UNCT-SWAP PERFORMANCE INDICATOR 5.1
Virtual Toolkit Resource

What?

Gender Theme Groups: Standards and Procedures (UNDG 2021)

Why?

The Gender Theme Groups (GTG) Standards and Procedures is an update of the Resource Guide for Gender Theme Groups from 2018 considering UN repositioning and the 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review to accelerate gender mainstreaming.

The Standards and Procedures emphasize the importance of the GTGs as a critical instrument for UN coordination and has a strong focus on GTG results.

The Standards and Procedures are outlined in five chapters:

1. Mandate
2. Composition & Architecture
3. Leadership
4. Clear roles & responsibilities
5. Accountability for roles & responsibilities

The Standards and Procedures can support GTGs in meeting the minimum requirements for UNCT-SWAP Performance Indicator (PI) 5.1 and other PIs such as PIs 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3. It provides clarity on different functions of the GTG and how these can be leveraged to better position GTGs within the UN Country Teams (UNCTs), and speaks to lines of accountability. This resource also addresses entry points to supporting the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment considerations in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) development process.

Performance Indicator 5.1 Gender Coordination

Approaches Minimum Requirements	Meets **2** of the following:
	a. A coordination mechanism for gender equality is chaired by a HOA;
	b. The group has an approved TOR and annual work plan;
	c. Members include at least 50% senior staff (P4/NOC and above or equivalent);
	d. The group has made substantive input into the UNSDCF including the CCA, Cooperative Framework design, results framework and M&E.

Performance Indicator 5.1 Gender Coordination

Meets Minimum Requirements	Meets **3** of the following: a. A coordination mechanism for gender equality is chaired by a HOA; b. The group has an approved TOR and annual work plan; c. Members include at least 50% senior staff (P4/NOC and above or equivalent); d. The group has made substantive input into the UNSDCF including the CCA, Cooperative Framework design, results framework and M&E.
Exceeds Minimum Requirements	Meets **all 4** of the following: a. A coordination mechanism for gender equality is chaired by a HOA; b. The group has an approved TOR and annual work plan; c. Members include at least 50% senior staff (P4/NOC and above or equivalent); d. The group has made substantive input into the UNSDCF including the CCA, Cooperative Framework design, results framework and M&E.

GENDER THEME GROUPS:

STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

2021

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CCA	Common Country Analysis
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GFP	Gender Focal Point
GS	Gender Specialist
GTG	Gender Theme Group
HOA	Heads of Agencies
JMC	Joint Management Committee
JP	Joint Programme
JWP	Joint Work Plan
PSG	Peer Support Group
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
RBM	Results-Based Management
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCP	Regional Collaborative Platform
RGG	Results Group on Gender Equality
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCT-GEM	UNCT Gender Equality Marker
UNCT-SWAP	UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group

The Gender Theme Group Sudan participating in a training integrating gender perspectives in the Sudan Cooperation Framework.
Ahmed Amin Ahmed Mohamed Osman /UN Women Sudan
Khartoum, Sudan, 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

Girls attending recreational activities, numeracy and literacy classes at
child-friendly spaces at an IDP settlement in the outskirts of Herat City.
Sayed Bidel /UNICEF
Herat, Afghanistan, 2021

1. BACKGROUND

Gender Theme Groups (GTGs) have their origins in the broader framework of United Nations (UN) reform processes and in the global normative framework for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. This guidance updates the 2018 UNSDG GTG guidance[1] to reflect the far-reaching UN Development System reforms that came into effect in 2019.[2] At country level, the reform entailed the establishment of a reinvigorated Resident Coordinator (RC) system and a new generation of United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) centred on the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (hereon "Cooperation Framework"), as well as revised management and accountability procedures.[3]

Per the General Assembly's 2020 resolution on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR, A/75/233), accelerating progress on gender equality is a core function of UNCTs. Evidence generated for these standards and procedures showed that GTGs play an important role in Cooperation Framework development, in consensus building on national gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) priorities, and in driving cross-thematic collaboration. Largely through GTG action, Joint Programmes (JPs) with GEWE as their primary objective are reported to be the largest sub-group of all JPs world-wide.[4]

---

1   UNSDG (2018). Resource Guide for Gender Theme Groups.
2   United Nation (2017). Report of the Secretary-General on Repositioning of the United Nations Development System to Deliver on the 2030 Agenda: Our Promise for Dignity, Prosperity and Peace on a Healthy Planet. A/72/684–E/2018/7.
    https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1473546/files/A_72_684%26E_2018_7-EN.pdf
3   https://reform.un.org/content/un-development-system-reform-101
4   United Nations (2020). Secretary-General's Report on the Implementation of the QCPR (A/72/279-E/2020/55) – para 230.

Yet, GTGs face many challenges, including lack of clarity on purpose and responsibilities, and limited funding. Further, the location of GTGs in the UNCT coordination architecture sometimes constrains the ability of GTGs to function optimally. Too often, participation in GTGs is delegated to junior UN staff with limited ability and decision-making to promote GEWE issues within their entities, or to review, monitor and advise on gender issues across Cooperation Framework outcomes. Robust championing of the GTG by UNCT leadership and greater coherence among proliferating GTG functions and formats, as well as the wide range of entity tracking and accountability mechanisms, is needed.

