

Background Note to the Executive Board, First Regular Session 2019

Knowledge Management Strategy – Harnessing knowledge for organisational effectiveness

Knowledge Management is a set of practices and processes that enable an organisation to generate, systematise and share cutting-edge knowledge both internally and externally. In doing so, it promotes efficiency, reduces duplication and fosters learning and innovation. In the case of UN-Women, Knowledge Management strengthens the ‘how to’ of advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment.

More specifically, UN-Women will seek to achieve the following three Knowledge Management Strategic Outcomes:

- Improved performance across UN-Women’s triple mandate (normative, coordination, operational) and most urgently in terms of capacity development through training
- Enhanced technical advisory services and evidence-based advocacy to mainstream gender into national policies and initiatives
- Strengthened capacity to engage in policy dialogue on gender equality as a non-resident agency (through, for example, country gender profiles in contexts where UN-Women does not have programme presence).

To position itself in the new regional architecture proposed by the United Nations Development System (UNDS) reform, UN-Women will need to demonstrate how it can add value to development proposals by providing timely evidence-based analysis, strategies and tools to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment in different and complex environments and in a range of UN Country Team (UNCT) configurations as foreseen by the UNDS reform.

The UN-Women’s Strategic Plan 2018–2021 highlights the importance of strengthened capacities for Knowledge Management for the advancement of gender equality and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Knowledge, together with innovation, results-based management and evaluation, is an element of high-quality programmes (Output 3: Organisational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework, OEEF).

The 2018–2021 Strategic Plan also requires UN-Women to continue strengthening its knowledge platforms; develop communities of practice (COPs) bringing together thematic expertise and knowledge from across the organisation and its partners; strengthen its capacity to anticipate emerging issues and trends to better drive normative advances, monitor progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), develop effective advocacy strategies and enhance gender-responsive programming; explore operational innovations for agenda-setting; and further develop South-South collaboration and triangular initiatives.

This Strategy proposes three objectives to move from ad-hoc knowledge production and sharing to standardised Knowledge Management practices. These objectives are based on an understanding of a hierarchical relationship between data, information and knowledge and how organisational learning happens. They are intended to improve Knowledge Management systems at each level of the pyramid, to foster links between different kinds of knowledge and ultimately to support UN-Women's thought leadership. Their achievement will be supported by cutting-edge ICT tools that will support knowledge production and sharing.

Objective 1: Strengthen knowledge production, capture and analysis

Strengthening knowledge production within UN-Women will allow the organisation to address knowledge gaps and more accurately capture what works to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. It will also allow UN-Women to position itself as a key partner at the regional level and in the new UNCT configuration and lead the UN System planning processes such as the Common Country Analysis-United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA-UNDAF), etc., on gender equality and women's empowerment by providing evidence-based solutions. This will be done through two main lines of action: identifying and addressing knowledge gaps and strengthening the production of knowledge, including through standardised quality assurance.

Objective 2: Strengthen knowledge sharing and exchange within UN-Women and with partners

Strengthened internal knowledge sharing will enhance understanding and collaboration across sections. It will also prevent duplication of efforts and improve organisational efficiency. Enhanced external knowledge sharing will allow UN-Women to reach out to external partners and stakeholders to benefit from their expertise and knowledge, increase its impact and position the organisation as a knowledge hub on gender equality and women's empowerment.

To achieve this objective, UN-Women will focus on enhancing knowledge and communication flows between headquarters and regional and country offices through its Knowledge Management strategy. It will also seek to strengthen South-South collaboration by creating opportunities to be led by country offices.

Additionally, UN-Women will reach out to external stakeholders (including governments, UN System agencies, academia and civil society) and act as a knowledge curator and knowledge broker, making its own high-quality knowledge products available, as well as assessing, recommending and ensuring quality resources produced by other stakeholders and partners are also available.

Objective 3: Develop a knowledge-sharing culture and better collaboration across sections

An organisational culture that encourages knowledge sharing will be strengthened through strong leadership and an enabling environment. The Strategy proposes to achieve this objective through four key modalities: creating an enabling environment for knowledge production and sharing;

streamlining Knowledge Management in annual work plans and operations; including Knowledge Management indicators in performance management and development; strengthening capacity for Knowledge Management in UN-Women

Implementation

This Knowledge Management Strategy focuses on standardising existing processes as well as integrating new ones. It also aims to provide criteria for prioritising activities while supporting UN-Women in its transition from process management to focusing on results management.

All UN-Women staff and personnel will be responsible for implementing the Knowledge Management Strategy, which will be coordinated by a Knowledge Management Specialist. Given the position's key role in knowledge production within UN-Women, the Knowledge Management Specialist will be structurally located within the Research and Data section.

In view of the Strategy's decentralised approach, dedicated resources at the regional level will be key for its implementation. Each division, section and regional and country office will develop a specific work plan with the support of the Knowledge Management Specialist. Its implementation will strengthen the current change management process and better position UN-Women in the UNDS reform process. The Strategy's implementation will allow UN-Women to transition from ad hoc, uneven and inconsistent Knowledge Management practices to systematic and consistent approaches that create synergies, provide quality assurance and ensure that the best available knowledge and experience throughout the organisation is made available to all UN-Women staff anywhere in the world. They will thus be fully equipped to provide the best available knowledge on gender equality and women's empowerment in UN-Women's strategic areas to partners and stakeholders, especially Member States.