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About the System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP)

What is the origin of the UN-SWAP?

January 2006: The Secretary-General asked the high-level committees for programme and management of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to develop, in cooperation with his Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, a system-wide gender mainstreaming policy to

accelerate implementation of ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/2 on “Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system”.

April 2006: During the first regular session of the CEB, it was agreed that gender equality was critical to the achievement of the internationally development goals and the MDGs. The CEB requested a system-wide policy at its next regular session to consider further concrete actions by the executive heads on the basis of proposals to be submitted by the Special Adviser and the recommendations of its two high level committees.

October 2006: At its second regular session CEB members endorsed the system-wide policy on gender equality and presented to it by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women. It also requested that as a next step the Special Adviser develop a UN-SWAP to be presented

to the joint meeting of the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) and the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) in the spring of 2007. While there were some discussions on the Action Plan in the Inter-agency Network for Women and Gender Equality, the plan was not prepared or presented.

2011: UN Women took up the matter, which also aligned with its own mandate to lead, coordinate and promote accountability of the UN system for its work on gender equality and empowerment of women.

2012: UN Women presented the system-wide action plan to the HLCP and HLCM at their spring meetings, and subsequently to the CEB in April.

What is the UN-SWAP?

- The UN-SWAP is a unified gender equality framework, designed to promote accountability, a common understanding, enhanced coherence, systematic self-assessment, and a steady targeted and progressive approach to which the UN system entities can aspire and adhere in their work on gender equality and the empowerment of women at the corporate level. For the first time the UN system has a common set of measures on gender mainstreaming and the representation of women against which to report, and against which senior managers can be held accountable.
- The UN-SWAP will facilitate and substantiate accountability to Member States for the work of the UN system on gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- Its conceptual model involves progression from a checklist to a scorecard approach, transforming accountability for the work of entities on gender equality from a reactive to a proactive one.

What was the CEB mandate with respect to the policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women for the UN system?

The CEB stipulated that the UN-SWAP was to reflect a system-wide understanding of concepts, norms, standards and indicators, be built on lessons learned and achievements of each individual entity and specify the actions required for implementation of its six elements with time frames and indicators, responsibilities, accountability mechanisms and resources, to strengthen the UN system’s work on gender equality and empowerment of women at both system-wide and individual entity levels

The CEB also stipulated that the results of implementation were to be monitored at senior management level and reported to the HLCM and HLCP on a regular schedule specified in advance.

Why does the UN-SWAP contain both gender mainstreaming and the equal representation of women?

The CEB policy explicitly includes both of these areas and the UN-SWAP mirrors this. Both are central to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The equal representation of women is mandated by the General Assembly for all levels and occupational groups.

How is the UN-SWAP aligned with other ongoing work on accountability in the UN system?

In response to the CEB Policy, UN Women is facilitating the development and rolling out of three inter-connecting and mutually reinforcing mechanisms, which will establish a comprehensive UN accountability framework for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment:

- The UN-SWAP focuses on corporate processes and institutional arrangements at the individual entity level. The UN-SWAP was developed taking into account the various accountability frameworks in place in individual entities—the first step in the development of the UN-SWAP was a review of these frameworks.
- The [United Nations Country Teams \(UNCT\) Performance Indicators for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women](#), introduced in August 2008. The UNCT Performance Indicators focus on UNCT performance as a whole rather than individual entities, e.g., the quality of the UNDAF including its development and monitoring and evaluation; joint programmes and programming; and capacity development with counterparts. The Performance Indicators in the UN-SWAP have been aligned with the UNCT Performance Indicators, with use of the same Performance Indicators as relevant.
- Accountability for the United Nations system's contributions to gender equality development results at country and normative levels. Whereas the UN-SWAP and UNCT Performance Indicators focus mainly on processes, this mechanism will focus on actual development results to which the UN system contributes at country and normative levels. This is an area of much interest to Member States, as well as to senior managers across the UN system who want a better understanding of how their entity's programming is supporting gender equality and the empowerment of women.

What was the process of completing the UN-SWAP?