This document sets out standards and procedures for GTGs to guide UNCTs in their establishment and functioning. The standards and procedures aim to address current shortcomings while harnessing existing potential, clarifying how GTGs should function within new frameworks and processes, addressing current challenges and opportunities in a globally coherent manner, within country level contexts. This will be key for effective, integrated and coherent UNCT support to national GEWE priorities, in response to the mandate from UN Member States.

Monitoring of implementation will take place annually through the UNDCO Information Management System and UNCT-SWAP reporting, to capture progress and to inform the development of capacity building initiatives and refinements to the guidance.

2. WHAT IS NEW?

The guidance provided in this document builds on previous GTG guidance, existing UNSDG tools, frameworks and resources, and is aligned with the gender mainstreaming minimum standards put forward by the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard. It is not intended to be a stand-alone resource but should be read in conjunction with key UNSDG guidance and resources. The guidance incorporates a number of new elements (see Box 1).

Box 1: What's New

- ✔ Description of the 'cascade' of UNCT gender mainstreaming accountability from the RC and Heads of Agencies (HOAs) to gender focal points, and the mechanisms for enforcing this.
- ✔ Greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the RC, HOAs, GTG chair/co-chairs, and individual GTG members in this process.
- ✔ Definition of the RC and HOA responsibility to establish and support an empowered GTG, through a clear mandate, resourcing its work.
- ✔ Greater clarity on the coordination and advisory support function provided by the GTG to the UNCT.
- ✔ Positioning the GTG as the critical instrument for UN coordination and leadership on GEWE at country level: as the entry point for coordinating technical support and services to the host Government, and as a mechanism for partnership development and engagement with GEWE and Women's Human Rights CSOs on behalf of the UNCT.
- ✔ Strengthened focus on GTG results, aligning the GTG annual objectives and workplan with those of the UNCT and of Results Groups.
- ✔ Guidance on how to operate across the Humanitarian-Development nexus to ensure joint analysis and planning.

3. CONTENT OVERVIEW

This document provides guidance to RCs, UNCTs, individual UN entities and UN staff, GTG chairs and members on standards related to the role, functions and working methods of GTGs. The focus is on the corresponding procedures to be set in place to support UNCTs to achieve the gender mainstreaming standards founded in the Cooperation Framework guidance and the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard (UNCT-SWAP), drawing on over two decades of gender mainstreaming and accountability experience. The overall purpose is to strengthen UN coordination on gender equality issues at country level, in order to facilitate coherent UNCT support to Governments in achieving their gender equality commitments across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

II. STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

Skills Training
Tasfiq Mahmood /UN Women Bangladesh
Joypurhat, Bangladesh, 2018

1. WHAT IS THE GENDER THEME GROUP?

Based on the role prescribed by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the GTG is defined as an interagency coordination group that "*provide(s) strategic support and advice to United Nations country teams in enhancing their gender mainstreaming efforts*.[5]"[6]

1.1 Mandate

The 2020 QCPR (A/75/233) emphasizes that gender equality and empowerment of women and girls is crucial to progress across all the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda and calls on the UN system at country level to promote gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls, accelerating gender mainstreaming through the full implementation of the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard (UNCT-SWAP). In particular, the resolution emphasizes the need for gender-responsive performance management and strategic planning, sex-disaggregated data, reporting and resource tracking, while drawing on gender expertise to mainstream gender equality in the preparation of the Cooperation Framework.

This gender mainstreaming mandate and its provisions relate directly to the role and responsibilities of GTGs. Taken together, these underscore the GTG as playing a central role in provision of strategic support and advice to UNCT collaboration

---

5   ECOSOC (2019). Resolution on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, para 7 (i). https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3806913/files/E_2019_L.10-EN.pdf,

6   These standards and procedures apply to all UN Inter-agency mechanisms on GEWE, irrespective of the official name of the UN gender coordination mechanism.

with Governments to achieve SDG 5 and the gender equality dimensions of other SDGs throughout the Cooperation Framework, the provision policy advice and joint programmes. In order to achieve these objectives, the ECOSOC calls on the UN system to ensure that these coordination mechanisms are *"fully empowered through clear mandates, capacity and sufficient resources"*.

The 2020 QCPR calls upon UNCTs to implement gender-responsive performance management through the full implementation of the UNCT-SWAP gender mainstreaming minimum standards. Based on standard UNCT presence[7], to meet the minimum standards for an empowered gender coordination mechanism, UNCTs must meet at least three of the following criteria:

(i) A coordination mechanism for gender equality is chaired by a HOA.

(ii) The group has a TOR and an approved annual work plan.[8]

(iii) Members include at least 50 per cent senior staff (P4 and above; NOC and above or equivalent[9]).

(iv) The group has made substantive input into the Cooperation Framework including the common country analysis (CCA), strategic prioritization, results framework and monitoring and evaluation.

UN Member States monitor and review progress in realizing the QCPR mandates on gender equality and the implementation of UNCT-SWAP gender mainstreaming minimum standards through annual reports of the Secretary-General.[10]

Nina Py Brozovich, a 17 years old a college student and an environmental activist from Bolivia.
Sara Aliaga Ticona /UNICEF La Paz, Bolivia, 2020

---

7   The UNSDG 2019 Cooperation Framework Guidance introduces as a new step in the Cooperation Framework planning process the review of the UNCT configuration in country. The purpose of the review is to ensure that the configuration is needs-based and tailored to the country context, moving from a standardized model of physical presence to one that draws on remote contributions, including through redeployed and re-organized UN regional assets and reconfigured business models in Multi-Country Office contexts. These processes are ongoing in 2021, including to develop standardized capacity mapping and assessment tools. The UNCT-SWAP criteria for GTGs will be revisited to reflect these developments, once these processes are at finalization stage.

