



Evaluation of the OHCHR Regional Gender Advisors Structure

Final Evaluation Report

An external Consultant has prepared this report. The views expressed herein are those of the Consultant and therefore do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of OHCHR.

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Due to their volume, annexes are not attached to this report but are available from PPMES upon request.

	Acronyms
AU	African Union
ACHPR	African Commission on Human and People's Rights
ACSRT	African Union Commission and the African Centre for Study and Research on Terrorism
AMISON	African Union Mission in Somalia
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIM	Inter-American Commission for Women
CLACSO	Latin American Council on Social Sciences
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DEXREL	Donor & External Relations Section, Donor and External Relations Section
EA	Expected Accomplishment
EARO	East Africa Regional Office (Ethiopia)
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community Of West African States
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EXB	Extra Budgetary Funding
FOTCD	Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division
GFPs	Gender Focal Points
GMO	Global Management Output
GTA	General Temporary Assistance
HQ	Headquarters
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NWM	National Women Machineries
NYO	New York Office
OECD-DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OMP	Office Management Plan
PBRB	Programme and Budget Review Board
PPMES	Policy, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Systems
PSMS	Programme Support and Management Services
RBM	Results-Based Management
RGA	Regional Gender Advisor
RO	Regional office
ROMENA	Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa (Lebanon)

ROCA	Regional Office for Central America (Panama)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UNCTs	UN Country Teams
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNOWAS	United Nations Office for West Africa
UN-SWAP	UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WARO	West Africa Regional Office (Senegal)
WHRD	Women Human Rights Defender
WRGS	Women's Rights and Gender Section

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Executive Summary

Background

This report constitutes an independent evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) Regional Gender Advisor (RGA) structure, with a focus on the years 2014-2016. During the period under review RGAs were placed in New York, and the Regional Offices (ROs) for East Africa, Central America, Middle East and North Africa, West Africa, and the Pacific Region.

RGAs were intended to provide advice on and support the integration of women's human rights and gender perspectives in OHCHR's work globally, regionally and nationally to implement the OHCHR Gender Equality Strategic Plans. They were intended to work in line with the strategic objectives developed by the Women's Rights and Gender Section (WRGS) by providing expert advice on the integration of women's human rights and gender perspectives into the work of their respective office, and undertake initiatives in the area of women's human rights and gender equality, in partnership with other UN entities, regional organizations, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, and regional and international human rights experts.

Evaluation background

An evaluation of the Office's performance in gender mainstreaming (OHCHR 2010) highlighted that gender integration in OHCHR programmes, policies and processes was not systematic. The evaluation demonstrated that gender integration was largely driven by individual interest, rather than through institutionalized guidelines and Office-wide commitment. The broader question for the current evaluation was therefore whether the RGA structure helped overcome these generic challenges.

The evaluation took lessons learning and utilization-focused approaches, and is organised around the five OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. The evaluation methodology included: review of key documents; an inception phase including a one week mission to Geneva and finalization of an evaluation analytical framework and evaluation tools; one week missions to the four RGAs which currently host RGAs, and an interview with the RGA in New York; four case studies illustrating good practice, developed by the use of Appreciative Enquiry methods; and counterfactual evidence from interviews with ROs not hosting RGAs and evaluative evidence.

Main findings and conclusions

Overview

The RGA structure was a highly effective mechanism for achieving regional level results, despite funding and staffing challenges. The vast majority of outputs as stated in WRGS and RO work plans were achieved, and respondents noted the importance of having a dedicated staff member working on gender issues in the ROs. OHCHR's advocacy and convening roles were particularly valued by partners. Considerable good practice was achieved in each of the ROs visited, highlighted in Boxes throughout this report:

- The Model Protocol on femicide led by the Regional Office for Central America (ROCA) was an outstanding and innovative initiative.
- Consistent support over several years to Women Human Right's Defenders led by the Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa (ROMENA) significantly improved the capacity of Defenders.
- The West Africa Regional Office (WARO) effectively supported the capacity of women Parliamentarians and civil society to contribute to Parliamentary processes vis-à-vis human rights.
- Systematic and well researched input by the East Africa Regional Office (EARO) into the African Union report on women's rights in Africa has the potential to shape national and regional policy.