This involved:

- Extensive consultation involving over 50 entities, Secretariat Departments, and inter-agency coordination bodies, facilitated by UN Women, between July 2011 and February 2012.
- Consultations with gender focal points or their equivalent, followed by consultations within entities with relevant departments and units, led by the gender focal point or equivalent.
- Debriefing sessions of focal points with UN Women.
- Consolidation of comments and responding to each comment by UN Women.

- Piloting of the UN-SWAP by eight entities—ESCWA, IAEA, IOM, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF (a representative sample from the UN system)—from November 2011 to February 2012, concluding with a piloting workshop attended by all eight entities.
- Testing and validation of the UN-SWAP reporting framework and validation of the UN-SWAP Performance Indicators by the piloting entities. Overall the piloting found the Performance Indicators to be adequate and made useful recommendations for revisions and additional indicators.

UN-SWAP vs. UNCT Scorecard – is there a difference?

The purposes of, and differences between, the UN-SWAP and the UNCT-Scorecard include:

The UN System-wide Action Plan

Focus: corporate processes and institutional arrangements at the individual entity level.

Content: 15 Performance Indicators focusing on the central strategic planning document and articulated corporate policy for GEEW; results-based management; gender architecture and organizational culture as well as tracking and allocating human and financial resources; evaluation, audit and oversight including reporting; gender capacity development and, knowledge sharing and coherence. While many of the standards apply mostly to the HQ operations, several may carry implications also for the global operations of any entity systems.

Reporting: internal reporting is the responsibility of the entity HQ, drawing on Regional and Country input as relevant. Reporting is yearly to UN Women who will report to ECOSOC as required by it in its Resolution of June 2012.

Main audience and use: the main audiences are the CEB, entity HQs, and inter-agency bodies. The main uses are: feeding into the annual Report of the Secretary-General on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the UN system; and development of Individual entity plans of action for meeting the UN SWAP Performance Indicators.

The UNCT Performance Indicators for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Focus: joint processes and institutional arrangements within the UNCT.

Content: 22 Performance Indicators focusing on joint processes at country level: the CCA; development, content and quality control of the UNDAF; joint programming and programmes; partnerships; UNCT support to national priorities, programme based and aid effectiveness processes; UNCT decision making; capacity development through the UNCT; UNCT resource allocation and tracking; and monitoring and evaluation

Reporting: responsibility of the UNCT, preferably using a consultant to conduct the review. Reporting is preferably twice during the five-year UNDAF cycle.

Main audience and use: the main audience is the UNCT, and the main use is for improved strategic planning for GEWE through the UNDAF cycle.

What are the main updates from UN-SWAP 1.0 to UN-SWAP 2.0?

UN-SWAP 2.0 has a stronger focus on results and capturing activities and outcomes for gender-related SDG results. The three first indicators of SWAP 2.0 build on previous indicators on strategic planning, monitoring and reporting and programme review. There is also an additional indicator on Leadership in SWAP 2.0 which focuses on internal and external championing on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Four of the other performance indicators have been strengthened (Evaluation, Audit, Coherence and Organizational culture) and one has been split in two (Equal representation of women and Gender architecture). Seven performance indicators remain the same as before (Policy, Gender-responsive performance management, Financial resource tracking, Financial resource allocation, Capacity assessment, Capacity development and Knowledge & communication).

Support for the UN-SWAP

What was said at the High-Level Committee of Programmes (HLCP) and Management (HLCM) respectively on the UN-SWAP?

The UN-SWAP was universally supported at both the HLCP and HLCM.

HLCP and the UN-SWAP

- WMO, UNICEF, IAEA, WIPO, UNOHCHR, UNAIDS, FAO, UNHABITAT, UNEP, UNDP, ILO, UNESCO, UNCTAD, UNFPA and the five Regional Commissions supported the UN-SWAP.
- The HLCP Chair noted that in his years at the HLCP he had never encountered an agenda item with the type of support that the UN-SWAP had generated.
- The HLCP Secretary indicated the thoroughness and consistency of the UN-SWAP in terms of consultative process and the extensive scope of the engagement maintained from inception to presentation.