8   Annex provides a template for a GTG TOR and annual work plan.

9   UN Entities should nominate GTG members at P4 level, or at most existing senior level (for example, NOA and NOB or others) to ensure decision-making authority regarding GTG action plan. Aligned with UNCT-SWAP performance indicator 5.1 : Gender Coordination Mechanisms empowered to influence the UNCT for GEWE.

10   Annual reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the QCPR are available at https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/oas-qcpr. Annual reports of the Secretary-General on Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system are available at https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/documents/reports.

1.2 Composition and architecture

The GTG comprises gender focal points/specialists of each UN entity that is signatory to the Cooperation Framework. The GTG chair together with the RC will propose the optimal GTG structure to the UNCT, ensuring that each Results Group is represented on the GTG.

Designation of gender focal points to the GTG is made by individual HOAs/RC and must be official and formalized in their Terms of Reference and their performance appraisals and reports.

In those UNCTs that have a Cooperation Framework Outcome on Gender Equality and a corresponding Results Group on Gender Equality (RGG), the UNCT should decide on one of the two options below:

A GTG and a separate RGG	A combined GTG and RGG
·· There is a risk of overlap between the functions of the GTG and the RGG, which may result in duplicative and/or competing agendas. **The distinct functions of each should be clearly delineated in the respective TORs of the GTG and RGG.** ··➔ RGG has only Results-Based Management (RBM) responsibilities, and only exercises these in respect of the Gender Outcome - it does not have gender mainstreaming responsibilities across other Results Groups. The GTG, on the other hand, provides support and advice to all RGs, including the RGG, and does not engage in project or programme RBM.	·· There is a risk is that this approach devolves into a no-GTG situation as RGG tasks – being a requirement of the Cooperation Framework and therefore better-funded and more explicitly time-bound – risk displacing those of the GTG. ·· Of particular concern is the potential erosion of GTG collaboration with other RGs, UNCT coordination mechanisms, and with national partners in the implementation of the Cooperation Framework. **When this option is chosen, the combined responsibilities must be reflected clearly in the TOR of the combined group.** ··➔ The combined group has both responsibility for gender mainstreaming across all RGs, and technical advice to the Gender Outcome.
Mitigation strategies / Tips: ✔ Organize meetings back-to-back as a convenience to those who are members of both groups, while keeping the two sets of responsibilities distinct, and minimizing confusion. ✔ Ensure the GTG work plan indicates how it will contribute to the RGG work plan and its specific outputs, and the necessary funds.	**Mitigation strategies / Tips:** ✔ Adjust the job descriptions of the staff concerned to reflect both responsibilities. ✔ Ensure ToR and work plan of the combined group incorporates the work of both groups, clearly delineating these. ✔ Ensure a separate annual report to the UNCT on the GTG functions.

GTG Sub-Groups: The chair of the GTG may establish sub-groups under the GTG architecture to lead GTG action on specific cross-cutting issues and activities, such as the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence Campaign,

Normative work (CEDAW, UPR), Cooperation Framework roll out, and Joint Programme development.

1.3 Leadership

The GTG is chaired (or co-chaired) as follows:

(i) The UN Women Head of Agency shall chair the GTG where UN Women has presence in the country and the HOA is at the level of P4 or above.

(ii) Where these requirements are not met, the UNFPA Head of Agency, or another agency with the adequate country level capacity on gender equality and level of representation, will assume responsibility for chairing the GTG.

(iii) The UNCT may decide on a consensus basis to designate the HOA of another UNCT entity as co-chair of the GTG, on a standing or rotating basis, with due regard to the strategic priorities of the Cooperation Framework and the presence or otherwise of a Humanitarian Country Team.[11]

(iv) A maximum of two co-chairs may be appointed to lead the work of the GTG.

1.4 Roles and responsibilities

An effective GTG requires the RC, UNCT HOAs and GTG chairs to implement complementary leadership and facilitation roles in order to make the best strategic use of the GTG.[12]

The RC, as the highest UN official in-country, is ultimately responsible for UN support to the country and leads UNCT consultations with the host Government to define and agree on the UN's response to national priorities, including GEWE priorities.

Under the overall leadership of the RC, the GTG chair facilitates the UN's support to national GEWE priorities within the framework of the Cooperation Framework results, including policy and technical support, and support to the implementation of normative standards and frameworks on gender equality and women's human rights. In so doing, the GTG chair collaborates directly with the National Women's Machinery, GEWE and Women's Human Rights CSOs on the GTG's and UNCT's behalf.

In addition, HOAs – in a coordinated manner - engage directly with sectoral ministries and their gender equality architecture, as well as other relevant stakeholders in country, to advance their entity's GEWE commitments, in line with the Cooperation Framework GEWE results.

Box 2: Tips for GTG Chairs

✔ Position the GTG as supporting and advising the UNCT, Results Group and other UN coordination mechanisms on gender equality priorities.

