

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UN WOMEN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2018-2021



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Knowledge Management is a set of practices and processes that enable an organization to generate, systematize and share cutting-edge knowledge both internally and externally. In doing so, it promotes efficiency, reduces duplication and fosters learning and innovation. In the case of UN Women, Knowledge Management strengthens the ‘how to’ of advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment.

More specifically, UN Women will seek to achieve the following three Knowledge Management Strategic Outcomes:

- Improved performance across UN Women’s triple mandate (normative, coordination, operational) and most urgently in terms of capacity development through training
- Enhanced technical advisory services and evidence-based advocacy to mainstream gender into national policies and initiatives
- Strengthened capacity to engage in policy dialogue on gender equality as a non-resident agency (through, for example, country gender equality profiles in contexts where UN Women does not have programme presence).

The UN Women’s Knowledge Management Strategy aims to communicate a corporate vision and key objectives for the effective production, sharing and application of knowledge across the organization. It is guided by the UN Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and informed by an extensive review of documents as well as consultations with UN Women personnel in headquarters and in the field, including the Knowledge Management Consultation Group.

To position itself in the new regional architecture proposed by the United Nations Development System (UNDS) reform, UN Women will need to demonstrate how it can add value to development proposals by providing timely evidence-based analysis, strategies and tools to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment in different and complex environments and in a range of UN Country Team (UNCT) configurations as foreseen by the UNDS reform.

UN Women’s Strategic Plan 2018-2021 highlights the importance of strengthened capacities for Knowledge Management for the advancement of gender equality and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Knowledge—together with innovation, results-based management and evaluation—is an element of high quality

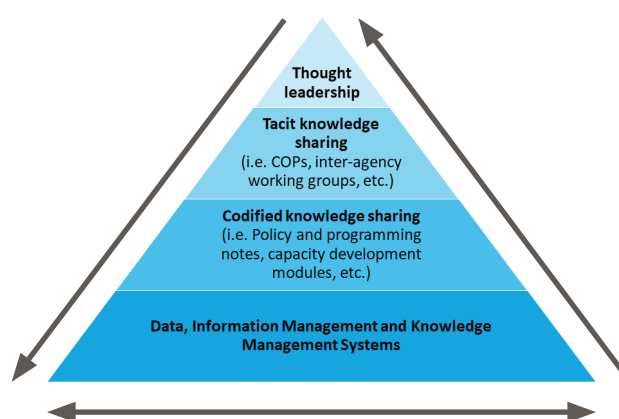
programmes (Output 3: Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework, OEEF).

The 2018-2021 Strategic Plan also requires UN Women to continue strengthening its knowledge platforms; develop communities of practice (COPs) bringing together thematic expertise and knowledge from across the organization and its partners; strengthen its capacity to anticipate emerging issues and trends to better drive normative advances, monitor progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), develop effective advocacy strategies and enhance gender-responsive programming; explore operational innovations for agenda-setting; and further develop South-South collaboration and triangular initiatives.

Existing Knowledge Management practices and challenges in UN Women

The Knowledge Management pyramid (figure 1 below) illustrates the relationships between data, information and knowledge and how organizational learning happens. Its aim is to strengthen organizational understanding of current Knowledge Management practices in UN Women.

FIGURE 1
The knowledge pyramid



Data and information are at the base of the pyramid. UN Women has developed and implemented internal information systems (ATLAS, RMS, LEADS, DAMS, PPG, etc.) to facilitate the capture, storage and dissemination of information on processes and results. Strengthening of quality assurance and further linkages among systems are planned for 2019.

