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UNCT Bahrain Gender Theme Group

Annual Report 2023

MARCH 2024

Introduction

In 2023, the Bahrain UNCT established for the first time a Gender Theme Group (GTG), with the aim of strengthening collective results for gender equality and women's empowerment in Bahrain. In line with the UNSDG Standards and procedures, the Bahrain GTG was established to facilitate inter-agency, gender-responsive, programmatic, technical and policy advice to the UNCT at all stages of the UNSDCF cycle. This timing was particularly opportune given that in 2023 the Bahrain UNCT and its national partners embarked on the process to develop the next UNSDCF 2025-2029.

Since 2021, Bahrain UNCT has taken significant steps to increase its gender integration in joint workplanning and implementation. Bahrain was the first UNCT in the GCC sub-region to conduct the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard,

resulting in important lessons on the value of the Scorecard as a flexible tool to advance GEWE at any stage in the UNSDCF cycle. In 2022, UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States (ROAS) and the Resident Coordinator's Office convened the first face to face workshop in the Arab States region on the application of Gender Equality Marker during the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) joint workplanning process. The establishment of the Gender Theme Group builds on these achievements to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment is at the heart of the UNCT's joint work in Bahrain. This effort is complemented and supported by the establishment, also in 2023, of UN Women Bahrain, the first UN Women programme office to be established in the GCC sub-region.

Establishment of the GTG

The GTG TOR, co-Chairs' TOR, and AWP were endorsed by the UNCT in April 2023. UN Women Bahrain and RCO convened a preparatory workshop on 9 March to discuss the UNSDG global Standards and Procedures for Gender Theme Groups (2021) and develop the Terms of Reference and Annual Workplan for the Bahrain GTG.

The first GTG meeting was convened on 6 May 2023. Subsequent meetings were convened on 13 June, 29 August and 6 November 2023. In line with best practices observed in the Arab States region, the GTG is co-chaired on a rotational basis, and during the first year of operation by UN Women and UNFPA.

Terms of Reference of the UNCT Bahrain Gender Theme Group

The GTG is responsible for coordinating gender mainstreaming through UNCT joint work, in the areas of Programme Support and Policy Dialogue and Support. The principal activities of the GTG are determined on an annual basis per the annual workplan, and focus on three key areas to increase gender mainstreaming, aligned with the UNSDG Standards and Procedures:

- Support the implementation of the UNCT-System Wide Action Plan Gender Equality Scorecard (UNCT-SWAP GES) action plan and serve as the inter-agency task team for subsequent comprehensive assessment (next due in 2025);
- Support UNCT efforts to increase Gender Equality Marker (GEM) 2 and 3 coding of the JWP; and
- Serve as the dedicated forum for UNCT members to share knowledge, data and analysis on GEWE issues in Bahrain, including in contribution to gender mainstreaming in the UNSDCF cycle.

Membership

Membership of the Bahrain GTG is open to all gender focal points of all agencies that are members of the UNCT. Current membership includes: UN Women, UNFPA (co-Chairs), IOM, OHCHR, RCO, UNDP, UNHCR, UNESCO, UNIC and UNIDO.

2023 Annual Workplan and Key Results

The 2023 AWP was aligned with the action plan of the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard Comprehensive Report and 2022 Annual Report to accelerate achievement of the UNCT-SWAP GES minimum requirements.

OBJECTIVE 1: The joint implementation of the UNSDCF facilitates achievement of greater results for women and girls in Bahrain.

Significant progress was made towards this objective in 2023. The UNCT has enhanced accountability for gender mainstreaming through regular tracking by the GTG of progress under the UNCT-SWAP Gender

Equality Scorecard indicators. The UNCT now has access to data and analysis on gender investments in the JWP, and on investment gaps, as well as low-hanging fruit to increase gender mainstreaming to benefit women and girls from existing programmatic investments. In parallel, Bahraini stakeholders have access to more information on the accelerator effect of gender mainstreaming in development partnerships, and the opportunities to expand this work across all sectors.

Output 1.1: The Bahrain UNCT has strengthened capacity to mainstream gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE) across the CCA/UNSDCF cycle.

The Bahrain GTG now has strengthened capacity to mainstream gender equality, including in key strategic documents for the planning cycle, following the establishment of the GTG.

The GTG met four times in 2023 and conducted regular monitoring of the GES action plan implementation to track progress towards achieving the Scorecard performance indicators. The 2023 Annual Report of the Gender Equality Scorecard demonstrated progress across five performance indicators:

| UNCT-SWAP GES Performance Indicator | Role of the Gender Theme Group |
|--|---|
| PI 1.1 Common Country Assessment - Meets minimum requirements | The GTG compiled all available gender data held by UNCT members and drafted a narrative summary report to inform the gender mainstreaming of the CCA. |
| PI 2.2 Joint Communications and Advocacy - Exceeds minimum requirements | The co-chairs of the GTG coordinated with RCO and GTG members a social media campaign for International Women's Day 2023; and produced a viral video for the launch of the UNCT Gender Theme Group. |
| PI 5.1 Gender coordination mechanism - Exceeds minimum requirements | The GTG is co-chaired by UNCT representatives of two agencies; has a TOR and an approved annual work plan; more than 50% of membership is senior staff; and has made substantive input into the CCA by the end of 2023. |
| PI 5.2 Gender capacities - Meets minimum requirements | On 9 March 2023 UN Women and RCO conducted a workshop for UNCT gender focal points on the UNSDG global standards and procedures for Gender Theme Groups, as a preliminary to the establishment of the GTG. Participants then became members of the GTG. |
| PI 6.1 Resources allocation and tracking - Approaches minimum requirements | The GTG conducted analysis of the GEM allocation across the JWP 2023-2024 and identified a roadmap of key actions to increase GEM 2 and GEM 3 investment across a two-year period. |