✔ Seek to demonstrate the synergies of cross-sectoral programming, rather than competition.

✔ Use GTG meetings as combined information and capacity-development opportunities for all members.

✔ Mentor junior members of the GTG and promote mentorship within and across UNCT entities.

✔ Work with GTG members to identify a repository of relevant national and regional gender analysis for the country and disseminate information on it widely.

✔ Facilitate the development of a set of key messages about gender equality challenges and opportunities in the country and ensure that all GTG members know and understand these, are able to adapt and include them strategically in policy dialogue.

✔ Share the key messages with the UNCT and with the Communications Group and draw links to key gender equality messages in dialogues with national partners.

✔ Under the leadership of the RC, facilitate UNCT contributions to and engagement in GEWE communications and advocacy activities, campaigns and events, such as International Women's Day and 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

✔ During discussions with the National Women's Machinery, ensure discussion on sectoral areas in which integrating gender equality results would help achieve national development priorities more effectively and sustainably.

✔ Ensure that GTG has some level of engagement with CSOs including Women's Human Rights CSOs as well as organizations representing excluded/marginalized women and girls to foster meaningful participation.

✔ Facilitate a discussion within the GTG to identify priority technical support needs of the Government (the National Women's machinery and sectoral ministries).

✔ With the support and leadership of the RC, facilitate agreement within the UNCT on a division of labor that identifies the contributions of different entities through the Cooperation Framework Results Groups and their Joint Work Plans to addressing priority GEWE technical support needs of the host Government.

---

11   MAF
12   UN Leadership framework: https://unsceb.org/united-nations-system-leadership-framework

The Resident Coordinator

- Ensures formation of the GTG, appoints RCO staff[1] to support the GTG and promotes and champions GTG objectives.
- Ensures that the GTG work plan and annual report are discussed and endorsed at HOA meetings.
- Facilitates dialogue within the UNCT to ensure effective and efficient entity-specific contributions to the GTG work plan.
- Supports the resource mobilization efforts of the GTG, including through pooled funding opportunities and entity contributions. Support the GTG chair(s) in fundraising activities.

- Ensures inputs to joint analyses and planning are systematically sought from the GTG – importantly, the CCA and Cooperation Framework – and to JP development, and joint evaluations.
- Holds RC Office staff accountable for promoting synergy and alignment on gender equality issues across all UNCT work plans and coordination mechanisms.
- Meets with the GTG chair at minimum biannually, prior to performance appraisal and joint work planning exercises, to receive the annual report, and at other times as needed.
- Reports on the GTG's performance and functioning as part of annual RC reporting.

UNCT Entity Heads of Agency

- Officially designates and supports a gender specialist/ gender focal point(s) (GS/GFP) of sufficient seniority to participate in the GTG, and to provide technical advice on gender equality issues.
- Ensures the job description of the GTG focal point(s) is revised to reflect participation in the GTG and is incorporated in the annual performance appraisal process
- Empowers the GS/GFP(s) to participate in the GTG on behalf of the entity, with decision-making authority and capacity

building where needed.
- Regularly updates the UNCT and RC on their entity's important engagements with the government on GEWE issues.
- Is accountable for their entity's contributions to the GTG work plan and budget.
- Supports inter- and cross regional dialogue to enhance engagement among GTGs and UNCTs in different contexts (Nonresident agency, Multi country office).

GTG Chair

- Ensures the effective functioning of the GTG, convening GTG meetings on a regular basis and ensuring meetings are prepared and documented.
- Facilitates information-sharing between the GTG and the UNCT, representing the GTG at UNCT HOA meetings and elsewhere as needed.
- Supports inter-agency capacity development for gender mainstreaming.
- Guides the preparation and implementation of the GTG work plan and budget, ensuring GTG activities are aligned with the UNCT work plan and contribute to national GEWE priorities.
- Presents the GTG work plan to the UNCT and keeps the

UNCT informed of progress in implementation; presents the GTG annual report to the UNCT.
- As a full member of the UNCT, provides policy and technical advice to the RC and UNCT on GEWE issues in support of effective and coordinated action.
- Supports and strengthens the linkages between the UN system, Government, GEWE networks and organizations, and women's rights advocates.
- Briefs the UNCT and RC prior to Joint Monitoring Committee meetings with the host Government on current developments and priorities related to the UN's contributions to GEWE in-country.
- Leads and coordinates fund-raising for the GTG in collaboration with the members.

---

13   Gender focal points in RCOs and/or other colleagues with gender expertise.

Individual GTG member

- Contributes to the development and implementation of the GTG work plan, and related monitoring and reporting.
- Supports monitoring progress on GEWE results and targets across the Cooperation Framework.
- Provides technical inputs and advice on national GEWE priorities within their areas of expertise.
- Contributes to GTG joint analyses, reports and communications.

- Participates in GTG meetings and follows-up on agreed action points.
- Keeps their HOA informed of GTG activities, decisions and entity accountability towards the achievement of GTG results, seeking inputs from their HOA as needed.
- Represents the GTG in Results Group meetings, and other UN coordination groups as relevant.

GTG Secretariat

The secretariat could be located either in one of the chair entities or in RCO.

