

Summary of UN Women's Field Capacity Assessment - Minimum Requirements for UN Women's Country Level Presence

Completed in February 2011, the Field Capacity Assessment (FCA) was conducted as part of the UN Women Executive Director's *Vision and 100 Day Action Plan*, and as part of the development of the first Strategic Plan of UN Women (2012-2013).¹ It addresses the country level, but not regional or sub-regional level. It was prepared by an interagency team, and guided by an interagency reference group comprised of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and representatives from each of the four former entities comprising UN Women. The FCA is expected to inform the upcoming UN Women Strategic Plan in relation to a phased strengthening of field capacity over the coming years, based on priority national needs and demand, existing UN Women and UNCT capacity in each country.

The findings of the FCA represent the opinions of the drafting team.

Based on the Entity's founding resolution (64/289) and the "*Comprehensive Proposal for the Composite Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women – report of the Secretary-General to the United Nations General Assembly*" (A/64/588), the FCA proposes a Standard Model of Support that UN Women will offer at country level based on national needs and priorities, and recommends minimum capacities required to deliver it. The FCA also offers a preliminary overview of the gap between current capacities available and future capacities required by UN Women.

The recommendations of the FCA are based upon:

- ▲ A survey of government, CSO and UN partners with over 1000 responses from over 60 countries across all regions.
- ▲ Visits to ten countries for in depth consultations covering all regions.²
- ▲ A review of previous evaluations and assessments of UN Women's work at country level.
- ▲ Information from UNCTs, UN partners, UN Women staff, and UN Women Human Resources and Operations data.

Standard Model of Support: Based on UN Women's founding documents, the FCA proposes four functional areas for UN Women's Standard Model of Support at country level:

- Supporting development and implementation of evidence-based laws, plans, policies and budgets, in line with international and national commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;
- Supporting gender equality advocates, both within government and non-governmental organizations, to have a stronger voice in decision-making processes that shape the lives of women;
- Supporting the development and strengthening of knowledge and expertise on gender equality and the status of women and girls, including through South-South learning and exchange; and,

¹ The FCA began in December 2010 and was completed in mid-February 2011.

² FC Team and national consultants visited partners in: Thailand (national and regional consultations), Pakistan, Tajikistan, Yemen, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Liberia, Guatemala, and Barbados.

- Within the RC system, leading coordination to promote enhanced coherence and accountability within the UN Country Team (UNCT) in providing support to countries in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women.

These functional areas were validated by both the partner survey and field visits, with government and CSOs rating all four functions as almost equally important

In general, partners identified national capacity development and advocacy as priority functions for UN Women. However, enthusiasm for the expansion and implementation of the knowledge function was considerable, particularly among government partners. Within this function, emphasis was placed on support to monitoring and analyzing the impact of policies on women and girls, evaluation of policies, and learning from other Member States, including South-South cooperation. All partners stressed the need for expanded support around gender mainstreaming. In all countries visited, there was request for support for stronger civil society and national women's machinery advocacy, and strengthening data and analysis on gender equality issues.

The elements of this model are considered relevant in all country contexts, but the emphasis between them would reflect national priorities and an analysis of areas not addressed by other international partners. In delivering the Standard Model, UN Women would work in partnership with agencies within the UNCT, with a view to supporting and/or partnering with on-going work of the UN, or leading in areas where gaps remain.

Influencing factors: The FCA was asked to consider the implications of different country contexts for the proposed minimum capacity. The Assessment asserts that there are three aspects to country context which shape UN Women's operations and the balance between different functions in the package of support it offers stakeholders. These are: i) overall country context; ii) the situation of women and girls; and iii) UNCT existing strengths and capacities. These factors inform the nature of UN Women's presence and the ways in which it ensures that development support and partnership provided is relevant and reflective of local and national contexts.