- The data and information generated at the base of the pyramid, together with research and evaluations that are guided by normative frameworks, are then analysed and elaborated into knowledge products that allow **codified knowledge sharing**. An initial mapping carried out for the preparation of this Strategy shows that although UN Women has developed key knowledge products to guide normative, policy and programming work to achieve outcomes, there are some gaps that need to be addressed. Furthermore, there is no standardized approach to developing this type of knowledge product. The mapping also reveals that some knowledge products and tools are outdated, which poses a reputational risk.
- Sharing of **tacit knowledge** (skills, ideas and experiences that people have but that are not codified) happens through communities of practice (COPS) and research partnerships. The performance and results of COPs are varied. While some COPs are thriving, others have had difficulties taking off. The lack of a common corporate definition of what COPs are and standards regarding their aims—as well as deficits in technical guidance, organizational capacity and resources—have made success heavily reliant on the capacities of individual teams and programme opportunities. Some COPs have tried to overcome silos and weak communications, but understanding who does what is still a challenge, leading to duplication of effort.
- Websites and knowledge portals facilitate both **tacit and codified knowledge sharing**. UN Women counts approximately 40 websites, platforms and applications covering different strategic areas and functions for both internal and external audiences. In the absence of corporate guidance, the design, approach and quality assurance of platforms is uneven and their sustainability not always secured. Poor branding and atomization of platforms also lead to weak visibility and reduced traffic. Platforms that have had adequate resources and invested heavily in design, mapping and engagement of

stakeholders, production of high-quality peer-reviewed content and continuous monitoring have achieved exemplary results and serve as good practices for learning and replication.

- The UN Women intranet is organized by pillar, division and section and provides a tool for internal knowledge sharing. Although some sections are user-friendly and up-to-date, difficulties in access, an unclear structure and inconsistent updating means that knowledge sharing is hindered.
- **Thought leadership** sits at the apex of the pyramid. For UN Women to be recognized as a thought leader across the very wide array of topics in its Strategic Plan, greater investments will be required in the technical capacity of the organization at all levels. Knowledge Management can support UN Women's role as a thought leader both by ensuring the organization is capturing and learning from its own work and by bringing knowledge into the organization through convening and creating networks.

Where to go from here? Harnessing knowledge for organizational effectiveness

This Strategy proposes three objectives to move from ad-hoc knowledge production and sharing to standardized Knowledge Management practices. These objectives are based on an understanding of a hierarchical relationship between data, information and knowledge and how organizational learning happens. They are intended to improve Knowledge Management systems at each level of the pyramid, to foster linkages between different kinds of knowledge and ultimately to support UN Women's thought leadership. Their achievement will be supported by cutting-edge ICT tools that will support knowledge production and sharing.

BOX 1

UN Women principles for effective Knowledge Management

The following principles will guide the Knowledge Management Strategy and its implementation.

i. Knowledge Management is a core activity for UN Women

Knowledge Management is at the centre of UN Women's work and allows the organization to deliver its triple mandate. Staff and managers at all levels are accountable for Knowledge Management.

ii. Knowledge is an output and a key asset for organizational efficiency

Knowledge Management prevents inefficient use of financial and human resources. The effective sharing of knowledge across the organization and its retention over time can reduce duplication and wasteful 're-invention of the wheel'.

iii. Knowledge Management is people centred

Systems and technology are important for supporting Knowledge Management, but people and an organizational culture in which the production, dissemination and exchange of knowledge are highly valued are the vital components of its success. Organizational culture should support staff to create, systematize and share knowledge within the organization and with external partners.

iv. Knowledge is evidence based and supports the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment

UN Women's knowledge work should be empirically grounded, based on both quantitative and qualitative evidence and on the needs and experiences of stakeholders. The knowledge UN Women produces is practical and action oriented. The implementation of the overarching principle of Leaving No One Behind demands both gender-responsive statistics as well as concrete and in-depth analytical case studies, documenting stories of success and failure. UN Women understands that

stakeholders possess valuable knowledge about their contexts and challenges and supports knowledge production by and for stakeholders. Therefore, UN Women favours demand-driven production of knowledge as well as production of knowledge that supports the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment.

v. Knowledge is contextual

There are no one-size-fits-all solutions. Good practices are models to be contextualized and applied.

vi. Knowledge production and sharing is strengthened through partnerships and networks

Validation of knowledge by partners and networks strengthens UN Women's knowledge products, policy guidance and programme proposals. UN Women benefits from policy-oriented research by dedicated networks that provide access to up-to-date knowledge and analysis as well as advisory and peer review support. Engaging with researchers also enables UN Women to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in research agendas that pave the way for innovative approaches.

vii. Decentralization is key to effective Knowledge Management

Within the framework of the corporate Knowledge Management Strategy and standards, regional and country offices, divisions and sections implement Knowledge Management practices in a decentralized manner to enhance knowledge production and sharing in the organization, fostering organizational culture for Knowledge Management. Knowledge Management facilitates South-South collaboration and exchange.

