Integrating a Gender Perspective and a Human Rights-Based Approach in Institutional Settings:


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2. Introduction

My interest in gender and human rights unconsciously began at the age of 15 when I started volunteering with orphan girls in my country Ecuador. I discovered the difficult realities and all the needs they were facing; inter alia, a need for a family, a need for love and emotional stability, a need for better living standards and opportunities. The same occurred with my volunteer work with elderly people, single teen mothers, street adolescents, children with cancer and children whose parents are in jail.

Before coming to Europe and pursuing the master degree, I worked for an Ecuadorian NGO named FUDELA – Fundación de las Américas para el Desarrollo for more than 3 years. I had the opportunity to witness how the lives of many youths in vulnerable situations were changing in a positive direction through our support: training, counselling, mentoring, and soccer; the latter is the distinctive element that has made those changes possible by bringing in hope, enthusiasm, respect, friendship and love.

Women and men playing on common ground and shaping their dreams together, without rivalry or egoism, but with a real sense of solidarity and equality; all of this was made possible through the other “face” of soccer. This is exactly the same “face” we need to promote in all the efforts conducive to gender equality and the full realization of human rights.

The present work titled Integrating a Gender Perspective and a Human Rights-Based Approach in Institutional Settings: An Assessment of Gender Equality Policies and Practices of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – OHCHR is the result of research made through the review of literature, interviews and guidance of different professionals and friends, participation in meetings and events, and other day-to-day experiences.

The work is divided in two main chapters. The first chapter covers the relationship between gender mainstreaming and a human rights-based approach by showing an overview of these two strategies as well as the importance of their correlation for a proper institutionalization of gender equality and human rights at the heart of organizations. The second chapter specifically focuses on the case of OHCHR in integrating a gender and human rights perspective in its organizational culture and practices, and its alignment with the commitments required by the United Nations System. Good practices and experiences from other organizations are also addressed.
I have chosen OHCHR, not only because they have provided me with the internship opportunity and facilitated the collection of information, but also because I consider this organization an important point of reference: for other organizations who want to pursue an effective integration of gender and human rights within their organizational practices and processes and also for me in my desire to learn, work and contribute in this field.

This work, which I prefer to call a mapping of different experiences, insights and milestones, offers a “little taste” of the broad scope of gender equality and human rights. In this regard, I invite you to have the taste. I hope you enjoy it and take away something positive: a smile, a space for you, a moment of reflection, a lesson learned, a good practice to apply, or a new challenge to define.

Thank you for your attention and interest.

Warm regards,

Carolina Recalde Amores
3. Chapter One: The Relationship between Gender Mainstreaming and a Human Rights-Based Approach

A. Institutionalization of Gender Equality and Human Rights.

“Women’s reproductive autonomy is restricted: on average 1 in 5 women has an unmet need for family planning.”\(^1\)“Despite women’s labour force participation being as high as 53%, in some countries women are paid up to 40% less than men.”\(^2\)“As many as a third of married women in Malawi and a fifth of married women in India are not involved in spending decisions, even about their own incomes.”\(^3\)“In Jordan, only 17 percent of 20- to 45-year-old women work compared with 77 percent of men.”\(^4\)“Nepal restricts the passage of citizenship to children by both married and unmarried women.”\(^5\)“20% of economies in South Asia, 29% in Sub-Saharan Africa and 36% in the Middle East and North Africa can restrict their wives from pursuing trades or professions.”\(^6\)“In the Gulf countries only 1.5 percent of directors are female, and across the Middle East and North Africa region, about 90 percent of companies have either one or zero female directors.”\(^7\)

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2 Ibid. Pg 4.


4 Ibid. Pg 29.


6 Ibid. Pg 5.

What are all these facts telling us? That gender inequality and human rights violations are still present, in different corners of the world, in small and big scenarios, in the lives and relationships of individuals and institutions, affecting women more than men, hindering the fulfilment of human rights and threatening development in all its different dimensions: human, social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental.

Hence, gender equality and the full realization of human rights can still be seen by many people as a goal and as a dream difficult to achieve, a “utopia.” However, there are many other individuals, including myself, who see them as a moral value and the right thing to do, which needs to be built starting from our own actions and from the notion and respect of human rights. Therefore, the move towards gender equality or gender inequality and towards the advancement or the violation of human rights is the result of our on-going decisions, processes, relationships and experiences.

Furthermore, we must be aware of the fact that the path towards the realization of human rights and gender equality is not easy, fast, neither straight or given. On the contrary, it is long way, with many conflicts, complexities, obstacles and mistakes that need to be overcome and learned from. The challenge is enormous but so is our potential as individuals, organizations and institutions to stand and succeed in this battle.

In this regard, it is important to recall what gender, gender equality and human rights are. According to the Glossary of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ Gender Equality Policy, gender and gender equality are defined as:

Gender[^]: “While the term ‘sex’ here refers to biological differences between men and women, the term ‘gender’ refers to socially constructed identities, attributes and roles for women and men and society’s social and cultural meaning for these biological differences resulting in hierarchical relationships between men and women and in the distribution of power and rights favouring men and disadvantaging women. This social position of men and women is affected by political, economic, cultural, social, religious, ideological and environmental factors and can be changed by culture, society and community.”

Gender equality\textsuperscript{9}: “Inherent to the principle of equality between men and women, or gender equality, is the concept that all human beings, regardless of sex, are free to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices.”

Likewise the website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights shows the meaning of human rights as follows:

Human Rights\textsuperscript{10}: “Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible. Universal human rights are often expressed and guaranteed by law, in the forms of treaties, customary international law, general principles and other sources of international law.” Furthermore, it states that “Human rights entail both rights and obligations”, where the states are obliged to respect, protect and fulfill those rights and individually, each human being must respect the human rights of others.

From these definitions I would like to highlight the fact that gender equality is strongly linked with human rights and development because if individuals, both men and women, are not able to fully develop as human beings, in their different roles and dimensions, and if human rights are not applied and respected, we cannot pursue gender equality. Likewise, we cannot attain the full realization of human rights and the development of human beings without including a gender perspective along the process, without foreseeing gender equality. We can confirm this correlation through different milestones\textsuperscript{11}: the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, among others.

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid. Pg 14.


\textsuperscript{11} “Timeline” Gender Equality, UN Coherence and You e-learning course. UNICEF. http://www.unicef.org/gender/training/content/scoIndex.html
Moreover, gender equality doesn’t mean that women and men are the same; on the contrary, it involves acknowledging and paying attention to their differences as well as letting women and men have access to the same playground where stereotypes and discriminatory practices are left aside, and men and women are treated with respect, dignity and are free to develop their potential, to assume their responsibilities and to claim their rights.

On the other hand, those visible but not always known facts cited at the beginning of this work such as women’s reproductive autonomy being restricted or women being paid less than men, and many more, show gender inequality and the violation of human rights as results that we cannot change because they have already occurred and the impact has already been felt. Why we have forgotten to consider those invisible and not always measurable practices and elements which give rise to those inequalities and human rights violations such as the stereotypes or patriarchal structures that are behind them? Since at the end, they can be changed in order to take the proper direction and prevent “underdevelopment” results. I call them “underdevelopment” because every time an act of gender inequality or a human rights violation occurs, it is a step back in development.

Therefore, organizations and institutions, formal or informal, play an important role in this matter since their on-going processes affect enormously the impact they can have when delivering a service, producing and selling a product, implementing a program, running a mass-media campaign, designing and applying policies and laws or simply accepting certain cultural and social practices. As Rao, Stuart and Kelleher affirm in their work Gender at Work: Organizational Change for Equality, “the problem of gender inequality is rooted in the institutional arrangements of organizations, which in turn produce gender-inequitable outcomes.” Likewise, the lack of respect of human rights is also enshrined in these institutional arrangements, bringing in different types of inequalities which are not only related to gender.

In this context, the need to institutionalize gender equality and human rights at the heart of organizations is evident. Institutionalizing gender equality means to consider gender equality as a fundamental principle and a cross-cutting issue in all institutional settings, from

the simple decisions and actions to the hardest and challenging ones, from the beginning to
the end of an event, project or process. Furthermore, gender equality is a fundamental
condition for the full realization of human rights. On the other hand, institutionalizing human
rights means to consider human rights as the basic and fundamental standards and values for
human dignity; gender equality is part of this bigger umbrella. This needs to be applied in an
on-going basis in all practices and scenarios of life; whether it is at home, at work or at any
other setting. Furthermore, the assessment of this institutionalization should be embraced not
only in quantitative but also in qualitative terms by exploring new ways of thinking and
working, identifying discriminatory practices and human rights violations, analysing and
challenging power relations, reshaping the organizational culture, making institutions work
for men and women.

I believe that three deep-rooted factors foster and build institutional practices that are
gender-bias or gender-equitable, human rights-oriented or human rights-discarded: perceptions, power and values. At the same time, these factors give shape to the
organizational culture, which is the base for the promotion of in-house gender equality and
human rights realization and its expansion over the different institutional practices and
outcomes.

Hence, perceptions matter a lot because if an organization wants to pursue and take
part of a transformation process conducive to gender equality and the advancement of human
rights, the starting point for its people should be broadening their minds and changing their
way of thinking. They need to go beyond the “monocultures of the mind”\textsuperscript{13} to take into account
not only their perceptions but also the perceptions of others, to think with tolerance and
empathy, to think not only in the short-run but also in the long-term impact that will benefit
all constituencies. Gender equality and the full realization of human rights are part of these
broader goals that deserve attention and intervention.

