



DRIVERS OF UN-SWAP PROGRESS 2012 - 2016



INTRODUCTION

Since its inception in 2012, the UN-SWAP has guided the UN system in mainstreaming gender equality considerations in all institutional functions. Five years of implementation have produced remarkable progress in meeting or exceeding the UN-SWAP requirements, with compliance increasing by 35 percentage points, from 34% to nearly 70%.

In 2016, UNAIDS was the first UN entity to meet or exceed all UN-SWAP indicators. While, overall, the UN system has not yet achieved all the UN-SWAP targets, several UN entities are close to full compliance.

As of 2016, 11 entities - out of 65 - are lagging by 1 or 2 indicators to position themselves within reach of the UN-SWAP target. The performance patterns of these 11 entities are diverse, as the indicators separating them from full compliance belong to different UN-SWAP areas. This suggests that a blanket approach to support performance targeting one specific indicator or UN-SWAP area is unlikely to generate collective progress by the group. Conversely, entity-specific, tailored interventions are needed. These, however, require additional efforts and resources from UN Women.

For those entities which are further behind in UN-SWAP performance, the UN-SWAP trends generated by five years of implementation clearly indicate that key drivers of progress across performance areas exist, and that these can be targeted to effectively enhance performance and generate a positive, cascading effect across indicators and performance areas. For entities with limited capacities and resources, identifying these drivers can help them focus investments in the areas that have the highest impact.

In the next section, key drivers and lessons learnt are presented by thematic/functional criteria. This has the purpose of highlighting synergies across indicators and performance areas. UN-SWAP reporting shows that entities with better performance are also those which have approached the UN-SWAP framework comprehensively, understanding that indicators are interdependent.

The systematization of key drivers and lessons learnt is expected to guide UN entities not only in the last stretch of UN-SWAP implementation, but also, and most importantly, in planning their strategic approach to UN-SWAP 2.0.

METHODOLOGY

The observations and conclusions on key drivers of progress and lessons learnt are the product of an extensive qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data generated by five years of reporting under the UN-SWAP.

Correlations among indicators were calculated using the latest available data (2016), while qualitative analysis spanned across all five years of

reporting, to identify trends in the inputs provided by focal points. Furthermore, the main findings of and the anonymous responses to the independent external evaluation of UN Women's coordination mandate were used, as that evaluation touched extensively on the UN-SWAP as a tool for UN coordination.

A ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

I Gender equality policies

KEY DRIVER OF PROGRESS: GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES

UN entities with a gender policy/plan meet or exceed, on average, twice the number of indicators of entities without such a policy/plan.

Gender equality policies and plans lay the organizational framework to guide and support UN entities to deliver on gender equality work, including the UN-SWAP. Entities with updated gender policies have clearer gender equality and women's empowerment objectives, monitoring frameworks, distribution of responsibilities and resources to deliver on GEWE, among others. In 2012, only 21 reporting entities had gender equality (GE) policies. This increased to 51 five years later, in 2016.

Furthermore, entities whose gender policies/plans are aligned with internal strategic documents and/or organizational-wide policies have demonstrated stronger uptake and more effective and efficient implementation. Anchoring GE policies in the organization's priorities helps staff understand how GEWE work is a concrete component in their organization's mandate.

LESSON LEARNT

When GE policies and plans are anchored in the organization-wide priorities, and, in particular, in strategic plans or equivalent, gender equality work is carried out more effectively.

How a GE policy/plan is developed has a direct impact on its sustainability. UN-SWAP practice has demonstrated that, in those organizations with internal resistance to gender equality, *the methodology used to develop a GE policy can help reverse negative attitudes and narratives around gender equality work, if that methodology is highly participatory and consultative* and engages staff beyond the gender unit or Gender Focal Points (GFP) net-

work or equivalent. For example, entities reported that extensive iterative processes involving both HQ and regional levels and all departments of an organization have contributed to awaken interest in gender equality issues among non-focal points, creating a web of gender-aware supporters across departments and locations that have informally furthered the gender equality agenda through their daily work and professional interactions.

LESSON LEARNT

A participatory and inclusive development process for a GE policy/plan can be a game changer within organizations with resistance to gender equality, as this have proven to trigger wider support for gender equality from staff at all levels and in all functional areas.