Objective 1: Strengthen knowledge production, capture and analysis

Strengthening knowledge production within UN Women will allow the organization to address knowledge gaps and more accurately capture what works to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. It will also allow UN Women to position itself as a key partner at the regional level and in the new UNCT configuration and lead the UN System planning processes—Common Country Analysis-United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA-UNDAF), etc.—on gender equality and women's empowerment by providing evidence-based solutions. This will be done through two main lines of action: identifying and addressing knowledge gaps and strengthening the production of knowledge, including through standardized quality assurance.

I. Identifying and addressing knowledge gaps

An initial mapping has been carried to identify knowledge gaps and address them through key knowledge products to be developed that include programming tools and capacity development modules. Knowledge production will be aligned to the current Strategic Plan and informed by the documentation and discussion of annual results, good practices and national and regional contexts.

II. Strengthened processes for developing knowledge products (and their quality assurance)

Corporate standards should guide the production of knowledge within UN Women, including research products, guidance notes and other publications. These will include criteria for deciding which knowledge products will be developed, identifying and assessing target audiences and programme/project information needs, defining formats, implementing quality assurance and streamlining design and publication. As part of annual work plans, each section, regional and country office will prepare a knowledge product plan to facilitate adequate quality assurance and dissemination. Results will include different types of products that will respond to partner and stakeholder needs.

Objective 2: Strengthen knowledge sharing and exchange within UN Women and with partners

Strengthened internal knowledge sharing will enhance understanding and collaboration across sections. It will also prevent duplication of efforts and improve organizational efficiency. Enhanced external knowledge sharing will allow UN Women to reach out to external partners and stakeholders to benefit from their expertise and knowledge, increase its impact and position the organization as a knowledge hub on gender equality and women's empowerment. To achieve this objective, UN Women will work on two fronts.

First, internally, the Knowledge Management Strategy will focus on enhancing knowledge and communication flows between headquarters and regional and country offices. It will also seek to strengthen South-South collaboration by creating opportunities to be led by country offices. Improved internal knowledge sharing will allow UN Women staff to connect with other colleagues working on similar issues and to exchange good practices and lessons learnt as well as access existing knowledge products, guidance and programming tools and capacity development modules. These processes will be facilitated through internal communities of practice, the intranet and expertise locators that will use the latest technological tools.

Second, UN Women will reach out to external stakeholders (including governments, UN System agencies, academia and civil society) and act as a knowledge curator and knowledge broker, making available its own high-quality knowledge products as well as assessing, recommending and making available quality resources produced by other stakeholders and partners.

Making the most of cutting-edge knowledge-sharing technologies and improved internal and external knowledge sharing will position UN Women as a unique partner and provide timely quality policy advice.

I. Internal knowledge sharing: Enhancing design and use of the intranet and preventing knowledge loss with staff/ personnel rotation

An updated intranet using cutting-edge technology will ensure easy access to updated information, good practices, lessons learnt and results of evaluations. Under the leadership of the Information System and Telecommunications (IST), guidance for effective use and population of the intranet will be developed and shared. The Knowledge Management Specialist will support this process from a content perspective.

II. Internal and external knowledge sharing: Strengthening communities of practice for strategic areas/programmes and other functions

Existing communities of practice (COPs) will be strengthened by providing clear guidance and support for their design, management and evaluation to ensure horizontal knowledge sharing. COPs will be both internal and external. Internal COPs will provide a forum for discussion on good practices and lessons learnt that will enhance staff capacities to make decisions about the programmes or operations for which they are responsible.

The creation of COPs will be dynamic and flexible: They will be defined, created and allowed to thrive and disappear as needed by organizational and programme context, objectives and resources. Up-to-date, system-wide technology and tools will be used to facilitate knowledge sharing.

III. Strengthening external knowledge sharing and exchange through UN Women's platforms and networks

Strengthening knowledge partnerships

UN Women's work with external partners and stakeholders is critical to its knowledge work. Such partners are not only the recipients of knowledge products developed by UN Women but are integral to processes of knowledge production. At the global, regional and national level, UN Women uses its convening power to build knowledge partnerships to support its work, including through centres of excellence and South-South collaboration.