The FCA proposes a minimum capacity focused on the core institutional and staffing arrangements and capacity required to deliver the standard model of support. From this perspective of "minimum capacity", the FCA proposes that overall country context, and the situation of women, while integral to orientation and design of programme cooperation, do not have significant implications for minimum capacity required to deliver the standard model of support at the country level. The *UNCT's existing strengths and capacities*, however, do represent relevant factors for minimum capacity. The implications of the scope and responsibility of UN Women's UN coordination role on the minimum capacity is directly related to the complexity of the UN presence in country and the degree of existing investment and capacity of UN Agencies on gender equality. Country presences in countries with large UNCTs will require slightly greater minimum capacity to carry out the coordination role of UN Women and to leverage the opportunities. Conversely, where UN presence and capacity is smaller, UN Women might carry a heavier burden in its own programming, but require less minimum capacity for its UN coordination function. Additionally, humanitarian and conflict/post-conflict situations will have many potentially relevant features, not least the presence of a peacekeeping/political mission, many of which have gender advisors and result in a broader mandate of the UN on the ground.

A. Minimum Capacities Proposed for Country Presence:

In rising to meet the high expectations of Member States and the UN System, UN Women is balancing prudent growth with measures which ensure that the entity becomes a strong and responsive agent for the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Over the coming years, through increased support to regional hubs, sub-regional offices and a minimum 15 country presences, UN Women will prioritise enhanced support at the country level, responding to national priorities and the needs within respective UNCTs. In so doing, and in accordance with UN partner requests, UN Women will look to enhancing support in those areas which add value to the UNCT's overall work, and not to take over or replicate what others are doing.

In balancing the above expectations with expectations on the ground, UN Women will look to establish sounder institutional foundation for country-level programming, in close consultation with Member States and the UN system.³ This requires establishing a corporate standard of minimum country capacity. This pertains to capacity in all senses. Such capacity includes not only staffing in terms of numbers and type of staff, but also institutional arrangements and structures, profile, partnerships, knowledge and capacity of staff to carry out requisite functions.

The FCA proposes a Minimum Capacity Model for countries where UN Women will: a) have a government-endorsed country programme; b) be a full member of the UNCT; and c) be headed by an accredited international representative. The FCA recognises other types of country presence, but does not consider a Minimum Capacity Model for these varied modes of engagement useful. Minimum capacities are proposed in terms of: institutional arrangements; staffing and resources; capacity (knowledge and skills) of staff.

Institutional arrangements: Based on partner feedback, the FCA proposes that UN Women move to a country programme model comparable to other UNDG agencies, in order to ensure that cooperation is strategic and responding to national priorities. This will also avoid ad hoc or donor-driven presence and ensure that there is space for partners to discuss and agree on the overall orientation of UN Women's cooperation, and that UN Women can better operate with a medium to long-term perspective within an overall strategic UN Programme or UNDAF. Such country programmes demand delegation of authority to country level and an internal control framework for their implementation. UN Women also requires full country representatives who are members of UN Country Teams (UNCTs).

Staffing and resources: The FCA proposes a minimum staff complement to carry out the Standard Model of Support comparable to that of other agencies:

- ▲ Representative (international, level comparable to other UNCT members).
- ▲ Deputy Representative/ Senior Programme Officer (NOC/ NOD, P3/ P4 with level dependent on country context).
- ▲ Operations Officer (national, NOC/ NOD).
- ▲ Administrative Assistant (national, GS6).
- ▲ Driver/ Clerk (national, GS3, and only when more economical options are not available, such as pooled funding for sharing with other agencies).
- ▲ Security Officer, only in those countries where the UN Department of Safety and Security and Designated Official for Security determine it to be necessary.

³ Extracted from the Statement of Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Under-Secretary General and Executive Director, UN Women. *Statement to the First Regular Session of the Executive Board, UN Women – Item 2: Introduction of Proposals for the Use of Voluntary Resources for the Support Budget 2011.* January 24 2011.

The actual staffing that UN Women deploys to deliver its mandate will vary depending on country context and demands but this is the minimum core capacity which the FCA proposes to be funded from the Biennial Support Budget. The FCA suggests that should future resources allow, priorities for additional staffing should be monitoring and evaluation, and advocacy and communications.

The profile and job description of the majority of all national and international programme staff must ensure a strong focus on supporting the UNCT's work in their respective areas and functions.