In fact, taking into account and reshaping the different perceptions of people that are
involved in the different positions and areas of an organization, through their own
involvement and mutual interaction, can lead to more human rights-oriented and gender-

\textsuperscript{13} This concept comes from Dr. Vandana Shiva, an Indian feminist ecologist, writer, philosopher and
scientist. For more information see her publication \textit{Monocultures of the Mind}, Research Foundation for
sensitive institutional practices since they are not imposed but built from the people
themselves; this is from the heart of their thinking. Furthermore, it is important that people
get rid of those mental schemes and stereotypes that are preventing from having these
desired institutional practices. One of these schemes for instance should be not to consider
the organization merely as a top-bottom structure but to broaden our minds and think about
the different lines and relationships of power, communication and work that an organization
and its people should promote and develop.

From this example we can see how a new way of thinking could lead to a new way of
managing power and therefore shaping existing power relations in an organization.
Therefore, we switch to power, another important factor for the promotion of gendered
equitable and human rights-oriented relations, decisions and practices. In order to innovate
with new ways of thinking and new ways of working, we need to innovate with a different
form of power, far from the traditional power that is authoritarian, selfish, exclusionary and
misleading.

As Rao, Stuart and Kelleher clearly emphasize, we need an “alternative power base”
that is aligned with the organizational mandate and that is able to challenge the institutional
practices that are not promoting gender equality and the advancement of human rights, and
to generate “political knitting”; this means to build and maintain relationships with different
constituencies based on trust, respect, dialogue and ownership. Moreover, flexibility as well
as moral and financial support from senior management is a clue element of this political
knitting and of this alternative and healthier form of power.¹⁴

I would call this kind of power a “power of empowerment” since the best way to
promote ownership and build capacity for gender equality and the advancement of human
rights is by empowering people to act and participate with freedom but also with
accountability, with creativity but also with determination, with a broader vision and
mutually reinforcing relationships. It is about sharing power and responsibilities, leaving
aside any hegemony. By letting people lead and develop a discussion, start from their own
ideas and perceptions, be decision-makers instead of decision-takers, share their meanings

¹⁴ Kelleher, D; Rao, A and Stuart, R. Gender at Work: Organizational Change for Equality. Pg 22-25.
http://www.genderatwork.org/article/gender-at-work-organizational-change-for-equality
and experiences regarding human rights and gender equality, we are talking about a culture of empowerment. Hence, if an organization is based on a power of empowerment, effective and sustainable practices and results are meant to rise.

The third factor, values, is an important element for the achievement of gender equality and the advancement of human rights within any institutional setting. On one side, we have the values of the organization which are part of the organizational culture and are a sensitive strategic orientation for the attainment of the organization’s mandate. Therefore, any effort directed towards human rights-oriented and gender-equitable institutional practices, needs to be aligned with these values. As Rao, Stuart and Kelleher suggests: "We believe that positive change will not come about without direct, articulated connection between gender equality and the values of the organization (or the agenda of powerful insiders)." Furthermore, this connection must be developed under the broad scope of human rights. On the other side, we have the personal values, which must be taken into consideration if we want to have an impact on the people and consequently on their work. When personal values match with those of the organization, there is more room for understanding, coherence and cohesion.

However, special attention should be given to the cultural values that are being applied and that differ from the ones presented in the organizational mandate. If negative values such as egoism, individualism, disloyalty or deception are prevailing in day-to-day practices, this means there is no sense of belonging with the organizational mandate and culture and thus, there is not a real commitment for implementing institutional practices that are gender-friendly and human-rights sensitive. Therefore the importance of empowering people to take part somehow on a review and adjustment process of the strategic plan of the organization, which includes the reformulation or reaffirmation of values and other cultural and organizational elements. There is no single recipe about which values should be promoted, but they should always foresee the full realization of rights and gender equality along with the achievement of the organizational mission.

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15 Ibid.
Now that we have clear the goal of institutionalizing gender equality and human rights or in order words, working on and reshaping the perceptions, values and power, three important elements of the deep structure of any organization and its different institutional practices, we need to know how to do it. Therefore, for an effective institutionalization of gender equality and human rights, two interrelated strategies should be followed: *gender mainstreaming* and a *human rights-based approach*.

### b. Beyond the Meaning of Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming was born as a concept, as an intergovernmental mandate and as a system-wide strategy for the promotion of gender equality in 1995, during the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing through the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action - BPfA. In this forum is where women and girls' rights were reaffirmed as *“inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights”* and where gender equality and women’s empowerment were incorporated in the development agenda, including specific programs for empowering women, gender mainstreaming in all phases of programming and governments' commitments to integrate a gender perspective in policy formulation and implementation. However, it is also important to mention the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action – VDPA as the baseline for recognition of women's rights as human rights within the international human rights framework.  

Likewise, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women-CEDAW was the initial push for the UN to consider gender equality within an operational framework.  

Furthermore, the ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2 and resolution 2001/41, the General Assembly 23rd special session held in 2000 and the Security Council resolution 1325, all have reinforced the gender mainstreaming mandate.

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16 "Timeline" Gender Equality, UN Coherence and You e-learning course. UNICEF. [http://www.unicef.org/gender/training/content/scolIndex.html](http://www.unicef.org/gender/training/content/scolIndex.html)  


The ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2 defines gender mainstreaming\textsuperscript{19} as follows:

“Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.”

Hence, gender mainstreaming should be at the centre of the table when designing a policy, plan, budget, strategy or program and throughout the respective implementation and evaluation processes. If gender mainstreaming is not at the heart of an organization’s ongoing development, it makes more difficult and almost impossible the achievement of gender equality.

From this theoretical framework, gender mainstreaming has been put in practice not only within the UN System but also by many other development organizations and even governments around the world. And is in the practical settings where the major challenges rely because beyond being aware of the meaning of gender mainstreaming, the big question mark has been how to implement it. “The lack of understanding of ‘HOW’ gender perspectives can be identified and addressed remains one of the most serious constraints.”\textsuperscript{20}

In this regard, the assessment of the context in which gender inequalities are taking place in a particular timeline, is key not only to define the main gender gaps and limitations but also the institutional mechanisms and practices that need to be facilitated and promoted in order to build a transformation process for the organization and for all the actors involved. “The first steps in the mainstreaming strategy are the assessment of how and why gender differences and inequalities are relevant to the subject under discussion, identifying where there are opportunities to narrow these inequalities and deciding on the approach to be taken.”\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid. Pg vi.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid. Pg 2.
Thus, an integral gender analysis that collects and assesses not only sex-disaggregated data but also gender-disaggregated information and other related data based on age, ethnicity, religion, social class, etc., is the best mechanism for having a complete picture of how gender is developed or underdeveloped within an organization, both at the corporate level and at the level of its impact over the different constituencies.

This can be supported by the definition of the World Bank for gender analysis:

“Gender analysis focuses on understanding and documenting the differences in gender roles, activities, needs, and opportunities in a given context. Gender analysis involves the disaggregation of quantitative data by gender. It highlights the different roles and learned behavior of men and women based on gender attributes. These vary across cultures, class, ethnicity, income, education, and time; thus, gender analysis does not treat women as a homogeneous group or gender attributes as immutable.”

However, the scope of institutional practices is limited when the organization only pays attention to quantitative information disaggregated by sex or even worse, when the organization doesn’t have any sex-disaggregated data at all. Therefore, beyond knowing how many women and men are holding a managerial position, involved in a career plan or being trained in gender issues, the challenge and functionality of a gender analysis relies on the capacity to obtain qualitative gender-disaggregated data. Assessing the quality of work-family balance arrangements, the treatment of concerns and priorities of both men and women, the existing discriminatory attitudes and practices or the value-added of gender-equitable policies and programs are examples of this broader approach to gender analysis and therefore, to gender mainstreaming.

In this context, the analysis of the three structural factors previously described: perceptions, power and values, comes into the scene. Assessing what people perceive and misconceive about gender and gender equality, how power and gender relations work, and whether positive organizational and personal values are being applied and supporting a culture of gender equality; all of this is fundamental for the integration of a gender

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perspective into the core business of an organization and into its different areas of work and institutional scenarios. If we want to pursue broad processes of change, this kind of substantial analysis needs to be done.

However, a gender analysis is not enough to mainstream gender at the heart of institutional processes and practices. Perceptions, power and values, which all form part of the organizational structure and culture, need to be reshaped and reoriented in a systematic way and long-term focus. Therefore, the support and accountability from senior management are essential for making this transformational process possible. “Getting gender equality into the mainstream of an organization’s policy and practice entails a significant change in the organization’s management culture and systems.” Hence, if there is no change of the management culture, there cannot be a change of the organizational culture and organizations will still have to deal with important “know-do” and “planning-implementation” gaps. In this regard, the establishment and application of systems of accountability and recognition can produce a real commitment towards gender equality, starting from the top. For instance, setting gender equality institutional and programmatic targets within the Management Strategic Plans and inviting senior managements to come up with initiatives to promote gender equality is an important starting point. Increasing women’s participation and decision-taking at senior management positions is also crucial.

It is interesting to see how UNESCO presents the gender mainstreaming cycle where the organizational culture is at the centre of it and all the other processes (policy-making, planning, implementation, etc.) derive from it. “At the core of the gender mainstreaming cycle requires a gender-responsive organizational culture which allows both men and women to participate equally in all stages of the programme cycle.” Once again, the focus on and the reshaping of the organizational culture with the respective involvement and leadership from senior management is clue in making this cycle works effectively.