HLCM and the UN-SWAP

- ILO, UNICEF, UNFPA, IFAD, UNHABITAT, UNESCO, IOM, UNDP, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNHCR, IMO, UNAIDS and the Regional Commissions supported the UN-SWAP.

UN-SWAP roll-out

How will the UN-SWAP promote synergy and reduce duplication?

This will happen in two ways:

- The UN-SWAP will promote reporting against a commonly agreed set of indicators, to which all entities can align, so there will be less need to develop measures of gender mainstreaming at the individual entity level.
- The UN-SWAP roll-out will reduce duplication by supporting more joint work and inter-entity learning—through establishing centres of technical support in each of the areas of the UN-SWAP, peer review, and enhanced communication.

How will the SWAP be rolled out?

UN Women will facilitate the following. All entities are invited to participate and contribute:

- UN Women will provide ongoing technical support which will be tailored by entity.
- Centres of technical support in the six CEB areas will be set up. These centres will become repositories of knowledge in the areas covered by the Performance Indicators (strategic planning, audit, etc.), and support the system in meeting the requirements of the Performance Indicators.
- Outreach to specialized entities with a technical focus; this will involve formulation of an action plan with specialized entities.
- Peer reviews will take place where entities with similar mandates will visit each other to ensure accurate reporting on the CEB-SWAP and share experience on good practices and challenges.
- At the Secretariat level, ongoing input into work on accountability, RBM and change management.
- Strengthening accountability for gender equality development results at country and normative levels. UN Women will facilitate the process on strengthened accountability and leadership at the country level.
- Establishment of/and orientation on web-based reporting system for the SWAP.

How will the SWAP be reported on?

Reporting on the SWAP will commence in 2013, setting a baseline for the UN system. It would then be expected to be reported on regularly through the Report of the Secretary-General to ECOSOC on “Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the UN system”.

What role will the gender department in entities play once the SWAP is rolled out?

Gender departments will play a coordinating role, ensuring that the SWAP is disseminated in their entity, and departments are reporting, and developing plans of action where they are not meeting.

Implementation and accountability

What extra resources will be required for UN-SWAP implementation?

- Mandatory training may require allocation of additional resources.
- Some areas of the UN-SWAP, e.g. strengthened strategic planning, development of a competency on gender equality and the empowerment of women, and development of a gender equality policy, will require limited additional resources
- However, the UN-SWAP roll-out process plans to streamline capacity development processes so that there is greater coherence and synergy, and therefore less replication and a better use of resources across the system.

What level of resources will be necessary for completing the UN-SWAP reporting framework?

It has been attempted, to the extent possible, to base UN-SWAP reporting on existing reporting frameworks within individual entities. This will vary from entity to entity. The UN-SWAP piloting

demonstrated that for some entities, in particular the funds and programmes, limited extra resources will be required.

For some specialized entities and Regional Commissions and some parts of the Secretariat, there will need to be an upfront investment in getting systems in place to gather the required data. Once these systems are in place the level of effort should be relatively low. The UN-SWAP roll-out process will support the development of data gathering systems.

What if an entity is not meeting the requirements in the UN-SWAP?

Entities will have a 5–7-year period to meet the UN-SWAP requirements. If an entity is not progressing towards requirements during this period, then a remedial plan of action can be developed with UN Women.

What are the implications of the Performance Indicators on resource tracking and allocation?

Resource tracking can be integrated into updated RBM software at relatively limited cost, and there are several gender markers currently in use that are being harmonized. The Secretariat for example tracks funding on ICT and could use the same methodology to track allocations for gender equality and the empowerment of women. On resource allocation, entities will be encouraged to set a target for a specific percentage of funding to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, as has already happened in the case of the Peace Building Support Office, which has set a target of 15 per cent.

What are the implications of the introduction of mandatory training for all relevant staff?

There will need to be an upfront investment in building capacity and stand-alone training if the UN is to meet its gender equality and women's empowerment mandate. The recommended minimum training is one day in the first year for new staff and then one day every two years after that.

What are the implications of the Performance Indicator on fully resourcing the gender department/unit according to entity mandate?

Like any other entity function, work on gender equality and the empowerment of women needs to be adequately funded which will differ from entity to entity dependent on its mandate on promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women.