



Guidance on Capacity Development

Background:

The Sustainable Development Goals represent an ambitious and transformational development agenda. The development of new capacities and strengthening existing capacities is a theme underpinning all the SDGs. The development of capacities in countries is also a core function of the UNDS, and the General Assembly in its resolutions has for the past two decades consistently emphasized the centrality of capacity development in achieving internationally agreed development goals. The recent GA 2016 Resolution on QCPR has called for measures to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of capacity-building activities through use of national systems and national capacities, a principle reaffirmed in the 2030 Agenda.

In line with this, the Spotlight Secretariat has recently undertaken analysis of proposed interventions in country and regional programmes, and the analysis has showed that Spotlight countries and regions plans to invest in capacity development across all pillars. As a result, several training activities as means for capacity development is being proposed. Programmes tend to resort to capacity development interventions, and often-times to undertaking several trainings as means to addressing challenges. However, in some cases, this has shown not to be effective, as trainings alone do not guarantee changes in behaviour or performance in the long run.

One of the principles of Spotlight is to move away from “business as usual” and to identifying effective interventions that will address the root causes. The Spotlight Initiative represents an opportunity for UN country teams to transform their approach to capacity development. It is thus critical for Spotlight countries and regions to acknowledge that capacity development, particularly trainings alone is not the best way to address the challenges identified in the country programmes. More importantly, without addressing the organisational issues and issues in the enabling environment as part of a comprehensive plan, the improvements achieved in knowledge and skills will not necessarily translate into higher level outcomes and impact.

Thus, the Spotlight Secretariat has put together this brief guidance on capacity development in-order to create common understanding on capacity development with a recommendation of key points to consider as well as tools/resources to use for effective and sustainable capacity development interventions.

It is recommended that **Spotlight countries and regions** consider the following **key steps** including resources and tools;

- **Definition- Capacity Development:** According to the undg definitions endorsed by the General Assembly/2007, **capacity** is the “ability of people, organizations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully”, and **capacity development** is commonly used to refer to “the process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time.” Capacity development is the process of creating and building capacities, as well as the [subsequent] use, management and retention of capacities.





It is seen as internally driven and recognises existing national capacity assets as its starting point. Capacity development is often used synonymously with training and technical assistance, although these are amongst several approaches to developing capacity. For capacity development to be effective, it should ideally be addressed at three levels, namely, individual, organizational, and the enabling environment and follow a systems approach. *For example, developing skills of individuals will not be effective if policies and systems in the organisation do not support the utilisation of these newly acquired skills.*

- **Engage stakeholders:** Capacity development begins with engaging in dialogue with all relevant stakeholders who stand to benefit from the enhanced capacity. The goal is to get all actors committed to the process and invested in its success. It is also to ensure that capacity development is demand-driven and focuses on outcomes or results. Spotlight countries and regions are thus encouraged to engage in consultation and decision-making from the start. This will ensure that every actor contributes to the design and content of the capacity building initiative for e.g a training and will help situate the training within existing local/national plans or priorities and establish accountability. In view of the leave no one behind principle, it is also critical to engage with all relevant actors, including groups with often weak or non-existent representative organizations.
- **Capacity Assessment:** Prior to carrying out any capacity development plan, it is important to undertake **capacity assessment**. Capacity assessment is a means of assessing the understanding, knowledge and skills that a given organization and individuals have on a given area identified as a challenge/gap to be addressed through the programme. When assessing the capacity of individuals, attention is paid to the knowledge, skills and attitudes that each person has regarding the specific area/concept identified and the integration of these concepts in their daily work. Capacity assessment at an organizational level evaluates what policies, strategies, procedures and resources are in place to ensure the specific areas identified (e.g eVAWG) are included in the agency's mandate. Thus, Spotlight countries and regions prior to carrying out any capacity development interventions, need to create a baseline of capacities and knowledge. This will also allow the setting of realistic targets and anticipating the desired level of capacity.

To assess the capacity of individuals, there are some commonly used tools such as **questionnaires and surveys, individual tests, focus groups, and interview**. At the institutional level, some existing tools can be adapted. The following are relevant resources and tools to be used/adapted in order to undertake capacity assessment interventions in Spotlight Country and Regional Programmes:

- **“Capacity Assessment Tool”** developed by UNWTC to assess the understanding, knowledge and skills that a given organization and their staff have on gender equality and women's empowerment, and on the organization's gender architecture and gender policy. The tool can be accessed [here](#).
- **“The Participatory Gender Audit tool”** developed by ILO is a systematic, participatory and gender-sensitive methodology to analyse how gender is mainstreamed within an organization. This tool requires time and analysis.





- Once the capacity assessment is done, information will be gathered and analysed, and this will be used to inform the ways forward for a training or capacity development strategy with targets and indicators for measuring the enhanced capacity.
- **Lessons Learned:** It is recommended that Spotlight countries and regions consider lessons learned from previous capacity building intervention, such as training initiatives. When available, it is worthwhile looking into previous trainings, training courses/content that can be adapted, challenges that arise in trainings and tools that are in use in training initiatives. The following resource can be of use; [Compendium of Good Practices in Training for Gender Equality](#); Compiles diverse and in-depth information on ten different good practices.
- **Capacity development through South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation:** Spotlight countries and region are also encouraged to support South-South and triangular cooperation, which is an important aspect of capacity development. There is demand from national partners in accessing knowledge and expertise from other developing countries, and identification of cooperation partners.
- **Quality of Training:** In-order to ensure high-quality and effective trainings, Spotlight countries and regions need to take into consideration the purpose of the training, envisioned training outputs, principles and techniques, training cycle management, quality assurance and budgets including the involvement relevant stakeholders. The following are resources that can be of use:
 - the [Theory of Change \(ToC\) for Training for Gender Equality](#); It is a working paper used to elaborate on the capacity development outputs ;
 - the [UNWTC Training Manual](#) to properly manage the entire training process;
 - The [Quality Assurance](#) and [Feminist Pedagogies](#) working papers to ensure higher quality standards and strategies leaving no one behind by designing inclusive trainings
- **Monitoring, Evaluation and Sustainability:** In order measure the success of the capacity building interventions, for instance training initiatives, Spotlight countries and regions should put in place **standardised M&E systems** such as pre-post training assessments, participant feedback surveys, training facilitator surveys, satisfaction surveys and progress reports. These M&E activities should be linked to the capacity assessment that was done, and the baselines set at the beginning. Spotlight countries and regions are also encouraged to employ multiple evaluation methods in the short, medium and long-term to ensure a comprehensive evaluation. This will allow countries to measure if the capacity building efforts are responsible for the observed changes in behaviours and practice in individuals or institutions at a later stage.

As part of the long-term evaluation, Spotlight countries and regions need to ensure that follow-up is done, create a group capable of replicating trainings (ToTs) as well as put in place mitigation strategies for any risks associated with staff turnover and gaps in knowledge transfer in institutions. Lessons learned from the capacity development interventions should also be documented and acted upon.





Additional Resources and Tools

- [UN Women Training Centre Resource Centre](#)
- [UN Women Training Centre- Manual on Training for Gender Equality](#)
- [UN Women Training Centre Capacity Assessment Tool](#)
- [UN Women Training Center Working paper series](#)
- [Typology on Training for Gender Equality](#)
- [UNDP Capacity Development](#)
- [UNDG-Capacity Development UNDAF Companion Guidance](#)
- [UNDG-A collective approach to supporting capacity development](#)
- [UNDG Capacity Assessment Methodology -USER Guide](#)
- [UNFPA-Capacity Development Matters – A Practical Guide](#)