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The UNESCO gender mainstreaming cycle is represented as follows:

An example of an organization that has made important efforts in institutionalizing gender equality at the organizational and programmatic levels, taking into consideration some of the structural factors mentioned previously, is CARE Bangladesh. Besides the establishment of a Gender Equality Policy, it has developed a Gender Analysis Framework that goes beyond the step of data collection and general analysis, and focus on six interrelated Gender Equity Strategic Directions upon which all processes and programs are aligned. One of these strategic orientations is Institutional Gender Mainstreaming which aims at strengthening “processes, capacity and accountability of CARE staff, project partners and other

25 Ibid. Pg 87. Note: Monitoring also requires a gender lens.
Furthermore, CARE has promoted several in-house gender equity and diversity sensitive behaviours such as: allocating resources for diversity and gender-related activities; offering flexible working arrangements with regards to breast-feeding; ensuring female wash rooms; asking for women’s participation in meetings, workshops and other settings; among other behaviours.

Another important focus has been building ownership through “women conferences” and “masculinities workshops” where men and women respectively, have their own spaces for sharing their concerns, perceptions and bringing on gender issues for discussion. On the other hand, a mechanism used both at the organizational and programmatic levels, has been the promotion of non-traditional sources of income activities for women. Within the organization for example, CARE has trained and hired women drivers and technicians, and within the community, it has provided to women, commercial access to more than 140 rural markets. Along with the appropriate support from senior management and many other efforts, CARE is a good example of an effective institutionalization and integration of a gender perspective.

From this good practice, we can see how employees' ownership, an accountable and supportive senior management and the adoption of new work practices and behaviours can really have a positive impact in the institutionalization of gender equality. However, all of this can be fully achieved only if a human rights-based approach is promoted and applied along with the integration of a gender perspective.

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27 Gender Equity and Diversity Sensitive Behavior. CARE Bangladesh’s work on Gender. CARE Bangladesh. http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/CARE+Bangladesh

C. An Overview of the Human Rights-Based Approach – HRBA

As a starting point it is important to say that there is no a universally concerted and accepted definition for a HRBA. However, I would like to share and highlight two definitions that together bring in the full spectrum and different elements of a HRBA: processes, responses, standards, practices, development, empowerment, exposure, dignity, law, responsibilities and rights.

In one of its publications, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has defined a HRBA\(^29\) as:

“A conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyze inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress.”

Furthermore, I would like to reinforce this definition with another one that comes from CARE International United Kingdom\(^30\):

“What is a rights-based approach? It is a lens and an approach to all our work, be that programming or within our own organization. A rights-based approach deliberately and explicitly focuses on people achieving the minimum conditions for living with dignity (i.e. achieving their human rights). It does so by exposing the roots of vulnerability and marginalization and expanding the range of responses. It empowers people to claim and exercise their rights and fulfill their responsibilities. A rights-based approach recognizes poor, displaced, and war-affected people as having inherent rights essential to livelihood security-rights that are (sometimes) validated by law.”


Moreover, we must be aware that a human rights-based approach has arisen through different historic moments which have contributed to strengthening the relationship between development and human rights. The UN World Conference on Human Rights, taken place in Vienna in 1993, should be recognized as the starting milestone in the integration of human rights within UN’s development agencies since it reaffirmed development as a right through the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action and also established for the first time, the designation of a High Commissioner for Human Rights. Then in 1997, as part of the United Nations reform, Mr Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the UN in that period, called for the integration of a HRBA in all activities and programs within the entire UN system.31

Further in 2003, a coherent conceptual framework was given by the United Nations Development Group to all Human Rights-Based Approaches to Development Cooperation and Programming adopted by all UN agencies. Known as the “Common Understanding”, this conceptual framework "serves to guide processes and outcomes with respect to human rights mainstreaming, and in doing so provides practitioners with operational guidance in applying a HRBA in their work."32 Furthermore, it highlights the direct contribution of all development cooperation efforts towards the fulfilment of human rights, the application of human rights principles as a cross-sector issue and throughout all phases of the programming process, as well as the capacity-building of duty-bearers to meet their obligations and of rights-holders to claim their rights.33

The following figure, which has been taken from WHO publication Human Rights and Gender Equality in Health Sector Strategies34, clearly summarizes the Common Understanding commitment:


33 Ibid.

In December 2009, the integration of a Human Rights-based approach as an important operational and interagency collaboration platform within the field of development has been adopted under the United Nations Development Group’s Human Rights Mainstreaming Mechanism - UNDG-HRM. The HRM is chaired by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and is composed of 19 UN Agencies, Funds and Programs. Among its priorities are the promotion and development of a coherent UN system-wide approach that integrates human rights standards and principles at the operational work of the UN but also at the country level through capacity-building of national institutions and national human rights protection systems. Advocacy efforts directed to raise awareness and commitments regarding human rights mainstreaming is another important strategic function of the HRM.35

A good practice in the application of a human rights-based approach within the UN operational work at the country level has been the development of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework – UNDAF of Ecuador for 2010-2014. Through technical support and different training sessions, with a simpler language and clearer content, the United Nations Country Team-UNCT staff in Ecuador was able to improve its know-how about human rights and therefore, acquire the necessary skills for human rights mainstreaming. Furthermore, the fact that the international human rights standards were linked to the national context and that the UNDAF was aligned to the National Development Plan, was clue for gaining greater identification, commitment and responsiveness not only from the UN.

national staff but also from the Ecuadorian Government. Even though several challenges have remained, a human rights-based approach has strengthened and given a new direction to the UN development cooperation process carried out in Ecuador by promoting stronger accountability as well as participation of international and national stakeholders and by adapting the international human rights framework to the national one.\textsuperscript{36}

A human rights-based approach is about institutionalizing human rights within the work of organizations and entities, no matter if they are public or private; big, medium or small; profit or non-profit. Through the statement of the Common Understanding and the adoption of the Human Rights Mainstreaming Mechanism, we can clearly see an institutionalization of human rights at the external and operational level of organizations within the context of development cooperation. However, if we want to pursue gender equality and the full realization of human rights, the institutionalization should also be internal and rooted in the organizational culture and practices.

UNICEF has been one of the organizations at the lead of the development and improvement of a HRBA both within the organization and also through its programmatic work. Human rights mainstreaming has been enshrined at different institutional milestones: from UNICEF Mission Statement in 1996 to the 1998 Executive Directive that made a call to all staff to join efforts in this aim and the most recent Medium-Term Strategic Plan 2006-2013. As part of this Strategic Plan, in 2011 UNICEF held a Global Evaluation of the Application of a Human Rights-based Approach to UNICEF programming in order to assess the understanding and implementation of the approach at the programmatic and corporate levels; and therefore, set good practices, remaining challenges and lessons learnt that mark the necessary adjustments and following actions.\textsuperscript{37} Even though the results showed that further efforts need to be made for achieving an optimal implementation of a HRBA, the evaluation per se is an important and appropriate step in this regard because if an organization wants to pursue new ways of thinking and new ways of working conducive to human rights mainstreaming and

\textsuperscript{36} “UNCT Ecuador: Applying a HRBA to the UNDAF.” HRBA Portal. UN Practitioners’ Portal on Human Rights Based Approaches to Programming. \url{http://hrbaportal.org/archives/agencies/unicef-featured-project}

therefore to the realization of human rights, the assessment is the first fundamental piece in this puzzle.

In this context, as a gender-based analysis is needed for an effective institutionalization of gender equality, a human rights-based analysis is the baseline for an effective institutionalization of human rights. This latter analysis allows the proper identification of rights-holders and their claims, and of duty-bearers and their obligations, as well as the capacity gaps and capacity-building opportunities that both have. Moreover, because of this clear distinction of duty-bearers and rights-holders, the different power structures and relations can be better assessed. Furthermore, it gives room to a wide and complete analysis in all branches: economic, cultural, social, political, and the link of each branch with the fulfilment or violation of human rights standards and principles; in the case of a violation it allows the analysis of the root causes as well.

In this initial stage is where the analysis of structural components such as perceptions, power and values should come because the only way to bring a change is by assessing the roots of the difficulties and obstacles to the fulfilment of human rights. In this sense, the analysis of the perceptions of people is important in order to find the best ways to reshape them and therefore, be able to reshape the actions needed for human rights mainstreaming.

As clearly stated by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights:

"The real potential of human rights lies in its ability to change the way people perceive themselves vis-à-vis the government and other actors. A [human] rights framework provides a mechanism for reanalyzing and renaming ‘problems’ like contaminated water or malnutrition as ‘violations’ and, as such, something that need not and should not be tolerated…"38

By analysing and reshaping perceptions we can also analyse and reshape the power structures and relations in order to build participation and accountability, two important human rights principles that are an integral part of a human rights-based approach. "A human rights-based approach to programming is powerful, because it emphasizes the fact that

governments are the primary duty bearers under a human rights framework.”\textsuperscript{39} This statement is important in the sense that if governments assume their responsibility with regards to the fulfilment of human rights, as the maximum authorities of a country they can enact or adjust laws, policies, and constitutions to protect and enforce those rights. However, by mainly emphasizing the agency of the government, everyone else that is not the government may see himself or herself with a limited level of responsibility. Therefore, the challenge for better processes and results when applying a HRBA, relies on broadening this perspective and increase the participation and accountability of other duty-bearers: organizations, companies, community leaders, each one of us as individual citizens because from the merely fact that we are alive and are entitled to rights, we also have obligations and must perform our role of responsibility towards the full realization of human rights. The \textit{UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights}\textsuperscript{40} constitute an important effort in this regard since they pursue human rights accountability not only from states but also from corporations.

Furthermore, the assessment of personal and organizational values should be incorporated within this human-rights based analysis because values are the basis to build a culture of commitment towards human rights. \textit{“It is fundamental that the organization acquires ownership over human rights, incorporates them to the set of organizational values and identity, and applies them on a daily basis along the work of all levels and all links of the value chain.”}\textsuperscript{41} Hence, values cannot be ignored or underestimated; they must be at the starting point of the transformational process. Underlining these values within an organizational human rights policy or statement is important in order to maintain coherence and foster a sense of belonging among people. Further, this conceptual framework should be translated into well-defined targets, indicators strategies and expected results through a concrete action plan. All of this should take place starting from a strong political commitment from senior management and the corresponding allocation of resources.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid. Pg 25.