Given the specific strengths, capacities and investments made by each UNCT on gender equality, proposing a corporate-level, generic job description in support of UN Coordination would not respond adequately to the very specific needs of each UNCT. The FCA recommends that, under the leadership of the UN RC and the coordination of UN Women, UNCTs develop models for UN coordination based on local circumstances. Should this require additional resources these could be funded either from BSB or a globally mobilised funding source, and that the experience of different models from different countries be evaluated in mid-2013 to inform a more common approach within the corporate minimum capacity model under the next Strategic Plan (2014-2017). Further, the FCA recommends that, within the UNDG, UN Women lead a global review of the capacities and strengths of the UN System at the country level on gender equality; a global review of successful tools and experiences in improved monitoring and accountability of UNCTs towards gender equality; and an assessment of the benefits, challenges and impact of the significant joint programming on gender equality.

In addition, the FCA proposes a minimum programmable allocation from core resources for full country programmes of \$250,000 per year.

Capacity of staff: Delivering the Standard Model of Support will require that UN Women's staff have the capacity for:

- ⤴ Gender equality and women's empowerment in key priority areas of the UNDAF or other coordination tools, and subsequently, UN Women's country programme;
- ⤴ Programme management, results-based management and monitoring and evaluation policies;
- ⤴ Principles, methodologies and tools on gender mainstreaming, as well as knowledge necessary to support the UNCT's gender mainstreaming work, including familiarity with UN coordination systems and approaches;
- ⤴ Development, implementation and monitoring of gender-specific laws, policies and budgets;
- ⤴ Methodologies and tools used to build national capacity so that it is sustainable and nationally owned, drawing from experiences of other UN agencies;
- ⤴ Monitoring and analysis of the status of women, and generating evidenced-based advocacy for development, implementation and/or revision of national laws and policies.
- ⤴ UN Women finance, operations and HR policies and procedures;

Establishing these capacities will require their proper articulation in competency frameworks and job descriptions, and investment in development of capacity of existing staff. Job descriptions should be explicit, in particular, about the responsibilities of staff for providing support to the UN Country Team.

B. Existing Strengths and Capacity Gaps

As currently defined by UN Women, the entity has a presence in 85 countries and territories. The current categorization of these presences falls into five categories: Category A: sub-regional offices, of which there are 15; Category B: country programme offices headed by internationals, of which there are 34; Category C: country programme offices headed by a national staff member, of which there are 26; Category D: shared technical advisors with another UN agency, of which there are 2; and Category E: UNV or JPO placed in the UN Country Team, SSA focal points, and part-time country-level focal points, of which there are 9.

For the purposes of the Field Capacity Assessment, only categories A, B and C have been considered for analysis of capacity gaps, since categories D and E lack the minimum elements of a country presence in the sense in which it is used in this assessment. As a result, 75 countries and territories are considered in the FCA analysis of capacity gaps.

Based on available information, there are currently no country programme offices in which UN Women has the full minimum capacity proposed by the Field Capacity Assessment. The FCA estimates that there are 18 country programme offices where minimal investment would achieve the minimum capacity, primarily made up of post-conflict and Delivering as One countries. In addition, while their functions are sub-regional in scope, the majority of sub-regional offices have, or are in the process of being granted, most elements of the minimum capacity proposed by the FCA for country offices.

The FCA also considered capacity in other agencies, through desk reviews of gender audits carried out within agencies, as well as data collected from UN Women presence at country level on numbers of full time/part time gender experts within the UNCT. This shows that there is significant gender expertise at country level in other agencies that can be leveraged, in particular in peacekeeping/ political missions. However, this capacity also tends to be funded by cost-sharing or programme funds, and as such does not represent reliable core support.

Institutional arrangements: Based on available information, five country offices have country strategies which could be modified into country programmes, while nine Sub-Regional Offices and two Country Offices have delegation of administrative authority. UN Women has full UNCT membership in 45 countries (including regional inter-agency mechanisms). Less than one-third of UN Women country presences have a representative at a comparable level to others in the UNCT.

Staffing and resources: For a number of reasons, biennium-support budget core funds within what was formerly UNIFEM were used almost exclusively for headquarters capacity, while virtually all field presence was funded from programme or project funding. As the Executive Director summed up in her statement to the first Executive Board in January 2011, as a result of this trend, "...an array of unsustainable, ad hoc arrangements have been employed to date to respond to operational needs, both at HQ and the field. The support budget now needs to correct the past inadequacies and make visible the requirements of UN Women's presence on the ground."⁴

⁴ Extracted from the Statement of Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Under-Secretary General and Executive Director, UN Women. *Statement to the First Regular Session of the Executive Board, UN Women – Item 2: Introduction of Proposals for the Use of Voluntary Resources for the Support Budget 2011*. January 24 2011.