II

Accountability mechanisms and performance management

Clear accountability mechanisms are key to ignite and sustain progress. When senior leaders' performance is monitored and rewarded, the organizations they lead are more likely to

successfully deliver on the UN-SWAP requirements. While all staff levels should have adequate accountability mechanisms, senior level compacts have proven to be able to jump start performance.

KEY DRIVER OF PROGRESS: SENIOR ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

UN entities with gender policies/plans and a mechanism in place to ensure accountability of senior managers for GEWE are, on average, nine times more likely to exceed requirements for UN-SWAP indicators than those without.

While accountability at the senior level is the cornerstone of compliance, entities that have performed better on gender sensitive performance management are those which have expanded the

notion of accountability for gender equality and the empowerment of women to include all staff, at all grades and levels, through performance plans and reviews.

LESSON LEARNT

Accountability for gender equality is best implemented when it not only targets senior leaders but also includes all staff, through the integration of appropriate objectives in each staff member's performance plan and review.

The UN-SWAP recognizes that positive performance is the result of the combination of accountability mechanisms as well as rewards and incentives. The UN-SWAP framework requires entities to implement both these approaches, in order to exceed requirements for "Performance Indicator (PI) 2 Gender responsive performance management". However, in the five years of implementation of the UN-SWAP, reporting entities have focused primarily on creating or strengthening accountability mechanisms rather than on setting up reward systems. This is not surprising, as the lack of accountability has been repeatedly recognized as a major obstacle to gender equality and was therefore a priority. In 2016, only 6 entities (less than 10% of reporting entities) indicated that they have a system in place to recognize excellent work promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. However, the importance of reward systems as incentives to perfor-

mance is getting increased attention: an example of this is the recent Secretary-General Awards. Further, UN-SWAP reporting has proven that accountability mechanisms (performance plans) which link expected results to capacity development objectives receive higher support by staff. In order for GE responsibilities to be considered sustainable, staff needs to be equipped with the appropriate skills to carry them out. This indicates that there is a positive synergy between the UN-SWAP indicators related to performance management and capacity development.

This highlights the comprehensive nature of the UN-SWAP framework, which is built on synergies across areas and indicators. It also suggests that practices that break silos and take full advantage of the interactions and interdependencies of indicators are the most effective for UN-SWAP implementation.

LESSON LEARNT

Linking performance management objectives related to gender equality and the empowerment of women to capacity building has improved compliance, results and support within those entities that have implemented it, as performance for gender equality is associated with skills and knowledge development of staff, and not only to policing.

III

Change management

UN-SWAP reporting reveals that *disruptive events, such as a leadership change or an organization-wide restructuring, have generally proven positive for the positioning of gender equality work within an organization.* In several cases, these events have led to the gender unit or equivalent to be placed higher up in the organization's chart, of-

ten within direct access to senior leaders, and closer to the planning department or equivalent. In a few cases of organizational restructuring, gender equality and gender mainstreaming have helped consolidate other existing organizational change processes, addressing challenges that would have been otherwise difficult to effectively process.

LESSON LEARNT

Disruptive events can become opportunities for gender equality, as they may help raise the profile of gender work, its positioning and its priority status within an organization.

IV

Gender focal points and business owners

KEY DRIVER OF PROGRESS: GENDER FOCAL POINTS SYSTEM

Entities with a dedicated gender focal point system appointed at the P-4 or higher level, written Terms of Reference and a minimum requirement of 20 per cent of time allocated to gender equality work meet or exceed, on average, requirements for 1/3 more indicators than those entities that are missing a Gender Focal Point System.

UN-SWAP reporting results highlight the importance of a Gender Focal Point system to further gender equality work within an organization. *While this is nowadays taken for granted, it was not the case before the implementation of the UN-SWAP.* The analysis of UN-SWAP reports, and in particular of submissions related to “factors determining ad-

vancement”, indicates that the awareness of the critical contribution of GFP networks for effective GE work developed over time: while, in 2012, GFP networks were almost never mentioned among the critical factors to deliver on the UN-SWAP, five years later, in 2016, their importance is widely recognized. Specifically, GFP networks were listed as

key factors for progress with increasing frequency with every year of UN-SWAP reporting. frequently with every year of UN-SWAP reporting. Evidence, therefore, indicates that the UN-SWAP can be credited with having shown UN entities the benefits of a functioning GFPs network and of a supportive architecture for gender equality, building awareness that was not present five years ago.