\textsuperscript{40} “UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.” Business & Human Rights Resource Centre. \url{http://www.business-humanrights.org/UNGuidingPrinciplesPortal/Home}

Correlation between Gender Mainstreaming and a Human Rights-Based Approach

“There is virtually no aspect of our work that does not have a human rights dimension. Whether we are talking about peace and security, development, humanitarian action, the struggle against terrorism, climate change, none of these challenges can be addressed in isolation from human rights.” Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations

Gender equality is also one of these challenges that cannot be achieved without the respect and application of human rights; therefore, the integration of gender mainstreaming and a human rights-based approach is not only the best strategy but “a must” in this process. After revising and appreciating separately both processes, now it is important to see and explain the value of their correlation for an effective institutionalization of gender equality and human rights.

Both strategies have their own analytical framework with the corresponding categorization of actors and elements subject to analysis: women and men and their different needs, perspectives and roles in the case of gender mainstreaming while duty-bearers and rights-holders with their respective obligations and entitlements in the case of a HRBA.

Likewise, their scope is quite wide and comprehensive; “both apply to all stages of activity (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) and to all types of action (legislation, policies and programmes).” The application of both strategies should not be limited to the programmatic level but should also be translated into the organizational setting: the organizational culture, its power relationships, the use of specific instruments and tools such as management strategic plans, individual or team work plans, codes of ethics and conduct, job descriptions and e-performances, among others. Furthermore, there is a sharing

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44 Ibid.
of common principles such as empowerment, accountability and non-discrimination which are fundamental for ensuring coherence in the processes and effectiveness in the results.

“HRBA has a normative value as a set of universally agreed values, standards and principles.”\(^{45}\) Hence, if this added value of a human rights-based approach is applied in the integration of a gender perspective; this is, if human rights instruments are considered as the reference point and level of measurement of any action aimed at mainstreaming gender, the process can no longer be seen as a voluntary provision and satisfaction of needs but becomes a legal and moral obligation. The same occurs with the actors involved who pass from being passive recipients, waiting for things to happen, to being active agents of their own development, making things happen. Moreover, with this wider spectrum of human rights other demographic elements such as age, socio-economic position, nationality and ethnicity can be considered when targeting actions for addressing gender-discriminatory practices and other inequalities; giving room to an integral and inclusive analysis.

In the case of organizations, which are important duty-bearers, even though they are not directly obliged to comply with the international human rights instruments, they are enforced to respect and apply the national legislation which should maintain coherence with the international human rights mechanisms. There is also a demand from the market and from the different constituencies with whom an organization has a specific relationship. Finally, it is a matter of moral value; therefore, this is what all organizations and companies need to be aware of and fully embrace as part of their organizational culture.

Many organizations are aware of this correlation and apply the integration of both principles in their work. UNICEF is one of them. It promotes and supports the development of policies, legislations, budgets, partnerships, institutions and systems, all of which “promote norms, services and protections for children that reflect global human rights standards, including those relating to gender equality.”\(^ {46}\) Likewise, “UNICEF brings a human rights


perspective and strives to mainstream gender issues in all its work for children, with the Convention on the Rights of the Child as principal reference, and recognizes the mutually supportive relationship between this Convention and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women."47

The World Health Organization – WHO in its publication Human Rights and Gender Equality in Health Sector Strategies emphasizes the added value that the integration of a human rights-based approach and gender mainstreaming brings in to the different strategies and activities of the health sector. For instance, it recognizes their contribution to “the reduction of gender-based (and other) health inequalities” and also their support in ensuring “transparent and accountable strategies to empower women and men – especially the most marginalized – to participate in policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.”48

Furthermore, WHO highlights the promotion of gender equality as a requirement of a HRBA and calls for an effective application of gender mainstreaming in this regard. It also acknowledges a supportive integration of both approaches in strengthening “commitments in the Millennium Declaration, the 2007 HRC resolution 6/30 (Integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system) and the UN System-Wide Policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women.”49

Daniel Collinge50, OHCHR Human Rights Officer of the Asian-Pacific Section in the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division clearly states and applies this correlation: “Gender mainstreaming is a means of better understanding human rights situations and how they affect men and women differently, to understand the violations and then to enable us to tailor our recommendations on how to address human rights violations in a more targeted and comprehensive way.”

49 Ibid.
50 Interview to Daniel Collinge in October 2013.


As stated in the Introduction, this second part of the work focuses in the integration of a gender and human rights perspective within the institutional setting of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – OHCHR. However, in order to better understand the OHCHR scenario, it is important to have an overview of the United Nations System-wide Policy and Action Plan on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

After the incorporation of gender mainstreaming within the development arena along with all policies and programs of the United Nations System, through the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 1997 UN reform with the respective agreed conclusions coming from the Economic and Social Council, a United Nations system-wide policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women was endorsed in 2006 by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination – CEB. Within this policy framework, an official commitment was made aiming at the achievement of a “coherent and coordinated implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy adopted by the Economic and Social Council-ECOSOC in its agreed conclusions 1997/2”, through the provision of a strong leadership, further efforts to attain gender balance, the use of knowledge, experience and comparative advantages of each UN entity, and a collective partnership with common objectives.52

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52 Ibid.
Furthermore, the strategy set the operational framework of this policy by formulating a United Nations System-wide Action Plan – SWAP enshrined in six core areas: accountability; results-based management; oversight through monitoring, evaluation, audit and reporting; human and financial resources; capacity development; and coherence, knowledge and information management. It also affirmed the need to establish performance indicators, timelines for improvement, responsibility for follow-up and resources required for each of these areas.\(^5\) But the SWAP wasn’t fully developed and didn’t entry into force until 2012, year in which through its Resolution\(^5\) E/2012/24, the ECOSOC officially:

"Welcomes the development of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, under the leadership of UN Women, and its adoption by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on 13 April 2012, as an accountability framework to be fully implemented by the United Nations system, and calls upon the United Nations system to actively engage in its roll-out."

Under this directive, UN Women with the involvement of and consultation to over 50 entities, Secretariat Departments and inter-agency coordination bodies, including the OHCHR, facilitated the development of the SWAP with the aim of enhancing coherence and accountability for action. As part of this consultation process, which was carried out between July 2011 and February 2012, a piloting of the SWAP was held by eight entities which tested the SWAP reporting framework and validated the SWAP performance indicators. The OHCHR took part of this process as well.\(^5\)

Even though the SWAP respects the individual work of the different UN entities in setting up their own policies and plans for mainstreaming gender equality and the empowerment of women, all of them need to report on the SWAP Performance Indicators

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53 Ibid. Annex 1. Pg 3-4.


which are based on a 5-level rating system\textsuperscript{56}: “missing”, “approaches requirements”, “meets requirements”, “exceeds requirements” and “not-applicable.” The UN entities are expected to reach the minimum standards set under the label of “meets requirements” by 2017.

Thus, we can see that the SWAP constitutes an important breakthrough in providing a coherent and accountable framework of action with clear standards that measure the level of success, stagnation or failure of each UN entity in taking the necessary and further steps for an effective integration of gender within its institutional practices.

\textbf{b. Gender Equality Framework of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.}

Within the OHCHR setting, gender mainstreaming was officially introduced as a conceptual framework in 2000 with the adoption of the first OHCHR Gender Policy Statement on Gender Mainstreaming and Human Rights of Women. This was followed and complemented by the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy formulated in 2002. However, their applicability was limited and further efforts were required for a proper institutionalization of gender equality. The creation of a specific unit on Women’s Human Rights and Gender in 2007 facilitated the day-to-day practices and operations of gender mainstreaming. Furthermore, after a performance evaluation carried out in 2010, the need for a more coherent and comprehensive policy guidance was evident; therefore the 2011 OHCHR Gender Equality Policy was established, “outlining a joint vision, strategic priorities and processes for integrating gender throughout the Office.”\textsuperscript{57}

This policy covers all OHCHR human resource force at Headquarters and in the field and has the leading support of the High Commissioner, the Deputy High Commissioner, the Assistant Secretary-General in New York, and other members in senior management positions. Furthermore, the policy has been constructed paying careful attention to different

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid. Pg 5.

international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the two international Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as well as on Civil and Political Rights respectively. The international human rights principles of universality; indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness; participation and inclusion; and equality and non-discrimination are also an important guidance for the policy. Moreover, the policy has two main strategic orientations: the institutionalization of gender equality in OHCHR organizational culture and the integration of gender equality as a cross-cutting issue in all fields of OHCHR mandate.58 These orientations have been made operational through the formulation and implementation of OHCHR Gender Equality Strategic Plan 2012-2013.59

C. OHCHR Gender Equality Strategic Plan 2012-2013: The Breakthrough in the Institutionalization of Gender Equality.

i. Goal, scope and other elements.

The OHCHR Gender Equality Strategic Plan 2012-2013 constitutes the main operational arm of the Gender Equality Policy and marks a crucial milestone in the institutionalization of gender equality within the organization.