- Supports the organization of meetings (invitation, agenda, presentations, minutes) and ensures the day-to day coordination and functioning of the group.
- Assists in developing the GTG AWP and budget in collaboration with the chair and members;
- Ensures synergy between the GTG and other UN

coordination structures such as the OMT, PMT, UNCG, Cooperation Framework Result Groups and TRGs.

- Maintains regular contact with the UNCT to advocacy through necessary decisions and follow up on actions taken, and to ensure that gender issues are a priority at the leadership level.
- Assists the chair and/or co-chair in communication with the members and knowledge management across the GTG.

1.5 Gender theme group accountability and reporting

The RC, entity HOA, GTG chair and GTG members are each accountable for fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as detailed above (1.4).

The following reporting lines enable UNCTs to ensure achievement of GEWE results across the Cooperation Framework:

- The GTG tasks of entity GTG focal points, as described in the GTG work plan, are reviewed by their respective line managers as part of their performance appraisal process. Their line managers are encouraged to consult with the GTG chair(s) in completing their performance appraisal. Their line managers ensure sufficient gender capacity and training.
- UNCT HOAs hold their staff accountable for their contributions to gender equality results across the Cooperation Framework and hold them accountable for agency contributions to annual GTG deliverables.
- UNCT HOAs report to the RC and to their respective entity on their engagement with UNCT and joint programming processes, and delivery on their respective

GEWE commitments vis-a-vis the Cooperation Framework and the 2030 Agenda.

- The GTG chair(s) includes their GTG responsibilities, as described in the GTG work plan, in their respective performance plans and their annual performance reviews with the RC and with their respective entity.
- The UNCT, led by the RC, assesses the annual performance of the GTG against the UNCT-SWAP performance indicator 5.1 on Gender Architecture and Capacities and the GTG annual report, which is prepared by the GTG chair and presented at a UNCT meeting. Impediments to the achievement of work plan deliverables are discussed and resolved by the UNCT at this meeting.
- The RC reports to the host Government and the UNSDG and Deputy Secretary-General on progress achieved by the UNCT collectively in supporting the 2030 Agenda and related strategic gender equality objectives in the Cooperation Framework, holding HOAs accountable for their entity's contributions.
- The UNCT makes available necessary resources to the GTG to support the UNCT-SWAP exercise and annual progress reports.

2. WHAT ARE THE MAIN FUNCTIONS OF GENDER THEME GROUPS?

Broadly, the main functions of the GTGs can be classified into: programme support, integrated policy dialogue and advice, and technical support. These functions cover all UNCT processes, supporting communications, advocacy and partnerships for national gender equality priorities. Across these functions, the GTG's role is to promote adherence to gender equality as a guiding principle and adherence to the UNCT-SWAP gender mainstreaming minimum standards.

2.1 Programme support

The GTG provides advice and support to the identification, prioritization, and achievement of Cooperation Framework gender equality results and related processes. The primary functions of the GTG at each stage of the Cooperation Framework are as follows.

Cooperation Framework Roadmap

✔ Ensure gender mainstreaming actions are integrated throughout the Roadmap.[14]

Common Country Analysis, its annual updates, and other joint analyses

✔ Create and maintain a database of all key research and data on gender relations and gender equality issues and ensure all UN staff in-country are aware of and have access to this.

✔ The analyses must make clear reference to international normative gender equality and women's rights frameworks such as the CEDAW Convention and the CEDAW concluding observations issued to each Member State, the Beijing Platform for Action, the CSW agreed conclusions, and depending on the context of the country, and all other relevant international normative frameworks. They must also refer to national legislation and policies that must be upheld or should be modified to promote GEWE.

✔ Prepare GTG analysis on the underlying causes of gender inequality and discrimination, and gender analysis of those who are furthest behind, for

incorporation in the CCA.

✔ Quality assure the CCA, and other relevant joint analyses, to ensure consistent use of sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data.

✔ Contribute to the financial landscape analysis through gender-specific data and analysis, identifying key sources of existing financing and analyzing potential for new sources of financing to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE), as well as barriers to mobilizing additional financing.

Cooperation Framework Design

✔ Support and advise the UNCT and relevant inter-agency working groups on the translation of critical gender equality issues identified in the CCA into the design of the Cooperation Framework, including its vision, theory of change, priorities, risk analysis, results and indicators.[15]

Funding Framework

✔ Support and advise the UNCT and relevant inter-agency working groups on the development of the Funding Framework to ensure that GEWE-related results are fully costed, and that a financial target specific to GEWE programming is established and that the common global financial target for UNCT planned allocations to GEWE is met.[16]

Cooperation Framework Implementation[17]

✔ Participate in the development of Joint Work Plans (JWPs) by Results Groups, ensuring potential for synergy and joint programming on GEWE are identified early on.

✔ Provide quality assurance to/screen Joint Programme proposals, to ensure that these integrate gender equality considerations.

✔ Advise and support Results Groups to ensure the application of appropriate UNCT Gender Equality

---

14 UNSDG (2019). Consolidated Annexes to the Cooperation Framework Roadmap, pages 2-6.

15 Aligned with UNCT-SWAP performance indicator 1.1: Common country analysis integrates gender analysis.

16 Aligned with UNCT-SWAP performance indicator 6.1, Adequate resources for Gender mainstreaming allocated and tracked, and QCPR indicator 1.4.18 : Proportion out of total UNCTs with a Joint Work Plan in UN INFO that allocated 70% or more of the UNCT annual funding framework available resources to activities with gender equality as a principal or significant objective.

