative basis for its gender mainstreaming efforts. However, the results brought by the GSAQ and the FGDs showed that for the majority of the participants, the knowledge of the different gender policies, frameworks or strategies guiding UNV’s work on GEEW is limited to the Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) on gender equality and women and girls’ empowerment, or to the UNDP Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2021.

Figure 2 Gender self-assessment questionnaire demographic

LOCATION OR SECTION	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Field Unit Arab States, EU & CIS, R. Office Amman, Volunteer Service Center	11-12
M. Service HR, Field Unit W & C Africa, Field Unit Asia-Pacific, R. Office Dakar, Volunteer Service Solution, Executive Office Team	9>6
R. Office Bangkok, R. Office Panama, R. Office, R. Office Nairobi, New York Office Procurement, Management Office Finance, Volunteer Advisory Service, Field Unit in Latin America and the Caribbean, External Relations and Communication, Common Service Unit	0>5



7) Source: UN Women, OSAGI Gender Mainstreaming - Concepts and definitions

» There is potential for gender mainstreaming at UNV to improve, especially in strengthening the organization's knowledge and capacities. In the absence of visibility of the UNV Gender Action Plan, participants cited the use of the UNDP Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2021 as the main guiding framework for gender mainstreaming.

Gender learning and application

» The GSAQ revealed that the majority of the respondents attended an introductory gender training (69%) or undertook a gender-related training in the last two years (89%). However, the FGDs highlighted that despite having access to various gender learning, there are different levels of understanding or willingness to consider gender among UNV personnel. In addition, UNV personnel confirmed that despite having confidence, many still lack competences in integrating and applying gender in their area of work and believe trainings are taken in isolation from their work and/or are not practical. Most of the GSAQ respondents (over 80%) consider benefitting from targeted training in gender mainstreaming which focuses on specific areas of work.

» The FGDs brought to light that the approach to the online mandatory gender training is "doing it as fast as possible". FGD participants explained that this attitude is mainly due to the excessive number of mandatory trainings associated with the high level of workload, which leads to undertaking the gender training as fast as possible and, therefore, generating issues in assimilating the knowledge. FGD participants also emphasized that the lack of opportunities to immediately apply the use of learning in daily work is another factor of non-application - "Training does not work anymore; we have to find a way to learn differently".

Support for gender mainstreaming

» UNV GAT and Gender Focal Points (GFPs)

In the GSAQ, 84% of the respondents highlighted a lack of support from the UNV GAT and GFPs. The FGDs informed that despite the significant role played by the GFPs in responding on the UN-SWAP process, in some sections at HQ, staff members were not aware of the appointed GFP for their section and his/her role for the section. This last result brought the question on how the UNV GAT has communicated its role and the role of GFPs to the organization. The UNV GAT was re-established only in April 2019 after a three-year hiatus and its current Terms of Reference (ToR) does not emphasize explicitly the role that GFPs could have in supporting UNV personnel or sections in mainstreaming gender. Updating the UNV GAT ToR and providing GFPs the required tools and capacity to support gender mainstreaming in their respective section would not only give more visibility to the GFPs but would also strengthen their capacity to effectively fulfill their role.

Tools

In the GSAQ and FGDs, the participants strongly informed on the lack of comprehensive, practical and user-friendly tools or guidance notes to support mainstreaming gender in their respective areas. The current practice is to use tools from existing UN sources and the suggestion was made to either have UNV-specific gender tools or a set of UN gender tools available on an accessible platform. ROs insisted to have tools adapted to contexts or with a scope for ROs to adapt these tools for use in a flexible way.



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Knowledge Management

To have a knowledge management system for gender mainstreaming was recognized as essential; a system to collect, manage and disseminate good practices, lessons learned and case studies on gender mainstreaming will have to be developed or reinforced. FGD participants often highlighted not having immediate access to such information. In general, gender mainstreaming is a strategy that involves its own learning process and a knowledge management system could also assist in evaluating the gender mainstreaming implementation. Shared lessons can feed into policy development and guidance and successful models should be systematically scaled up. Fully developed and accessible knowledge management system can also play a role in building support for gender mainstreaming by demonstrating its successful application.

Accountability

» During the FGDs, there was consensus that it would be difficult to systematically implement gender mainstreaming if institutional accountability is not further defined and enforced

through explicit inclusion in job descriptions and Performance Management Document (PMD). It was then suggested during the FGDs that the UNV corporate gender focal point should be the referral to support the Management Team in including gender into staff PMDs or job descriptions.

» Although current policies assign accountability to senior management, FGD participants acknowledged that the Management Team may not always have the requisite skills, training or time to take on this role.

Budget allocation

» Another prominent issue that emerged throughout the assessment was a lack of adequate financial resources dedicated to gender mainstreaming, which could be allocated to support UNV personnel to have the capacity to systematically mainstream gender in their area of work or to support sections to carry out gender mainstreaming initiatives. It was revealed that the budget dedicated to gender comes mainly from the Executive Office (ExO) and the Volunteer Advisory Services Section (VASS) budgets.



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KEY RECOMMENDATIONS MADE

Based on the analysis of the findings, the following recommendations are suggested with the objective to enhance and improve the gender capacity and support gender mainstreaming at UNV.

- 1** UNV should review the ECOSOC gender mainstreaming definition with a view to customizing it to more accurately reflect UNV's mandate and commitment to pursue a more inclusive approach to GEEW. Institutional definitions for key related gender terms should also be developed and the issue of diversity should be incorporated into the discourse on gender mainstreaming.
- 2** More should be done to build support for gender mainstreaming. A solution would be to develop a gender capacity development plan. Additionally, adequate contextualized support should be appropriately implemented at the regional and country levels, in order to address institutions and attitudes that hinder implementation.

- 3 The UNV GAT should become a resource team for all UNV personnel, and their capacity should be strengthened to provide relevant gender-related support.
- 4 Accountability for gender mainstreaming should be further clarified and defined at all levels. This issue would benefit from an Executive Directive and explicit inclusion in job descriptions, PMD and TORs, particularly for senior management and GFPs.
- 5 An increase in budgetary allocations for gender mainstreaming is necessary to improve gender mainstreaming implementation and, therefore, support capacity building on gender.
- 6 HQ should make a concerted effort to increase the level of knowledge on gender mainstreaming throughout the organization by enhancing knowledge management and information dissemination systems. All available information on gender mainstreaming should be disseminated widely at all levels to raise awareness of guiding gender policy, strategy or framework.
- 7 Gender conscious and unconscious bias should be addressed to all staff through face-to-face sessions.
- 8 All UNV sections and offices need simple tools to assist them in incorporating gender mainstreaming in their daily work and to monitor and evaluate results, ones that will reduce the current perception that gender mainstreaming activities will increase workloads. Existing gender mainstreaming capacity building initiatives, including tools, training and guidelines should be reviewed and revised so that they become sufficient, appropriate and adaptable.
- 9 Practical gender training should be provided to all UNV personnel.
- 10 ROs and NYO would benefit from a specific gender mainstreaming guidance to be utilized in their interactions with UN partners, national counterparts, civil societies, and the media, all while keeping in mind the various cultural and social barriers to implementation.
- 11 Develop regional strategies/context-based to recruit and retain UN Volunteer female candidates (gender talent acquisition strategy, gender lens in working conditions, gender outreach plan, standard DOS to include gender considerations as much as possible).

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