The draft CCA developed in Q3-Q4 is fully gender-mainstreamed and informed by a comprehensive compilation of data and analysis. In Q2, the GTG compiled available data and analysis on both progress and persistent gaps gender equality and women’s empowerment in Bahrain. This then fed into the CCA development by RCO, and the gender mainstreaming of the draft document led by UN Women.

Indicator 1.1.A: 2023 annual report demonstrates improvements in five GES indicators.

Target met. The 2023 UNCT-SWAP GES annual report demonstrated progress in five GES performance indicators:
1.1: Common Country Analysis (meets)
2.2: Communications and Advocacy (exceeds)
5.1: Gender Coordination Mechanism (exceeds)
5.2: Gender Mainstreaming Capacities (meets)
6.1: Resource Allocation and Tracking (approaches)

Indicator 1.1.B: Gender analysis across all sectors of the CCA including underlying causes of gender inequality and discrimination in line with SDG priorities including SDG 5; and consistent sex-disaggregated and gender sensitive data.

Target met. The draft CCA is fully gender-mainstreamed (in line with the criteria of UNCT-SWAP GES Performance Indicator 1.1).

Output 1.2: The Bahrain UNCT has strengthened capacity to increase Gender Equality Marker 2 and 3 coding in the JWP.

The UNCT has access to accurate, comprehensive, data concerning gender investments in the JWP, based on the quality assurance and analysis of the GEM in the JWP, conducted by UN Women. The analysis is accompanied by a roadmap with four key action areas to progressively increase the proportion of funds invested in the UNCT that will have gender equality and women’s empowerment as either a principal or significant objective (GEM 3, GEM 2). The analysis and roadmap were accompanied by the development of a JWP GEM quality assurance tool, which was developed to support the quality assurance process for Bahrain JWP and subsequently implemented also with regards to the KSA JWP. This tool was shared by UN Women with DCO HQ as a global good practice.

Indicator: 1.2.A: The UNCT has established and met a financial target for program allocations for gender equality and the empowerment of women (JWP 2023 or 2024, TBC)

Significant progress made towards achieving this target: The UNCT now has access to necessary analysis and proposed roadmap to establish a financial target for GEM 2 and GEM 3.

Output 1.3: Public awareness of key GEWE issues related to the Bahrain Economic Vision and the UNSDCF is supported

Public outreach was enhanced this year with a more systematic approach to regular communications on the UNCT's joint work on gender equality, as well as individual agency initiatives. Highlights of coverage in 2023 include:

- Social media campaign for IWD
- Insta reel on the launch of the GTG, tapping into the Wes Anderson trend
- Statement of the UN Resident Coordinator on the repeal of Article 353 of the Penal Code

Regrettably, it was not possible to launch a comprehensive campaign for the 16 Days in 2023, out of consideration for the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

1.3.A: Joint advocacy campaign conducted

Target is met: UNCT campaign for Women's Day 8 March 2023.

1.3.B: Number of online views of UNCT materials related to BWD and the 16 Days

Not achieved.

2024 key next steps

The GTG will build on the achievements made in its initial year of operation to continue to strengthen the UNCT's accountability for gender results through its joint work, with emphasis on supporting the UNCT to meet and / or exceed the minimum requirements of the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard. These include the following key activities in 2024:

Enhance coordination with other UNCT inter-agency groups

The GTG will coordinate with the Communications Group, Disability Inclusion Taskforce, the Migration Network and the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Taskforce, to support gender mainstreaming through their respective workplans.

Convene first retreat of the GTG

With the support of the RCO, the GTG will convene its first retreat in Q1 2024, to develop a multi-year workplan to support gender mainstreaming through the next UNSDCF.

Support gender mainstreaming in the UNSDCF and indicator framework

Building on the gender mainstreaming the CCA, the GTG will support the UNCT to ensure the UNSDCF is fully gender mainstreamed in accordance with the requirements of PI 1.2 i.e. that gender is visibly mainstreamed across all outcome areas; and to ensure that the indicators are capable of measuring change on gender over time in accordance with GES PI 1.3, including in the area of climate change action.

Support the UNCT to work towards achievement of a resources target per UNCT-SWAP PI 6.1

Based on the analysis of the current JWP, the GTG will engage with the UNCT during the UNSDCF process and through the development of the JWP to facilitate agreement on a GEM 3 and GEM 2 resources target and timeline for its achievement.