17 Aligned with UNCT-SWAP performance indicator 1.2, Gender Equality mainstreamed in UNSDCF outcomes and performance indicator 1.3, UNSDCF indicators measure changes on gender Equality.

Marker (UNCT-GEM) codes to JWP Sub-Outputs, and support quality assurance of coding.

✔ Advise the Results Groups and the M&E Group, Communications Group, the Operations Management Team, and other UN coordination mechanisms on gender mainstreaming in annual work planning, resource allocation and tracking, and monitoring and reporting.

Cooperation Framework Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

✔ Review the UNCT Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan to ensure that Cooperation Framework reviews and evaluations assess progress against gender-specific results and apply the UN Evaluation Group standards on human rights and gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation.[18]

✔ Review the annual reports of Results Groups and provide feedback to ensure that progress on GEWE results across the Cooperation Framework is reported.

✔ Support and facilitate trainings and capacity-development initiatives for UN staff, including on gender analysis, gender-responsive M&E and the UNCT-GEM.

✔ Contribute to mainstreaming gender equality considerations in the system-wide evaluation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and/or Cooperation Framework.

Accountability for Gender Mainstreaming Results

✔ Prepare an annual report on the implementation of the GTG work plan.

✔ Support the UNCT to keep track of the achievement by the UNCT of gender mainstreaming standards and spearhead the UNCT-SWAP assessments.

2.2 Integrated policy advice and technical support

The GTG should advance strategic dialogues and informal consultations on GEWE policy questions with the Government and civil society, ensuring an integrated approach to the aspirations of the host Government to reach SDG 5 and GEWE targets across the SDGs, and achieve related GEWE priorities.

Box 3. Tips for successful GTG support to ensuring a gender-responsive UN Cooperation Framework

✔ Include the Cooperation Framework as an agenda item at a GTG meeting to identify key GEWE action points for incorporation.

✔ Organize gender mainstreaming training for all UN technical staff involved in designing the UN Cooperation Framework, highlighting UNCT-SWAP standards related to joint planning, programming and M&E.

✔ 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.

✔ Propose GTG members (P4/NOC and above) to participate in Cooperation Framework planning and prioritization workshops, and to support facilitation at these workshops – or identify gender-specific facilitation through the regional Peer Support Group (PSG), or by an external gender expert.

✔ Facilitate the participation of the National Women's Machinery in the Cooperation Framework Strategic Prioritization Workshop.

✔ Make all background analysis, including GEWE international, regional and national normative standards and frameworks and sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data, available to the working groups.

✔ Support a review of the CCA before finalization, to ensure the incorporation of substantive gender analysis across sectors and thematic areas, and that gender issues are included in the summary section.

✔ Support the RCO to ensure that gender equality issues raised are included and documented in workshop reports.

✔ Incorporate GTG support to Cooperation Framework monitoring, evaluation and learning in the GTG work plan.

✔ Support the development of gender-responsive job descriptions and terms of reference so that appropriately skilled personnel are recruited.

✔ Support the National Women's Machinery's engagement in the Cooperation Framework Joint Management Committee (JMC), providing them with an annual update on UN support to GEWE in advance of JMC meetings.

18   UNEG (2014). Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations.

19   Where a summary section is included in the CCA, it is likely to be the basis for the design of the Cooperation Framework. UNSDG (2020). Cooperation Framework Companion Package, pages 9-23.

Communication and advocacy

- Ensure the annual work plan of the inter-agency Communications Group incorporates inter-agency communication and advocacy on GEWE priorities outlined in the Cooperation Framework, including activities conducted in partnership with the National Women's Machinery and with GEWE and Women's Human Rights CSOs.
- Support the Communications Group to provide high quality information on women and girls and gender equality issues – with specific attention to women and girls facing multiple forms of discrimination – through all its platforms.
- Collaborate with the Communications Group in the preparation and implementation of communication and outreach activities, including the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign, and International Women's Day.

Partnership development

- Provide strategic, technical and coordination support to enhance UNCT collaboration with the host Government and GEWE and Women's Human Rights CSOs and women's rights.
- Support the participation of the National Women's Machinery, as well as GEWE and Women's Human Rights CSOs in the design, implementation, and M&E of the Cooperation Framework.
- Promote and support dialogues with representatives of organizations and networks that represent excluded and disadvantaged groups of women and girls, to ensure that their rights, needs and interests inform UN policy engagement in-country.

Capacity building

- Technical support to assess the gender mainstreaming capacities of the UN in-country, and facilitation support to related trainings and capacity-development initiatives, including gender analysis in non-traditional gender areas and GEWE international, regional and national normative standards and frameworks.

Integrated policy dialogue and advice:

- Foster and support collective policy dialogue and advice on national GEWE priorities.

- Provide integrated policy guidance on gender mainstreaming across the UNCT development, humanitarian, human rights and peacebuilding response.
- Support the development of cross-sectoral partnerships for achieving the SDGs with the host Government, Development Partners, and GEWE and Women's Human Rights CSOs.
- Support the host Government in the implementation of, follow-up to and reporting on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in mainstreaming gender perspectives in their Voluntary National Reviews.