"Lay out concrete actions to advance gender equality, in both the institutional setting and the work of the Office"60 is the overall objective of the Strategic Plan. Taking into account the differences between men and women in terms of needs, experiences, perceptions, concerns; promoting equality of opportunities and making face to gender-based discrimination in its broadest sense is part of this goal.61

58 Ibid. Pg. 3-6


60 Ibid. Pg 3.

61 Ibid.
A representative pool of OHCHR members was involved in the development of this Plan. This was further supported through consultations made to different UN entities that have taken important steps in gender mainstreaming. Moreover, this new operational framework has been created taking into consideration two important directives: the SWAP at the UN System level and the Global Management Output 3 (GMO3) at the OHCHR level; both requiring the integration of a gender perspective. The latter has been included for the first time in OHCHR Management Plan – OMP 2012-2013 with the following statement: “Gender perspective is effectively integrated in all OHCHR policies, programmes and processes.” The GMO3 is one of the 8 management goals that have been defined in the OMP.

On the other hand, the scope of the Plan covers all OHCHR staff members both at Headquarters and in field presences, including the human rights components of peace missions. Its timeframe which also serves as a test period is from 10 August 2012, its adoption date, to 31 December of the present year 2013. After the respective evaluation and stock-taking of lessons learned, good practices and remaining challenges, a new Strategic Plan will be developed for the 4-year cycle 2014-2017.

The Strategic Plan is composed of 5 important elements subject to analysis and which makes the plan operational, measurable and comprehensive: expected results, performance indicators, planned actions, responsibility and resources required. Furthermore, as stated before, the framework of action is divided in two strategic orientations: Institutionalizing gender equality in OHCHR organizational culture, structure and processes; and Advancing gender equality in all areas of OHCHR mandate. At the same time, each of these orientations has sub-categories and makes reference to specific parts of the Policy.

The rest of this work will cover the first strategic orientation. Since both directives have a strong correlation, the second strategic orientation is addressed somehow.

62 Ibid.
65 Ibid. Pg 5-13.
ii. Institutionalizing gender equality in OHCHR organizational culture, structure and processes.

- **Strengthening accountability for gender equality among all staff members**

  In order to bring together responsibility for action and transparency; in other words accountability, OHCHR has requested that the e-performance of all staff members reflect gender integration by incorporating “at least one goal, action or success criteria related to the promotion of gender equality.” This expected result will also be part of the next cycle 2014-2017 since it needs a longer timeframe for its fully completion. Even though the specificity and definition of actions and goals varies from individual to individual depending on his or her role in the organization and also depending on the unit or division he or she works for, a guideline for the use of gender-sensitive language has been designed and shared in order to facilitate the establishment and fulfilment of actions conducive to gender equality. However, as it has been addressed in the gender facilitators’ annual meeting taken place on October 1st, the guideline for the use of gender-sensitive language should not be limited to the wording but also embrace the gender stereotypes behind it. Furthermore, the need for practical guidelines or checklists that help define and assess the appropriate goals or actions and that are tailored to the work and reality of each unit, division or country office has been raised in several interviews I conducted to some staff members. Moreover, the need for a higher and systematic level of accountability, especially from Senior Management, has also been addressed in both the gender facilitators meeting as well as in the interviews held. This also constitutes an important requirement within the SWAP framework.

A good practice in promoting gender equality that has been carried out by different OHCHR staff members from Special Procedures Branch and the Human Rights Treaties Division, to whom I interviewed, is ensuring women’s presence and participation in meetings with governments’ representatives, which have been characterized by a male-dominant

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participation. In cases where this is not possible due to specific political and cultural contexts, an alternative action has been to hold women and men’s meetings separately so women can also have their own space to speak out and bring in important issues that are not necessarily the same ones mentioned by men. All these kinds of actions need to be practiced and reported in a systematic way by all staff members in order to bring in accountability and make them visible to the different constituencies.

“Participation should enable women to challenge political and other forms of exclusion that prevent them from exercising power over decisions and processes that affect their lives.”

By promoting women’s participation through these kinds of actions, the right and principle of non-discrimination is being respected. Furthermore, women are being recognized as active agents, decision-takers and therefore important duty-bearers, and not only as victims of human rights violations and rights-holders. In other words, besides being gender-sensitive a human rights-based approach is being applied. However, careful attention should be given in not discriminating men when promoting women’s participation; on the contrary, by engaging men in gender equality initiatives, better results can be obtained. Regardless of the mandate and core-business of an organization or company, this accountability for gender and human rights integration can and should be pursued.

A further step and remaining challenge in strengthening accountability within OHCHR setting should be the design and implementation of a system of recognition that allows an alignment with the UN SWAP but mostly, the achievement of more effective results.

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A good practice in establishing a system of recognition is the UNDP corporate certification program denominated *Gender Equality Seal*. This program “incentivizes and recognizes good performance of UNDP offices/units to deliver transformational gender equality results.” It is composed of the following four steps:

1. **Online pre-screening to identify gender gaps of the office/unit**
2. **Action plan design and implementation**
3. **Final assessment to identify level of certification**
4. **Certification and award**

Furthermore, this certification program goes beyond individual and isolated actions; it builds teamwork and ownership which contribute to systematic and innovative organizational practices that come from the group’s synergy and the integration of individual contributions, perceptions, identities. Moreover, it further contributes to gender equality and other development results. For instance, among the achievements of the UNDP country office in Kyrgyzstan were well developed national gender legislation and policy as well as national mechanisms for human rights and public monitoring. When this kind of certification process is not done as an ad-hoc activity but is fully integrated in the organizational practices and mandate, we can talk about a real integration of gender and human rights, with a proper reorientation of actions and where principles such as inclusion, participation, empowerment, matter a lot and make the difference.

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71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.
Integrating gender perspectives in reporting, evaluation and oversight.

Within this action directive, “A gender perspective that is systematically integrated in annual work plans (AWP) and reported on” has been defined as the expected result. Moreover, the GMO3 is the point of reference upon which performance is measured since the activities formulated in the AWP must contribute to the achievement of this management goal. This constitutes an important alignment with the SWAP; specifically with the Results-based Management-RBM core area since one of its requirements is that “the central strategic planning document includes at least one-specific outcome/expected accomplishment and one specific indicator on gender equality and women’s empowerment.” Therefore, as mentioned before, the OHCHR Management Plan - OMP 2012-2013, the central strategic planning document of the organization, has included for the first time a management goal, the GMO3, which is directly linked to gender integration. At the same time, this output is composed of 4 indicators and 4 targets as shown in the following table:

![Table showing gender perspective indicators and targets]

Source: OHCHR Management Plan 2012-2013

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The second indicator is directly linked with the expected result described in this action directive while the first one has been addressed in the previous sub-category of action related to accountability. The 100% target of e-performances of all OHCHR staff members stated in the Gender Equality Strategic Plan 2012-2013 should ideally be included in the upcoming OHCHR Management Plan in order to have uniformity in the setting and completion of the target. Likewise, since this indicator of e-performance depends on the fulfilment of the other indicator with regards to Annual Work Plans, this latter should also have a target of 100% as it is being formulated in the Gender Equality Action Plan 2014-2017. The third indicator presented in the table involves the allocation of resources and the fourth measures the level of alignment with the SWAP. Recognizing this alignment in the Management Plan has been an important step in terms of accountability from senior management.

In order to better meet and even exceed the requirements of the SWAP in this regard, the Thematic Strategies\(^7^6\), which are the institutional lines of action of OHCHR, will also include a gender perspective in the Management Plan 2014-2017; thus better contributing to the full realization of human rights as well as of gender equality. Furthermore, the second strategic orientation of the Gender Equality Action Plan 2014-2017 will also set specific indicators and targets in compliance with these thematic strategies and also with some of the Global Management Outputs.

An inconvenient that was arisen at the gender facilitators annual meeting, was the lack of uniformity with regards to terminology. For instance, they were discussing whether to set indicators as objectives or as outcomes. Thus, the adoption of a basic and friendly-user results-based management terminology can avoid misunderstandings within the organization but also in the relationships with donors and other constituencies, allowing a better communication and more coherent orientation on what actions to take.

On the other hand, the Results-based Management core-area of the SWAP and the approach of RBM itself not only involves the definition of results and actions in key institutional documents as part of the planning process but also a proper system to monitor and evaluate the implementation of those results and actions. The 3 areas of a RBM (planning, monitoring and evaluation) need to have a clear relationship; otherwise, the intended results can’t be accomplished properly. The following figure, which has been taken from the UNDG Results-Based Management Handbook, shows this relationship:

Likewise, it is also important to be aware of the meaning of a RBM in order to better understand its scope. There is no one standard definition but the one adopted by the United Nations Development Group is quite comprehensive:

“RBM is a management strategy by which all actors, contributing directly or indirectly to achieving a set of results, ensure that their processes, products and services contribute to the achievement of desired results (outputs, outcomes and higher level goals or impact). The actors in turn use information and evidence on actual results to inform decision-making on the design, resourcing and delivery of programmes and activities as well as for accountability and reporting.”

Hence, OHCHR needs further efforts to fully mainstream a Results-based Management approach. Furthermore, all of this should be done through a gender and human rights lens in order to keep coherence with the UN system mandate and the principles of gender mainstreaming and a human rights-based approach.

In this regard, one of the SWAP requirements is to comply with the UNEG gender-related norms and standards. For instance, one of the UNEG norms that are human rights-oriented and gender-sensitive is with regards to the Ethics of Evaluation where it is stated that “In light of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender inequality.” Likewise, UNEG standards 3.9, 3.14 and 4.8 ask for the incorporation of gender and human rights considerations in the evaluation design, composition of the evaluation team and also in the evaluation report. Furthermore, the SWAP encourages the use of instruments such as the UNEG guidance document Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation – Towards UNEG Guidance, since this can be very helpful in framing the evaluation process with a gender and human rights perspective; thus allowing a comprehensive analysis of discriminatory practices and the impact on women and men, duty-bearers and right-holders.