Strengthening knowledge platforms

UN Women aims to have a consolidated knowledge platform that will facilitate access to resources on its strategic areas for each of the six types of support it provides. The process for consolidating and strengthening platforms will be implemented in successive phases led by the Knowledge Management Specialist and IST and will involve assessment and planning, creation of a common entry point and development of criteria for platform development.

Objective 3: Develop a knowledge-sharing culture and better collaboration across sections

An organizational culture that encourages knowledge sharing will be strengthened through strong leadership and an enabling environment. This Strategy proposes to enhance UN Women's organizational culture through four key modalities:

I. Creating an enabling environment for knowledge production and sharing

This includes creating safe spaces and facilitating communications for knowledge production and sharing; strengthening the role of managers as champions for Knowledge Management; implementing an informal rewards and recognition system; and sharing positive outcomes of the implementation of this Strategy.

II. Streamlining Knowledge Management in annual work plans and operations

Working together with other sections, inputs will be provided to ensure Knowledge Management is included in major guidance documents such as the Policy and Procedure Guidance (PPG) Framework, Annual Work Plans and Strategic Notes Guidance, as needed.

III. Including Knowledge Management indicators in performance management and development

Including Knowledge Management in performance management and development promotes an organizational culture that supports and recognizes knowledge sharing and ensures effective implementation of planned activities. Inclusion of Knowledge Management functions in UN Women staff and personnel job descriptions and individual performance plans will be strengthened through collaboration between the Knowledge Management Specialist and Human Resources section. Corporate standards and guidance (including indicators) for Knowledge Management will be provided for different functions and levels so that it is more consistently included in performance assessments and consequently in everyday work by each section.

IV. Strengthening capacity for Knowledge Management in UN Women

Capacity development on Knowledge Management will be designed and carried out based on the needs assessment and mapping exercises carried out to develop this Strategy. Guidance tools, online and face-to-face training and workshops will be implemented to ensure common understanding of Knowledge Management across the organization as well as of specific aspects of the Strategy.

Implementation

This Knowledge Management Strategy focuses on standardizing existing processes as well as integrating new ones. It also aims to provide criteria for prioritizing activities while supporting UN Women in its transition from process management to focusing on results management.

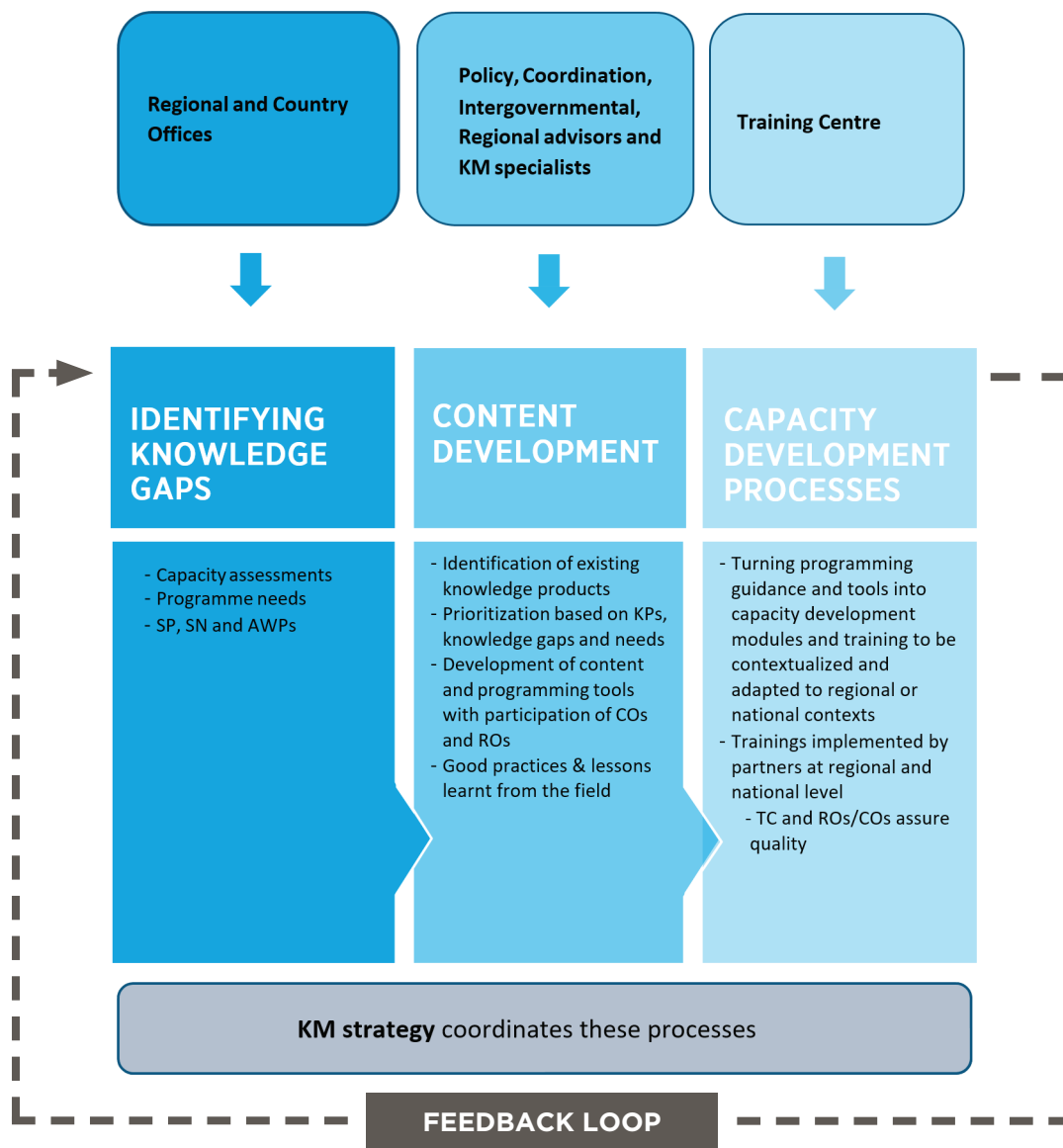
The Divisional Director (D2) will lead the organization in implementing the Knowledge Management Strategy. During implementation, quarterly meetings will be held with the Assistant Secretary-General to report on progress and challenges.