The FCA findings fully confirm the above. UN Women's capacities with regard to staffing are less an issue of numbers, and more one of level and type of contracts. Of 935 personnel in 75 countries, only 24.6% are on FTA/TA contracts. This impacts retention in staffing. Alongside this is the high ratio of UN Women staff whose contracts are funded from project funds, and whose job description and duration are determined by the funding agreements governing those funds. As a consequence, many of UN Women's staff at country level have job descriptions and accountabilities for specific project tasks, rather than the broader mandate of UN Women. Although because of commitment to the issue, the majority go beyond their job description in support of UN Women's broader mandate.

Capacity of staff: Responses to the partner survey indicate that confidence in UN Women's capacity is generally higher among national partners than UN partners, and that confidence in capacities for national capacity development and advocacy are higher than for the knowledge and UN Coordination functions. UN Women staff interviewed share a similar assessment of capacity development needs.

Capacity around UN Coordination: Overall, the partner survey suggests that there is confidence on the part of national partners in UN Women's country capacity and the UN's overall capacity, with less than a fifth of national respondents assessing the UN to have weak capacity in the area of gender equality. The partner survey also showed that national, CSO and UN partners all considered UN Women's role in providing support to the UN Country Team important. However, the overall perception among UN colleagues responding was that UN Women's current capacity at country level is not yet sufficient to meet that need.

While the view of UN partners represents a strong reflection of the reality, it is equally evident from document reviews and partner discussions that UN Women's experience on UN Coordination varies from country to country, and that there is strong experience coming from those countries where UN Women (formerly UNIFEM) has been leading coordination for a number of years, including leading the implementation of Joint Programmes. This is evidenced by the fact that of the 99 UN Gender Theme Groups at country level, UN Women currently chairs or co-chairs inter-agency theme groups on gender equality in 48 countries, and leads Joint Programmes on Gender/Gender-based violence in approximately 27 countries. UN Women's investment in the Delivering as One Pilot countries has also delivered invaluable experience which can provide lessons for the organisation.

Assessing the full capacity of, and demand for, UN Women's support to UNCTs must be done within a broader understanding of UN agencies' own investment in supporting that advancement of gender equality at the country level. While it is beyond the terms of reference and capacity of the FCA to review the capacities of all parts of the UN's capacities on gender, information has been gathered from UN Women country presences and directly from UN partners.

UNFPA has made a strong corporate investment in the majority of countries where UN Women has a presence, ensuring that at least one programme officer has gender issues as an explicit element of between 50 and 100 percent of their job description. UNDP also ensures a threshold of dedicated experts, a number of which are anchored to a programme/project. Of the 85 countries where UN Women has a presence (all categories), there are at least 51 countries where other agencies have allocated full time posts, and/or minimum 50 percent of job description to focused on gender equality issues (three of which include sub-regional or regional hubs). In at least ten of these 51 countries, there are five or more full time gender experts among different agencies, although the FCA does not have information on whether these are national or international and the types of

contract they hold. Of these 51 countries, the largest presences of full time gender experts within the UN are in the large post-conflict countries, often where there is a peace-keeping or integrated mission. While significant investment has been made in some countries to ensure agencies have the needed support to carry out their respective mandates from a gender perspective, discussions with partners in the UN make clear that that a more in-depth review is required at the corporate level to determine the strengths and capacities of the UN System at the country level on gender equality.

Regional functions in support of country presence: While the FCA makes no recommendations with regard to regional structures, it suggests that decisions on such structures need to ensure that they deliver and support the country level presence:

- ⤴ Support for RBM, monitoring and evaluation;
- ⤴ Advocacy and communications support;
- ⤴ Technical support in thematic areas including identifying sources of technical expertise both within and outside the United Nations;
- ⤴ Support to the knowledge function, including South-South knowledge, and statistical analysis;
- ⤴ Guidance on and provision of tools for UN coordination;
- ⤴ Connecting country level work with inter-governmental processes;
- ⤴ Transitional operational support to country offices in the delegation of authority; and
- ⤴ Supporting capacity development around Resource Mobilisation Strategies.