78 Ibid.


OHCHR collaborated in the development of this guidance along with other 8 UN agencies, all of which compose the UNEG Human Rights and Gender Equality Task Force. The guidance is based on UNEG norms and standards as well as on gaps identified in existing material.\textsuperscript{82}

As stated in the guidance, “An evaluation that is HR & GE responsive addresses the programming principles required by a human rights based approach and gender mainstreaming strategy.”\textsuperscript{83} Furthermore, it allows the identification and assessment of “the inequalities, discriminatory practices and unjust power relations that are central to development problems.”\textsuperscript{84} Thus, interventions can be better targeted and results can be more effective. Moreover, even though gender mainstreaming and a HRBA have a different background and approach, they share important principles such as inclusion, participation and fair power relations; giving room to a proper integration of these two strategies.\textsuperscript{85}

In this regard, if a sustainable change is intended, this evaluation approach that is human rights and gender-sensitive should start from the institutional arrangements of an organization, promoting these common principles among the staff, understanding the power relations and how decisions are taken with the respective implications on the different constituencies. Furthermore, it analyzes the different roles of women and men, duty-bearers and rights-holders where winners and losers are identified as well as their constraints and the opportunities to close these gaps and to make the necessary adjustments. This evaluation approach is not an end in itself but a crucial point of the process where better ways of working, thinking and relating to each other need to be shaped and put in place.

A good practice in considering human rights, gender equality and results-based management as cross-cutting issues is UNESCO 2011 guide Results-based Programming, Management and Monitoring (RBM) approach as applied at UNESCO. In this guide, UNESCO clearly states its commitment to programs applying a human rights-based approach and a

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\textsuperscript{83} Ibid. Pg.14.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid. Pg.14&15.
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gender perspective as cross-cutting issues along all process of a RBM approach. Furthermore, it recognizes gender equality as a human right and affirms the importance of applying a gender analysis as well as a situation analysis where the claims of the right-holders and the obligations of the duty-bearers are identified, and also the respective gaps and constraints that prevent the realization of human rights and gender equality. More specifically to results and performance indicators, it states that “results should reflect change needed to ensure that right-holders can exercise their rights and to ensure equal opportunities among men and women, boys and girls. Performance indicators can give indications of this change placing focus for example on equal participation, on degree of gender responsiveness and using sex disaggregated data to measure progress.” 86 The mobilization of rights-holders, men and women, boys and girls, as beneficiaries and partners is an important consideration also addressed in the guide.87

➢ Introducing gender-responsive budgeting in OHCHR

“OHCHR-wide guidelines on gender-responsive budgeting established”88 has been set as the expected result of this line of action in the Gender Equality Strategic Plan 2012-2013; therefore, OHCHR is in the process of developing these guidelines. In this regard, it is important to explain and clarify what a gender-responsive budget – GRB is. As defined in one publication of UNFPA:

“Gender-responsive budget (GRB) work is about ensuring that government budgets and the policies and programs that underlie them address the needs and interests of individuals that belong to different social groups. Thus GRB work looks at biases that can arise because a person


87 Ibid.

is male or female but at the same time considers disadvantage suffered as a result of ethnicity, caste, class or poverty status, location and age.”

We can see from this definition that a GRB doesn’t not imply specific and separate budgets for women and men neither a parity in % of allocation, but rather takes into account their differences in terms of needs, perceptions, roles and other features that are rooted in a particular culture or circumstance in order to ensure the promotion and realization of gender equality through the different policies, programs and any plan of action. If resources are not analyzed and disbursed for this matter, the intended results will remain as promises that are said and even written but never implemented. Therefore, accountability, transparency and other rights-based principles can enforce the “promises” and transform them into a real and effective allocation and prioritization of resources conductive to gender equality. As stated by Giovanna Bianchi, OHCHR Secretary of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances in the Human Rights Treaties Division, “A budget is fundamental. It is the most political tool that you have. Where you move your money, you move your priorities.”

This prioritization is in line with a GRB which, given the scarcity of resources, can make a significant contribution in the allocation of governmental funds and also of funding coming from private donors and civil society, being the focus redirected towards the needs of the most disadvantaged, with particular socio-economic characteristics and who are not or are less able to satisfy by themselves their needs. If we add to this a human rights framework, choices can be better made since human rights standards provide an important moral and legal value which cannot be ignored neither underestimated. Furthermore, it gives a more objective identification of the needs rather than allowing a subjective understanding of what the needs are according to policy-makers, legislators and other decision-takers.

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90 Interview to Giovanna Bianchi in September 2013.

91 Ibid.

It is also important to notice that a GRB doesn’t involve just the allocation of resources towards gender equality efforts neither the government as the sole actor, but implies “a range of different activities, including research, advocacy, monitoring, training, awareness-raising, policy analysis and policy design” and also “a range of different actors such as government, the legislature, civil society, academia, donors and the international financial institutions.” Consequently, it is important to consider and appreciate the diversity in its lines of action and the interaction of multiple stakeholders.

In this context, it is important to recognize the first steps of OHCHR in including for the first time an indicator of resources allocation conductive to gender equality in its Management Plan 2012-2013 as seen previously. However, this is not enough if a GRB is meant to be promoted and implemented as part of the gender mainstreaming strategy. If a commitment from senior management already exists as well as the respective disbursement of funds, further efforts should be concentrated on training and awareness-raising among all staff members and an appropriate advocacy with the external constituencies as well. Working in perceptions and the clarification of concepts is also important here since a GRB could be misunderstood and associated with women rights; thus failing to see the wider spectrum that it covers and therefore, unwillingness to implement the approach could arise. Indicators such as the % or number of staff members that are aware of or have been trained in GRB or % of activities that promote or apply a GRB approach at headquarters and in the country offices could be used.

Likewise, the SWAP requires not only a financial benchmark for resource allocation but also a financial resource tracking mechanism both conducive to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Having a tracking system in place can help not only to know the amount of resources that have been allocated for each unit and disaggregated by its different


http://www.unwomen.org/~/media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/How%20We%20Work/UNSystemCoordination/UN-SWAP-Framework-Dec-2012.pdf
activities but also to identify valuable qualitative information such as what kinds of activities usually receive more financial resources, what kinds of activities need further attention and allocation, who benefits the most and who is in disadvantaged, and other related-information.

➢ Committing to gender equality in human resources management

In this line of action, the expected result for 2012-2013 is: "Job openings and interview questions integrate gender sensitivity as a criterion."\textsuperscript{95} Thus, this result highlights the importance of promoting gender equality from the recruitment process. Moreover, the involvement and gender-sensitivity of Human Resources personnel and of the panellists who make the different interviews is clue in this regard. In fact, in OHCHR the Programme Support and Management Services – PSMS division, where the Human Resources Management Section belongs to, is responsible for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of this result\textsuperscript{96}.

On the other hand, the SWAP requires the achievement of gender parity, especially for General Service staff and for senior management positions, and a proper gender architecture with gender focal points and a gender unit that are supportive in gender mainstreaming efforts.\textsuperscript{97}

Hence, in the case of OHCHR’s gender architecture, there are two staff members who are full-time committed to gender integration within the Women’s Human Rights and Gender Section. While there are gender facilitators who are staff members working at Headquarters, there are gender focal points that provide their support and expertise in field presences. Likewise, there are regional gender advisors who are located in the regional field offices but also in the New York Office. On the other hand, there are Departmental Focal Points for Women who are elected members of the Staff Committee in charge of directly monitoring the work related to the advancement of women. Moreover, the Senior Human Rights Adviser on


\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity issues and other OHCHR colleagues responsible for gender-related issues are also part of this team.\footnote{OHCHR Gender Equality Strategic Plan 2012-2013. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. 10/08/2012. Pg 4.} Even though the gender architecture is quite solid, a consideration should be made on having more staff members fully dedicated to gender integration and more men as part of the gender architecture so more substantial work can be done and the results can be more effective. The involvement of other Human Rights Advisers can also generate an added-value.

The following figure shows the office-wide gender architecture:\footnote{Ibid. Pg 4.}
With regards to gender parity, notable improvements have been done mainly from the endorsement of the UN SWAP. The fact of having women occupying the highest organizational position as High Commissioner since 2004, Ms Louise Arbour from 2004 to 2008, and Ms Navi Pillay from 2008 to present, has also made an important difference in terms of accountability and an assertive role in the promotion of gender equality. This is reinforced by the perspective of Paulo David, OHCHR Chief of the Capacity-building & Harmonization Section in the Human Rights Treaties Division "I think we are a model in the UN. I don’t think any sector of the UN has been headed for such a long time by women. It is more than 10 years with women in our leadership including also women as Deputy High Commissioner. Our leaders have been very courageous and very independent and that it is not easy."

In general terms, we can say that gender parity exists in OHCHR but if we analyse specifically the senior management positions, there is still a male dominant presence and decision-taking. Therefore, the forthcoming Gender Equality Strategic Plan will include the promotion of a higher representation of women in senior management positions within the human resources line of action.

An assessment that allows the collection of information on the reasons why women don’t apply or are not hired for senior management posts as well as why they leave when already being involved in those positions can be very helpful in framing the actions needed to avoid this to happen and to promote a higher representation of women in leading positions. Likewise, analysing the other side of the coin, this is, the engagement or disengagement of men in these high-level positions could provide different and useful insights. Furthermore, this valuable information could be well received and appreciated by the Senior Management Team as well as by the High Commissioner and Deputy High Commissioner since it involves more substantial issues and therefore, they could make further commitments in the fulfilment of the intended result.