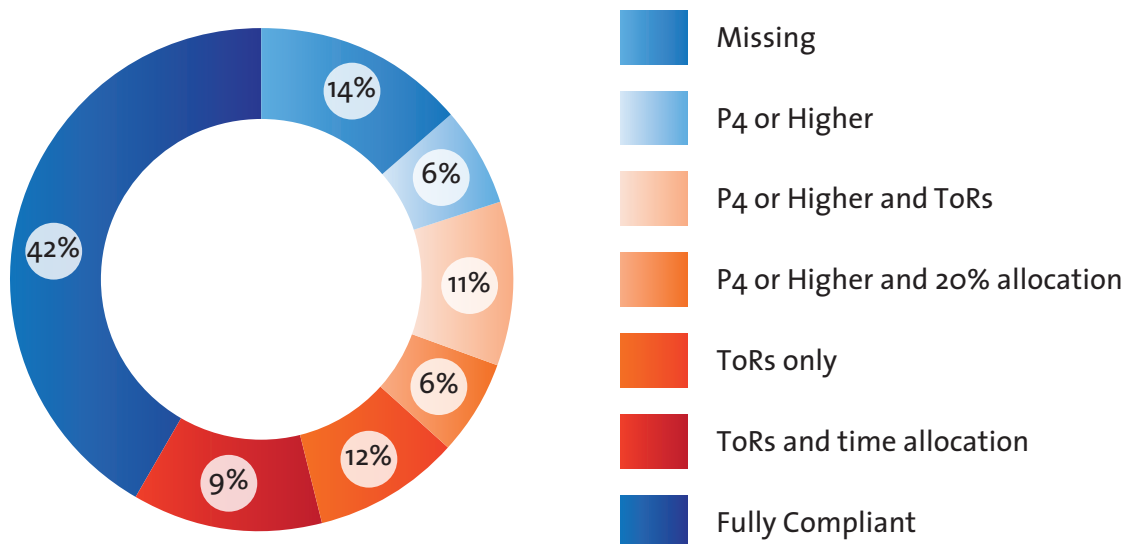
The UN-SWAP requires a fully-compliant gender focal points system based on three key components:

- Seniority: Dedicated gender focal points appointed at the P-4 or higher level;

- Defined responsibility: Written Terms of Reference; and
- Time allocation: A minimum requirement of 20 per cent of time allocated set forth in the Terms of Reference.

The graph below indicates that, in 2016, while 27 entities (or 42%) met all three of these requirements, 9 entities (14%) did not meet any. The remaining 29 entities complied with two or fewer of the sub-requirements.

Gender Focal Point System Architecture



Further, the sub-requirements listed above with which entities comply seem to have a direct impact on the organization’s overall UN-SWAP performance. For example, entities that have established Terms of References and a minimum of 20% time allocation perform better than those which have only seniority but no ToRs. Most of the entities which do not comply with the seniority requirement report to compensate for the lack of focal points at the p4 and above level through alternative measures, such as access to and influence upon Senior Managers, and pairing national and international staff members to constitute focal points teams. While these measures are no

substitute for seniority, the result above infers that, in specific cases, clear responsibilities, time allocation and proximity to senior management may result in a similarly impactful gender focal point architecture even if at a lower grade level.

With regards to the gender unit or equivalent, in 2012, at the start of the implementation of the UN-SWAP, *gender equality work was most often than not the exclusive responsibility of - an often isolated - gender unit or equivalent. Due to its isolation, the ability to carry out gender mainstreaming work was limited in scope and discontinuous in approach.*

Five years later, in 2016, 92% of entities that provided information indicate that staff other than the gender focal point or unit are designated as responsible for follow-up action around a specific UN-SWAP indicator. This percentage has continued to increase, with a 12-points percentage

positive difference since 2015. This decentralized model incorporates a strengthened network of responsibility and accountability spread more widely throughout the organizations, and has proven critical to enhanced performance for many UN-SWAP reporting entities.

LESSON LEARNT

Effective gender mainstreaming is better vehiculated by a network of focal points across all business functions and beyond the gender unit (or equivalent).