All UN Women staff and personnel will be responsible for implementing the Knowledge Management Strategy, which will be coordinated by a Knowledge Management Specialist. Given the position's key role in knowledge production within UN Women, the Knowledge Management Specialist will be structurally located within the Research and Data section. Dedicated and specialized expertise needed to implement the Strategy will also be convened through consultancies. This includes development of guidance tools on specific Knowledge Management practices and support to initial implementation.

Figure 2 shows a preliminary distribution of roles of different units, division, sections and regional and country offices of UN Women that will be involved in developing knowledge products. This initial outline will be further defined as specific work plans are developed. As mentioned, this will also demand reprioritizing knowledge production and knowledge-sharing activities within each section, and current and new goals and indicators will be integrated into individual performance plans.

FIGURE 2

Overview of knowledge creation to address knowledge gaps



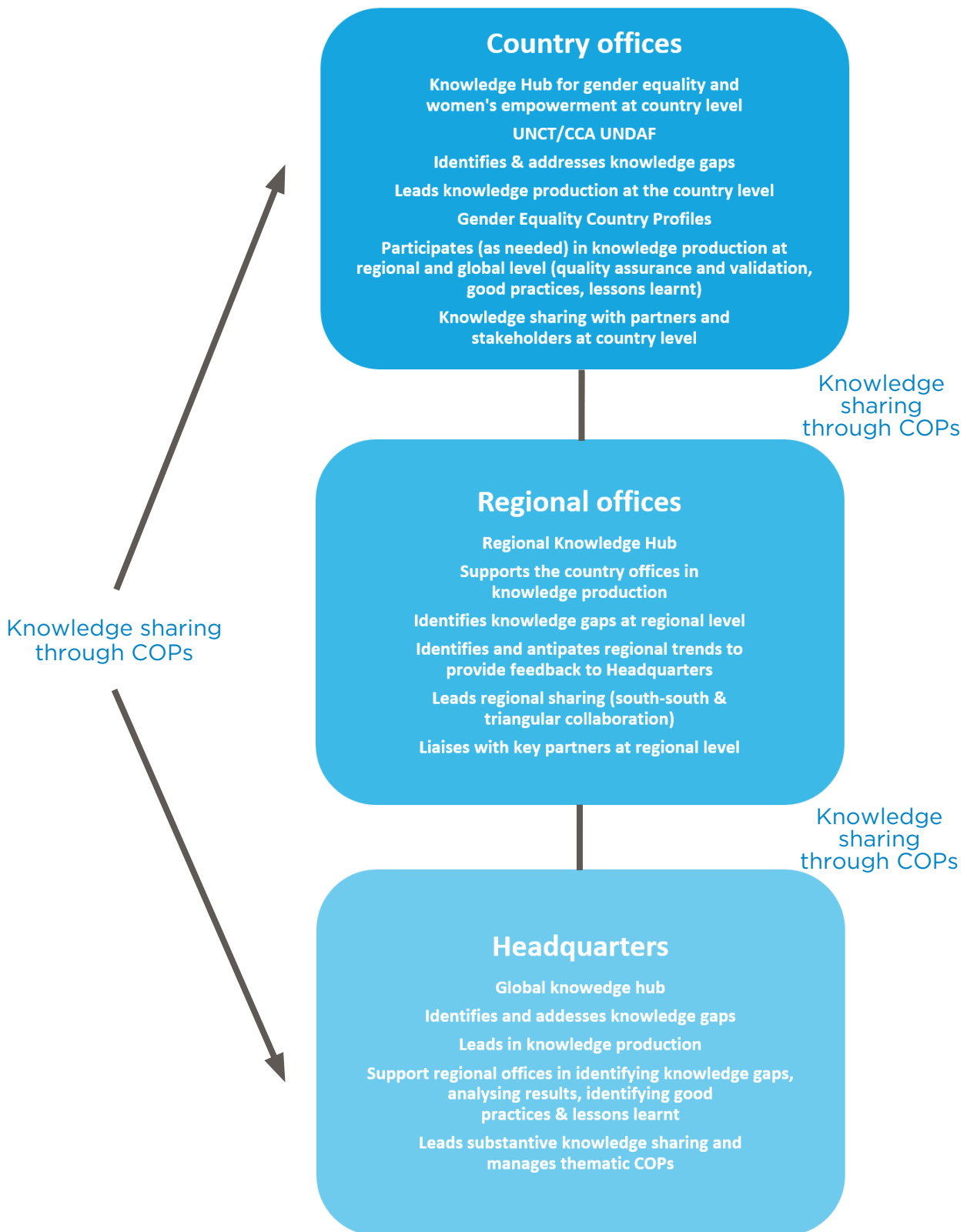
As previously mentioned, this is an organization-wide Knowledge Management strategy which will be implemented in a decentralized though coordinated and consistent manner. Its implementation will strengthen the current change management process and better position UN Women in the UNDS reform process. The implementation of this strategy will allow UN Women to transition from ad hoc, uneven, and inconsistent Knowledge Management practices to systematic and consistent approaches that create synergies, provide quality assurance, and ensure that the best available knowledge and experience throughout the organization is made available to all

UN Women staff anywhere in the world—whether in HQ, RO, CO, or other location—so that staff are fully equipped to provide the best available knowledge on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in UN Women’s strategic areas to partners and stakeholders.