101 Interview to Paulo David in September 2013.

102 This has been mentioned in some of the interviews held to OHCHR staff members.

103 This was remarked during the annual gender facilitators meeting.
The need for doing this kind of appraisal has been raised at the gender facilitators meeting and at some of the interviews. Likewise, it is also encouraged by the SWAP, as described in its technical notes where it talks about “A realistic plan in place for achieving the equal representation of women” that should include “An assessment of staffing changes in the next five years, including likely retirements” and “An assessment of the numbers and percentages of men or women who will need to be hired over the next five years, broken down by grade and by major department.”

In the context of promoting gender parity, the incorporation of quotas has been part of the gender equality debate. According to Martha Tufiño, General Manager of Equivida, an Ecuadorian insurance company, the numeric parity of men and women is not a good indicator of gender equality: “To be elected for a post just to comply with the quota is not appropriate. The positions, one must earn them. The establishment of quotas should be used only when the process cannot take place in a natural way. Everything depends on the means, the conditions, the country, the culture.” Therefore, in her company the selection of women for leadership positions is not based on quotas but on the capacities and attributes of women. From the 7 managerial posts that there are in the company, 5 are occupied by women.

A similar situation occurs in Seguros Oriente, another insurance company from Ecuador. They have a line of directors where women lead most of the organizational divisions and who have been chosen for occupying those positions based on their merits and competencies. As stated by Marielena Zari, Chief of the Legal Department: “In Seguros Oriente your criteria is valued no matter if you are a woman or a man.” Furthermore, the company promotes gender balance, diversity without discrimination and there is equality in terms of salary. The respect for gender and human rights is formally enshrined in the company’s code of ethics, internal regulations, annual report and corporate governance.

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105 Interview to Martha Tufiño, General Manager in Equivida. September 2013.

106 Interview to Marielena Zari, Chief of the Legal Department in Seguros Oriente. September 2013.
We have just seen the perspectives and experiences of two women in leadership positions in two different insurance companies from Ecuador but both with the acknowledgement that gender equality is a daily struggle that depends on the contribution of each one of us and that it is part of the wider spectrum of human rights.

Now I would like to share the valuable insights of two men heads of human resources within their organizations who are gender sensitive and who bring in important considerations in this battle of gender equality and the full realization of rights.

For Byron Amores\textsuperscript{107}, Human Resources Director for South America of \textit{The Linde Group}, it is important to be careful when promoting gender equality, especially with quotas, since they can create the risk of discriminating the dominant gender. According to him \textit{“The most important is that the policies and practices facilitate equality of conditions for both genders.”} In Linde, when they hire or promote someone, they do it in the same conditions for men and women and when both equally comply with all the competencies and requirements, they choose the person belonging to the gender that is less representative. Furthermore, in the training programs of high level development for staff, they pursue a 1/3 of the participants being of the gender that is a minority or sub-represented; thus constituting an important good practice in the promotion of gender equality. Byron also brought to the attention an important fact which is that \textit{“the inclusion of women also depends on the type of industry and the type of education.”} In the case of Linde, since its core-business requires a technical knowledge for many posts, women start to have less representation from this point of consideration due to their lack of education or training in the subject.

Dirk de Bruyne\textsuperscript{108}, Human Resources Officer of the \textit{United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – OCHA}, acknowledges that within the United Nations there are clear policies and guidelines for the promotion of gender equality. However, he recognizes that the inconvenient occurs when the positive effects of their actions are reduced to the number of women and men that are occupying a post in each level of the organization,

\textsuperscript{107} Interview to Byron Amores, Human Resources Director for South America in Linde Group. September 2013.

\textsuperscript{108} Interview to Dirk de Bruyne, Human Resources Officer in the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – OCHA. September 2013.
which in turn can be misleading. As he states: “In our office in Geneva we have a perfect gender balance of 49%/51%. But when we look at the managerial level only 35% are women and when we look at the executive level (assistances, secretaries, etc.) 79% are women; here is the trap of the statistics.” For Dirk gender equality involves something more complex: “We are talking about cultural and gender aspects that are difficult to break through policies or instructions.”

As the case of Linde, OCHA also faces structural factors that prevent a higher representation of women. Since most of OCHA work is done in the field and in many places that are difficult and risky, women apply less to the posts for the field than men do. This happens not only due to security concerns but also because women tend to be rooted to their situations and there are countries where it is easier to work if you are a man; as a woman it is more difficult to be listened and respected. Therefore, at the moment of looking for someone with experience in the field, automatically their pool of candidates is mainly composed by men. However, whenever men and women are in equal conditions for occupying a post, the rule is always to hire the female candidate.

I think that quotas are necessary; it doesn’t have to be a perfect 50/50 of gender balance but there must be an increasing representation of women at all levels, especially in senior management positions, since the different perspectives and experiences of women can become an added-value for the organization at the moment of taking decisions, bringing in innovation and other organizational changes. Furthermore, if a woman has the chance to take a leading position, the perspective wouldn’t be any more to see her only as a victim and as an agent with rights but to see her as an autonomous decision-taker and as an agent with responsibilities. However, I also agree with an important lesson learned that I can withdraw from all the above experiences, which is that one needs to pursue and see beyond what the numbers can tell you. Further efforts such as assessing and understanding the role and influence of the different structural factors – family, culture, history, human rights violations, among others – can better help in defining the necessary actions for promoting a higher participation and leadership of women or the gender less represented.
Creating an organizational culture conducive to gender equality

Within this line of action, OHCHR has established the following expected result as part of its Gender Equality Strategic Plan 2012-2013: “Flexible Working Arrangements are used or effectively implemented and monitored.”

The Flexible Working Arrangements - FWAs have been established as of 1 February 2003 through a decision of the Secretary-General of that period, Mr Kofi Annan, with the aim of “leading to a better balance between the professional and personal lives of the staff of the Secretariat.”

Under this directive staff members have four options of arrangements. The first option named “staggered working hours” let the personnel to decide when to start or leave their working day; they are expected to comply with a core period of time each day but before or after this period, the flexibility is applied. The second option “compressed work schedule: ten working days in nine” allows to take a day off after completing nine days of work. However, a compensation of the day off must take place by distributing its hours along the nine working days. Through the third option “schedule break for external learning activities”, there is room for taking profit of learning opportunities that take place outside the office and that are helpful for the professional development of staff members by providing them with 3 hours a day, twice a week. This time off must also be distributed during the working week. Finally, they are allowed to work two days a week from a place that is not the office under the last option “work away from the office (telecommuting).” Nevertheless, they must be in places where they can be easily contacted and where they have all the necessary instruments for complying with their duties.

All these FWAs are adapted to local conditions and cannot be considered an entitlement but a voluntary agreement between the staff member requiring these FWAs and the head of his/her department/office. Therefore, this latter has the autonomy to decide

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111 Ibid.
whether to grant these arrangements or not. As stated by the Secretary-General: “The task of the head of department/office is to optimize for the organization and the staff the benefits of flexibility while minimizing potential problems.”

Since OHCHR is part of the United Nations Secretariat, all its staff members are allowed to have these FWAs. In fact, from the adoption date of these arrangements, their implementation has been highly supported by all High Commissioners leading the organization. The usefulness of this initiative for the promotion of gender equality has been highlighted by the OHCHR staff members interviewed and also by the ones who participated at the gender facilitators’ annual meeting. They have acknowledged that these kinds of arrangements give the necessary flexibility to perform well both at the organizational and personal settings, especially when you have children or other particular responsibilities. However, they have also recognized that there is a considerable gap between women and men asking for the FWAs where women are taking more profit of this flexibility. Furthermore, they have also remarked the lack of information with regards to the quality data beyond the number of people taking the FWAs, and therefore the need to conduct a study to collect more substantive information including for instance: the reasons when applying to these arrangements, why men are not applying as women do, the reasons when the head of a particular department/office doesn’t grant this allowance, and other related information. In this regard, OHCHR Women’s Human Rights and Gender Section is planning to carry out this kind of assessment in 2014.

Another arrangement that has been set up for balancing the professional and personal lives of staff members has been the policy of breastfeeding, also adopted in 2003 by former Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan. This policy has promoted a family-friendly working environment for nursing mothers by providing them with time off, two and one hours per day respectively, for the purpose of expressing milk or breastfeeding their infants who are less than one year of age. Furthermore, a specific breastfeeding room or area has been made available permanently to nursing mothers at all headquarters locations. Similar arrangements have been done in other large and medium-size offices. Likewise, travel provisions have been designated, allowing nursing mothers to travel with their infants when the travels are done to a duty station that has the respective breastfeeding facilities. Additional travel expenses are

112 Ibid.
also covered. Once again, OHCHR has been able to comply with all these policy provisions. Some of the staff members interviewed have acknowledged the added value of the policy in providing flexibility and facilitating the conditions of nursing mothers workers.¹¹³

In this regard, as mentioned by Federica Donati¹¹⁴, OHCHR Coordinator of the Equality, Non-discrimination and Participation Unit in the Special Procedures Branch, there has also been a proposal by OHCHR Special Procedures mandate-holders¹¹⁵ to extend the benefits of the breastfeeding policy to them in a more systematic way and with a gender perspective; thus promoting a friendly working setting where they can better perform their duties as well as keep on track with their personal and family responsibilities.

The breastfeeding policy as well as the Flexible Working Arrangements is a good practice in promoting an organizational culture conducive to gender equality since they allow for a proper and necessary reconciliation between personal and professional obligations, especially for women; thus giving room to a friendly and comfortable working environment where staff members are motivated and committed to the organization.

When there is a lack of these flexible arrangements and supportive conditions for a proper family-work balance, the performance of the staff members is not the only one at risk but also the relationships with spouses and children. As stated by Verónica Escobar¹¹⁶, Executive Vice-President of an Ecuadorian NGO named FUDELA – Fundación de las Américas para el Desarrollo, “The practice of a real gender policy generally starts in the way we manage the quality of our personal and professional life.” When we fail to do this, the children can be the most affected. Therefore, Verónica emphasizes: “Nowadays we are living a generation of orphan children because mom and dad work, and beyond gender, we are promoting the raising


¹¹⁴ Interview to Federica Donati in October 2013.