In parallel to the expansion of the network of responsibility, gender focal points have repeatedly indicated in their UN-SWAP reports that *demands on gender focal points for expertise and overall co-ordination have increased over time. This has not correlated with an adequate growth in resources – both financial and human – to gender units/focal*

points or equivalent, generating an unsustainable tension between the levels of innovation, scaling-up and learning that are needed and the actual capacities of gender focal points to deliver. This is a significant challenge for the effectiveness of gender equality work within UN entities.

V

Entity size

One of the several strengths of the UN-SWAP is that it constitutes a comprehensive accountability mechanism that guides gender mainstreaming across all of the main functional areas of an organization. Nonetheless, this strength has often been noted as a weakness or an obstacle by entities of smaller size, which cannot draw from the same level of human and financial resources as bigger entities for UN-SWAP implementation. *In practice, however, UN-SWAP performance is not markedly different between entities with less than 50 staff*

members and the larger ones¹. In 2016, reporting entities with 251 to 750 staff met or exceeded requirements for an average of 9.5 indicators out of a total of 15. This corresponds to the overall average of all UN reporting entities in the same year. In comparison, entities with less than 50 staff members met or exceeded an average of 8.4 indicators, only one indicator below the overall average and the same of entities with more than 10,000 staff members.

¹ The correlation was calculated on the basis of a sample of 61 reporting entities, excluding the Global Compact, UNCDF, IOM and UNV for which parity data was as of 31 December 2015 was not available.

B LEADERSHIP AND BUY-IN

UN-SWAP reports since 2012 have consistently indicated that a committed and supportive senior leadership has been critical to many of the achievements of the UN-SWAP.

Interestingly, UN-SWAP findings evidence a change in perception from 2012 to 2016 with regards to the role of senior leadership. While, in 2012, senior leadership's support was the sole driver for UN-SWAP progress (followed, but mentioned considerably less times, by adequate resources and capacities), in 2016, UN-SWAP reports indicate that focal points believe that, while leadership is a necessary element to bring about change, it alone is insufficient to ensure progress. Other important and necessary contributors include adequate human and financial resources, as well as the continuous support of the Help Desk maintained by UN Women, the existence of a gender policy/plan, the close monitoring and support of Executive Boards or equivalent, and of donors and Member States, the existence of a solid GFP network, and access to lessons learnt and expertise through interagency partnerships.

These conclusions align with implementation approaches based on dividing responsibilities across business functions, empowering staff across levels and through-out the organization. This seems also consistent with the redefinition of the attributes of leadership for gender equality used within the UN-SWAP, which has moved from a centralized, individual and top-down model, to a horizontal and distributed one.

While supportive leadership drives progress, leaders are not always supportive. Focal points and gender advocates have adopted a variety of approaches to ensure buy-in by senior managers, including, for example, global staff surveys. The findings of global staff surveys highlight new and existing issues related to organizational culture, rally staff members behind organizational change, and are conversation starters toward change management strategies.

LESSON LEARNT

Global staff surveys have proven effective, in many instances, to garner leadership support towards strengthened GE work, where and when not already present, by exercising bottom-up pressure for inclusive practices in all functions of the organization.

Other approaches to gain the support of senior leaders have included promoting their participation in highly visible campaigns related to gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEWE), including, for example, the International Gender Champions Initiative, which aggregates decision-makers at the highest level who undertake timebound commitments for gender equality in both their organizations and their wider pro-

fessional relations. Such initiatives are effective in rallying leaders behind specific commitments for gender equality as they create a system of professional competition among peers which fosters collaborations and progress, and rewards them with high visibility for themselves and their organizations.

LESSON LEARNT

Participation in system-wide, highly visible campaigns, such as the gender champions initiative, where commitments are specific, mandatory and frequently monitored, creates healthy competition among leaders and can ignite their support for gender equality.

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C CAPACITY BUILDING AND COMMUNICATION

In the five years of implementation of the UN-SWAP, the number of entities which provide mandatory gender training to their staff increased by 400%, from 12 to 48. A significant improvement of performance was registered in 2016 alone, when compliance increased by 21 percentage points in comparison to 2015. Further, to date, more than 18,000 UN staff members have completed the “I Know Gender” course, ensuring all staff possess a basic and uniform understanding of gender equality concepts.

Entities with an ongoing mandatory training for all staff and which offer senior managers tailored training during orientation meet or exceed 70% more indicators than entities which do not have the above in place. This points to the foundational role of adequate gender related capacities at all levels to drive progress across all UN-SWAP indicators, beyond Performance Indicator (PI) 13. Entities aiming to improve their overall performance should target capacity development as a lever for progress.