Box 4: Tips for successful GTG support to UNCT policy engagement, communication on GEWE priorities

- Assign a member of the inter-agency Communications Group as a member to the GTG.
- Provide background information as needed to the inter-agency Communications Group activities to ensure i) balanced numerical coverage of women and men in all communications and promotional campaigns, publications and events; ii) multi-dimensional portrayals of women and men in all UNCT speeches, briefings and other communication products, challenging gender stereotypes.
- Identify and maintain an updated list of key GEWE messages corresponding with Cooperation Framework GEWE priorities to be shared with the UNCT, RCO and Communications Group for incorporation in relevant communications activities and engagement.
- If no National Women's Machinery or inter-ministerial coordination body with responsibility to lead the national response to GEWE exists, support the UNCT to lobby for such a body.
- On a regular basis, engage with GEWE advocates and representatives of marginalized groups to understand their priorities and how the UN can better support them, ensuring their participation in Cooperation Framework planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

3. HOW DO GENDER THEME GROUPS OPERATE?

For GTGs to be effective in performing their programme support and advocacy functions, they must be equipped with adequate resources and gender mainstreaming knowledge and skills, including GEWE international, regional and national normative standards and frameworks, and supported by an enabling environment that allows for empowered decision-making on gender equality priorities.

3.1 Gender theme group capacity

GTG capacity is contingent upon the strength of UNCT entity internal gender equality architectures. Robust internal gender architecture in UNCT entities, comprising trained gender focal points at level P4, NOC or equivalent and above, and actively championed by the HOA, will enable the entity to participate effectively in the GTG, contributing to the collective goals as well as to internal gender mainstreaming.

The RC holds HOAs accountable for establishing effective internal gender architecture, and for ensuring that their representatives on the GTG are at the required level and participate in and contribute to GTG activities consistently, allocating at minimum 10 per cent of their time to GTG activities.[20]

Each UN entity should ensure opportunities for their GTG focal points to enhance their skills and knowledge for effective participation in GTG activities. Collectively, and with the support of the GTG chair, the UNCT should identify and facilitate joint learning opportunities for GTG focal points in gender analysis, gender mainstreaming standards and tools, and Cooperation Framework processes.

3.2 Enabling environment

The extent to which the RC and HOAs exercise their leadership to empower GTGs and provide the enabling organizational culture that fully supports the promotion of gender equality, inclusion and diversity, has a deep impact on the extent to which gender mainstreaming can be achieved by the UN at country level. UNCT leadership ensures awareness and understanding of the GTG mandate by communicating about this internally and externally, and by actively and visibly consulting the GTG on gender issues.

A culture in which personnel are encouraged to pool and share their knowledge, and where cross-cutting teams, such as GTGs, foster and catalyze synergies, is a pre-condition for the collective learning required for effective Cooperation Framework implementation, and for mainstreaming of all kinds, including gender mainstreaming and the "Leave No One Behind" principle (LNOB) from Agenda 2030. The RC and HOAs, working together as a collective and transformative leadership team, have responsibility to establish and maintain such a productive organizational culture.

The GTG should be understood as a structure that facilitates the creation, acquisition and the transfer of knowledge, enhancing the UN's capacity to deliver GEWE commitments in the Cooperation Framework. The standards and procedures discussed in this guidance, and embodied in the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard, underpin and support the effective functioning of the GTG and achievement of gender equality results by the UNCTs.

3.3 Working methods

i) Gender Theme Group Work Plan:

The GTG work plan, developed through a participatory process among GTG members, should be systematically aligned with the UNCT and Results Groups' work plans, ensuring maximum coherence. Further, the GTG work plan should include specific deliverables for cross-cutting strategic support to Results Groups and other inter-agency groups.

The GTG work plan activities will be costed, available sources of funding identified, and responsible UN entities assigned. The finalized GTG work plan will be approved by the UNCT under the leadership of the RC. The UNCT will be kept informed at least quarterly on the implementation of the work plan by the Chair of the GTG. Each member of the GTG contributes to the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the work plan. The results are to be incorporated into the annual report, which will be discussed and endorsed by the UNCT. The UNCT will be kept informed regularly (at least twice a year) on the implementation of the work plan by the Chair of the GTG. Key results should be highlighted into the UNCT annual report, which will be discussed and endorsed by the UNCT. The GTG work plan may be incorporated as an annex in the UNCT-SWAP Action Plan.

---

20   The recommendation to allocate a minimum of 10% of GFPs time for joint activities is aligned to the UN-SWAP recommendation that GFPs should spend a minimum of 20% of their time on gender-related activities. The 10% recommendation is based on the assumption that half of the gender-related activities are joint activities.

ii) Gender Theme Group meetings:

In order to function effectively, the GTG chair will convene the GTG regularly to assess progress vis-a-vis the GTG work plan, share information and updates on new developments, identify challenges and risks, and facilitate agreement on next steps. The GTG chair is responsible for ensuring meeting preparations and knowledge management. Action-oriented meetings are highly recommended. It is strongly recommended that the GTG meet at least on a quarterly basis. The GTG Chair may organize more frequent meetings based on the country contexts/needs.

iii) Extended Gender Theme Group meetings – internal to UN:

Coordination with humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts: Where there is a protracted crisis and the presence of a Humanitarian Country Team, Integrated Mission or Political Mission, the GTG should convene and collaborate with the gender focal points of UN humanitarian and peacekeeping entities to:

- Maximize synergies and full complementarity of work to address gender-based discrimination and harmful gender norms across the development, humanitarian and peacebuilding spheres.
- Pool data, analysis and disaggregated statistics on gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.
- Undertake joint risk analysis and needs assessments to identify the gender inequalities that lead to different vulnerabilities, capacities, decision-making power and participation of women, girls, men and boys, in line with IASC Policy on Gender Equality.[21]
- Ensure collaboration with the Government and with GEWE and Women's Human Rights CSOs to reduce crisis-related gender-specific needs, vulnerabilities and risks over time and to increase the participation and leadership of women and girls in crisis-related planning and decision-making.