Figure 3 describes the roles of Country, Regional and Headquarters Offices for coordinated and enhanced knowledge production and sharing that will allow UN Women to position itself as a knowledge hub for gender equality and women’s empowerment at the country, regional and global levels.

FIGURE 3

Overview of knowledge production and sharing roles



ENDNOTES

- 1 Results Management System (RMS); LEADS Management System tracks business and resource mobilization opportunities with donors prior to finalization of agreements; Donor Agreement Management System (DAMS), Policy, Procedure and Guidance (PPG) Framework for all UN Women policies, procedures, guidance and other related materials.
- 2 To be developed as part of this Strategy Objective 1: Strengthening knowledge production, capturing and analysis.
- 3 As previously defined, a knowledge curator seeks, validates and shares the best and most relevant knowledge, in this case on gender equality and women's empowerment, while a knowledge broker links community of stakeholders together to share learning, influence each other's work and forge new partnerships.
- 4 The UN Women Strategic Plan proposes six types of support in its operational activities for gender equality and women's empowerment: normative support; UN coordination; integrated policy advice; capacity development; advocacy and social mobilization; and technical assistance for essential services as key strategies for sustainable development.

**UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION
DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY
AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A
GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND
GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED
TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON
MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.**

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



**Planet 50-50 by 2030
Step It Up for Gender Equality**

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