KEY DRIVER OF PROGRESS: GENDER TRAINING

Entities which provide gender training for all staff at all levels, including senior managers, meet or exceed 70% more indicators that entities which have no training in place.

As some entities have pointed out in their UN-SWAP reporting, senior managers have a critical role in creating and advancing gender inclusiveness. Therefore, *gender awareness and inclusive people management skills by leaders are key to*

overall performance; those entities that target these, besides offering general training for all staff, have demonstrated stronger performance than entities which do not.

Effective communication of gender equality work also appears to have a direct positive correlation with the overall UN-SWAP performance of an entity. Entities that systematically document knowledge on gender equality and women’s empowerment, have a communication plan that includes gender equality and women’s empowerment as an integral component of internal and public infor-

mation dissemination and are actively involved in an inter-agency community of practice on gender equality and the empowerment of women are, on average, nearly twice (1.7 times) as likely to meet or exceed the amount of indicators than entities that do not meet or exceed requirements for Performance Indicator 14.

KEY DRIVER OF PROGRESS: SYSTEMATIC COMMUNICATION

Entities that are fully compliant with the UN-SWAP requirements related to knowledge management and communication are nearly twice as likely to meet or exceed UN-SWAP indicators than entities which do not.

D PARTNERSHIPS

The findings of the evaluation of the UN system coordination function of UN Women, conducted in 2016, have pointed out that several entities significantly appreciate the sense of community that the UN-SWAP has created. Its implementation has helped revitalize and strengthen a network of solidarity across the UN system, through which UN entities and Focal Points are able to share expertise, lessons learnt, good practices and advocacy efforts. *Focal points indicated that the horizontality of the operational culture with which the UN-SWAP is led gives equal influence to all participants, encourages inter-agency exchanges, and constitutes one of the most distinguishing factors contributing to its success.*

The network revived through the UN-SWAP has fostered collaborations and partnerships among UN entities in relation to their gender equality work. In a context of progressive reduction of general financial allocations, and, in many cases, of allocation specific to gender equality work, focal points have reported that the partnerships supported by the UN-SWAP have partially compensated for the reduction in funding. Through them, UN entities are able to access expertise, knowledge and good practices that are relevant to their work, making savings on scarce resources and reducing duplication. Effective partnerships are often listed by focal points among the key factors for UN-SWAP progress.

LESSON LEARNT

In a context of shrinking financial resources, partnerships around sharing UN-SWAP related knowledge and good practices have sustained or propelled the performance of those entities that have used them.

Focal points indicate that partnerships provide two-fold benefits. First, when an entity's performance is stalling, working closely with another entity in the UN system through the UN-SWAP assists to reignite motivation through healthy

competition, peer pressure and encouragement. Second, when in-house gender expertise is limited, drawing on the knowledge of the rest of the UN-SWAP focal points is the best solution.

I

Central support

In their annual UN-SWAP reports, UN entities repeatedly indicated that the progress they have achieved would not have been possible without the continuous, dedicated and tailored support of the UN-SWAP Help Desk managed by UN Women. More specifically, *entities have credited UN Wom-*

en's leadership and support with helping to ensure there is a sustained focus on achieving UN-SWAP progress, by, inter alia, providing training, networking and information-sharing opportunities, as well as a wide range of technical support.

LESSON LEARNT

An active and resourced central hub for coordination and coherence is critical to the success of mechanisms that monitor system-wide performance based on the progressive development of capacities and functions.

In particular, inter-agency meetings have been mentioned by reporting entities as one of the main drivers to propel and sustain progress. Opportunities for in-person interaction significantly

and meaningfully solidify partnerships, support information sharing and peer learning, enhance coherence and strengthen coordination.

II

Member States and donors

The positive results of the UN-SWAP have increased its visibility with UN Member States and the donor community. Donors are often mentioned by UN-SWAP focal points among the critical factors of progress within one entity. In particular, donors and Member States can have a real and positive

impact on an entity's UN-SWAP performance, as they push for more ambitious UN-SWAP results, support the approval of supportive language in resolutions, and can advocate for more funding for gender equality work.

LESSON LEARNT

Member States and donors may have a tangible and positive impact on an entity's UN-SWAP performance as they push for stronger performance on gender equality and can win the resistance of senior leadership.