Where GTGs function as combined coordination mechanism with other thematic groups, such as Human Rights, Disability Inclusion, Youth or PSEA, it should receive additional resources that are proportional to the additional mandates they are requested to cover. TORs for these groups should capture the expected deliverables of the group on advancing GEWE in line with the ECOSOC mandate for GTG.

Annual UNCT-SWAP assessments: The GTG should play a proactive role in spearheading UNCT-SWAP assessments and monitoring progress. The GTG chair is responsible for convening meetings with and coordinating and consolidating inputs from members of UN coordination groups, including Results Groups, Programme Management Team, M&E Group, Operations Management Team, and Communications Groups to comprehensive assessments occurring at the Cooperation Framework planning stage and annual assessments to report on progress.[22]

iv) Extended Gender Theme Group meetings – external stakeholders:

The GTG may periodically or on an ad hoc basis convene extended meetings with government counterparts, including the National Women's Machinery; women's rights advocates and GEWE and Women's Human Rights CSOs including those representing excluded/marginalized women and girls; and/or Development Partners, including bilateral agencies, multilateral development banks, foundations and trusts as well as other private sectors actors, and academia. The purpose of these meetings will be to ensure participation, build consensus and collaborate on national gender equality priorities, coordinate support, and develop capacities.

3.4 Financial resources

The provision of adequate resources to enable a functional and empowered GTG is mandatory, called for by ECOSOC.[23] Resources are needed to undertake joint planning and implement joint activities in support of national GEWE priorities, covering:

- Costs associated with consultations, workshops, field visits, the production of knowledge products, and communications activities.
- Hiring of gender equality experts, especially for data collection, gender analysis, gender-responsive evaluations and assessments, joint programme design, capacity building, and technical support to the implementation of the gender mainstreaming accountability frameworks and tools (UNCT-SWAP and UNCT-GEM).
- Costs associated with GTG secretariat functions, including venue costs and staff to manage arrangements for meetings and to keep a formal record of meeting minutes and GTG decisions and follow-up.

21   Inter-Agency Standing Committee. IASC Gender Accountability Framework Report 2021 | IASC (interagencystandingcommittee.org) (2021).

22   UNSDG (2018). UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard: Framework & Technical Guidance, page 20.

23   ECOSOC (2019). Resolution on Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the UN system (E/RES/2019/2), para 7-I.

Funding requirements need to be reflected in the GTG annual work plan, which is presented to the UNCT by the GTG chair. The RC then leads the HOA discussion to collectively decide on the allocation of UNCT resources – whether of time, expertise or funds – to the GTG work plan. Options for funding the GTG include:

- ✔ Separate funding from UN entities to specific activities in the GTG work plan.
- ✔ Establishment of a country-level pooled fund dedicated to GTG activities.
- ✔ Adding a budget line to the Cooperation Framework Funding Framework to accommodate cross-thematic support to Cooperation Framework design and implementation, with a percentage ear-marked for the GTG.
- ✔ Incorporate funding to gender mainstreaming related work undertaken by the GTG in gender equality programmes funded by country-earmarked Multi-Partner Trust Funds.
- ✔ Allocate resources from the RC Special Purpose Trust Funds for costs associated with undertaking UNCT-SWAP assessments.

The RC, GTG chair and HOAs must actively support GTG resource mobilization efforts, and work towards reliability and predictability of funding to GTG activities.

Each UN entity is responsible for covering the costs associated with the participation of their focal point(s) in GTG activities.

3.5 Regional support

The 2030 Agenda and the 2020 QCPR emphasize the regional dimension for development in bridging the global and national levels, with the QCPR identifying as a key role of the UN at regional level, support to the achievement of the SDGs based on an understanding of regional specificities.

Anchored under the Regional Collaborative Platform (RCP) and comprised of the Executive Secretaries of Regional Economic and Social Commissions, Regional Directors of UN Development System entities and the Regional Director of the UN Development Cooperation Office, regional UN coordination mechanisms available to support country level GTGs include:

→ Regional Peer Support Groups: Provision of technical advice in quality assurance of CCAs and Cooperation Frameworks, including the gender dimensions thereof.
→ Regional gender equality focused Issue-Based Coalitions and regional GTGs: Provision of guidance to support addressing specific GEWE issues, as relevant to their focus.

In addition, regional Development Cooperation Offices provide support to bringing country level information and requests to the attention of the RCP, while UN Women Regional Offices stand ready to coordinate support to and advise on the implementation of key gender mainstreaming tools and frameworks, including the UNCT-SWAP and the UNCT Gender Equality Marker.

UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard Training Workshop for UNCTs in the Asia-Pacific region.
Buris Na Wong /UN Women Thailand
Bangkok, Thailand, 2019