¹¹⁵ “The special procedures of the Human Rights Council are independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective.” For more information visit OHCHR website: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Welcomepage.aspx

¹¹⁶ Interview to Veronica Escobar in October 2013.
of children and adolescents without affection, without care and with the focus only being placed on consumption.”

In this regard, since the organizational culture is built by the perspectives, values, power relationships, culture, history, knowledge and other structural elements of the people working in the organization, it becomes the DNA that needs to be assessed and reshaped, in order to better pursue gender equality and the full realization of human rights. Hence, OHCHR Women’s Human Rights and Gender Section besides holding a quantitative and qualitative study of the FWAs as mentioned previously, is planning to conduct an assessment of OHCHR working environment where some of these substantive issues will be included. This kind of assessment is fundamental in order to identify different means and actions for tackling discriminatory practices, hidden or pronounced stereotypes and other factors that are preventing from having an organizational culture that is gender and human rights sensitive.

This is also encouraged by the SWAP as one of its requirements is that the “organizational culture fully supports promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.”117 As a step forward, it also calls for a supportive leadership from senior management.118 Among the activities that should be carried out in order to meet with the expected result are the "Implementation and reporting on facilitative policies such as maternity, paternity, adoption, family, emergency leave, breast-feeding, childcare and Flexible Work Arrangements” as well as “Conduct regular global surveys which obtain and analyse data relevant for an assessment of the qualitative aspect of organizational culture.”119 These two actions go in line with the work that OHCHR is already doing and is planning to do in the following cycle.


118 Ibid.

Strengthening staff capacity and competency in gender integration and communication and managing knowledge on women’s human rights and gender equality.

These are the two last lines of action of OHCHR Gender Equality Plan. A “training module on gender integration available to all staff” has been set as the expected result for the first directive. In this regard, an on-line course will be available and mandatory for all staff members at the end of this year. The course will allow the staff to be familiar with gender concepts, understand how they can integrate gender in their human rights work and get the practicality of different gender integration tools. This training is aligned with the SWAP requirements with regards to capacity development where it is requested to carry out an “ongoing mandatory training for all levels of entity staff at HQ, regional and country offices.”

One suggestion raised by Guillaume Pfeiffle, OHCHR Human Rights Officer in the Special Procedures Branch, is to have an updated version of the course each year and keep it mandatory. Furthermore, this virtual learning opportunity should be offered and extended to Special Procedures, especially because it is not always possible for them to attend the training sessions carried out by the office. It can also help them to raise their awareness and knowledge on the issue.

This course will further facilitate the achievement of the expected result of the second line of action presented here which is “All staff are aware of the Gender Equality Policy Strategic Plan and its practical implications.” This awareness-raising has been supported by the different gender facilitators through the delivery of briefings at staff meetings and also by the different chiefs of units or sections who have recalled their teams about the importance and functionality of integrating gender in their practices and respective mandate.


122 Interview to Guillaume Pfeiffle in September 2013.

123 Ibid. Pg 8.
5. Contributions from OHCHR staff members

“There is more awareness from the staff working in Special Procedures because the office has been trying to step up in this particular aspect of the work, so naturally the staff is more into the gender perspective.” Federica Donati

“Whatever action one will take, is gonna be influenced by his or her feelings. And of course a woman will not have the same kind of feelings towards a situation than a man.” Sylvain Lidome

“Whenever we go on mission we will always have a specific section on women and LGBT activists. We look for specific needs of protection of these individuals….In my day work, gender is all over the place. I always look at things through a gender lens.” Guillaume Pfeiffle

“A human rights-based approach is when human rights are 360° applied in our lives. It is very intuitive. In order to apply a human rights-based approach, you need to be based on 2 elements: common sense and human dignity.” Giovanna Bianchi

“Both gender and a human rights-based approach are a daily challenge in the office because we are not perfect and there are some areas where it is more difficult to apply the knowledge for different reasons, so I think we still need to keep it on our agenda and seriously work on it, but also outside of the office if we want to impact and see human rights at the center of decision making at local level, at national level, at the international level; there is still a lot of work to do.” Paulo David

“We have to achieve gender equality and facilitate women to arrive there but without sacrificing the quality. Therefore, measures need to be taken to ensure that women who arrive to a position, it is because they are competent.” Georgina Mendoza

“Gender mainstreaming is something that has to be done internally in our work as UN staff members but also something that we have to push for in our vis a vis the external stakeholders, the experts, the rights-holders, to make sure that we reach equality in treatment between men and women; ending all forms of gender-based discrimination.” Natacha Foucard

“There is a tendency in the human rights work to portray women as vulnerable. It makes a difference if we say that women are vulnerable in certain situations rather than saying they are vulnerable themselves. This would challenge the gender roles.” Daniel Collinge

“In my opinion, gender mainstreaming is an integrated approach/strategy by which gender perspectives are fully incorporated by all relevant stakeholders into daily life of an organisation or an institution.” Narcisse Dongar
6. Final Remarks

After being involved in this work with the respective research based on different literature, the valuable insights and experience of the different professionals I interviewed or listened to plus my personal contribution; I would like to share the following conclusions:

- Gender inequality practices and human rights violations are occurring on a daily basis all over the world, hindering development in its broadest scope and constituting a big menace for many lives. Therefore, actions to stop, prevent and reduce the negative consequences of these threats are a must if we want to pursue well-being, respect, justice, tolerance, transparency, and therefore, gender equality and the full realization of human rights.

- The Government is not the only duty-bearer with obligations and responsible for all inequalities and violations that are taking place. Organizations and institutions are another important duty-bearer accountable for many of these problems who must adopt the necessary measures to solve or minimize them. Therefore, the institutionalization of gender equality and human rights should be one of these measures. This institutionalization should occur at the heart of organizations, as a cross-cutting issue that leads, assess and reshapes all practices, relationships, processes and results.

- Perceptions, power and values are three of the structural factors that are part of the organizational culture and that need to be identified, analyzed and reshaped in order to pursue gender-sensitive and human rights-oriented organizational practices.

- The institutionalization of gender equality and human rights should be embraced through the strategies of Gender Mainstreaming and a Human Rights-Based Approach. These two approaches should be applied in a timely and coherent manner, with the involvement of different stakeholders with whom organizations have a certain tie or relationship: government, staff, partner organizations, competitors, suppliers, media, customers or beneficiaries, communities and public in general.

- Gender mainstreaming and a HRBA should be applied at both the programmatic and organizational levels, from the beginning to the end of any action and with an equal focus in processes and results.
Gender mainstreaming has an analytical framework that allows the identification, assessment and reorientation of the different needs, roles, interests and perspectives that men and women have. This should be done through a comprehensive gender analysis that goes far beyond the collection of quantitative and sex-disaggregated data and look for visible and hidden qualitative information, identifying discriminatory practices and gender gaps.

A gender analysis is only one element of gender mainstreaming. A supportive leadership and management, legislation and policies that are gender-sensitive, strategies and actions tailored to address the differences between women and men, a gender-responsive budget, capacity-building and awareness raising, advocacy efforts, an organizational culture conducive to gender equality, among other elements, are all part of its broad scope.

A human rights-based approach has an important normative and analytical framework where the different human rights standards and instruments are the benchmark upon which the capacity of duty bearers and rights holders are measured and strengthened; for the former, the capacity to fulfil their obligations and for the latter, the capacity to claim for their entitlements.

Even though organizations are not obliged to comply with international human rights standards as governments do when they ratify these instruments, the demand of the market and the national legislation make them pursue their fulfilment. Furthermore, it is a matter of moral commitments and a shared-responsibility.

Principles such as empowerment, accountability, rule of law, inclusion, among others, guide all actions and processes carried out under a human rights-based approach; thus giving room to transparent, effective and sustainable solutions to the different discriminatory practices, vulnerable situations and inequalities that arise. At the same time, it offers an integral and comprehensive analysis by identifying and assessing other factors in addition to gender such as age, culture, ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic condition, inter alia.

It is fundamental to have a proper understanding and recognition of the relationship between gender mainstreaming and a human rights-based approach. Their correlation
is not only enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other core human rights instruments but also in the development arena, including the Millennium Development Goals, in their particular attention to marginalized groups and in the common principles they share: accountability, participation and non-discrimination, among others.

- The United Nations System-wide Policy and Action Plan constitute a comprehensive framework for gender mainstreaming within the different UN entities bringing in coherence, accountability and a common goal but at the same time, giving room to autonomy and flexibility for each institution to design and choose the path and the strategies that best adapt to their situation and let them comply with the requested commitments.

- The most recent OHCHR Gender Equality Policy and Strategic Plan is an important breakthrough in the institutionalization of gender within the organizational culture and work, as well as in the alignment of these gender mainstreaming efforts with the organization's mandate of promoting and fulfilling human rights and also with the UN System requirements.

- Its wide scope, its solid gender architecture as well as its clear and diverse lines of action makes of OHCHR Gender Equality Strategic Plan a useful tool and important directive for an effective integration of gender by all staff members. Furthermore, it encourages a supportive leadership and accountability from senior management which is fundamental for the processes and attainment of the expected results.

- There are remaining challenges and further efforts to be done not only in OHCHR setting but also in the UN System as a whole and in many other public and private organizations and institutions around the world. However, it is important to recognize the good practices and steps already undertaken and be aware that to bring significant changes towards the achievement of gender equality and the realization of human rights it takes time as well as the willingness, capacity and resources necessary to make this happen.
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