While there was significant support for the RGA structure from senior managers at RO level, OHCHR did not prioritize providing secure funding for the structure. The first priority of most OHCHR respondents was that the RGA positions be regularized. Given limited possibilities to fund the RGAs structure positions from the UN regular budget, OHCHR is dependent on extra-budgetary resources (voluntary funding) to cover the RGA positions. Without regular funding the RGA structure has had to struggle in terms of continuity of staffing and this has had an impact on results achieved.

The evaluation team found no overarching strategic planning document or concept note initiating the RGA structure. Rather the RGA structure was initiated as a pilot during a Senior Management Team meeting and a request for funding with the intention of "integrating gender into the work of the ROs"; what was meant by this term was not fully clarified. A Terms of Reference was developed for the RGA position, however these were broad and did not provide adequate clarity in terms of overall planning of the RGAs' work. Overall the originating planning document for the RGA structure did not provide adequate direction concerning the purpose of the structure, or the nature of the pilot, although strategic planning has improved over time. To place this finding in context, it is not uncommon for programmes and policies in the UN system to be developed without an explicit theory of change.

The lack of overarching strategic direction had implications for the operation of the structure, and led to a lack of clarity as to the role of both individual RGAs and the structure as a whole. These include: the ways in which the RGA structure was to function; what results the structure as a structure should be achieving; the extent to which RGAs should be prioritizing "integration in the work of the office" as opposed to substantive programming specifically designed and implemented by the RGAs; and whether the RGA structure should focus on global office priorities on women's rights and gender or regional priorities.

Relevance

There was effective strategic prioritization in relation to the results of the Gender Equality Strategic Plan (2014-2017) at both HQ and RO levels, which has played to the comparative advantage of the RGA structure and regional priorities. Strategic planning for the RGA structure also improved over time. Technical expertise provided by the RGA structure

contributed substantially to improved gender integration in RO activities at the regional and country levels, but this was not done in a systematic fashion

The RGA structure's role as an advocate – speaking out where others, including other UN agencies, did not do so – was considered highly relevant by respondents – a point also made in the OIOS (2017) evaluation of OHCHR. This was particularly evident in areas such as abortion, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and rights of people identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI). Advocacy is an area where having a dedicated staff member in the ROs has significantly enhanced the quality of engagement, including with civil society organizations (CSOs).

The RGA structure also used the unique convening power of the UN to bring together Parliamentarians and civil society, and human rights defenders, from across the regions. The OIOS (2017) evaluation of OHCHR also noted the importance of OHCHR's convening role. The effective interchange and dialogue during regional level meetings demonstrated a relevant strategy, although maintaining the networks created was not sufficiently emphasized in some situations.

The RGA structure brought some clarity to what gender integration means in the regional context, but challenges remain, for example clarifying the linkages between working on women's rights and gender equality, and more fully considering inter-sectionality in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Effectiveness

The RGA structure was highly effective in achieving planned results, with a significant majority of outputs in 2015 and 2016 RO work plans achieved as planned, or on track to be achieved. The OIOS (2017) evaluation found a similar level of performance for the Office as a whole.

In some cases the RGA structure effectively built or used regional networks, e.g. for women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in the Middle East and North Africa. In others the RGA structure missed opportunities to build and work through existing networks, for example through follow up to its work with Parliamentarians in West Africa, and through the Model Protocol in Latin America. Although networks were not always built or sustained, OHCHR's convening role was strategically used to create dialogue among different stakeholders at regional and national levels. Many respondents noted that learning from experiences in other countries helped them identify gaps and improve the understanding of national needs in comparative perspective. The issue therefore was not the networking/training event itself, but sustaining and building on the networks created.

The RGA structure's work led to increased and more systematic engagement with regional and national actors, which contributed to strengthening gender in regional and national agendas, e.g. working with the African Union in EARO and ECOWAS in WARO. The RGA structure enhanced cooperation in the area of women, peace and security in WARO, EARO and ROMENA, and significantly advanced OHCHR's work on sexual and reproductive rights in ROCA and EARO.

The technical assistance provided by the RGA structure strengthened the capacities of OHCHR field presences and UN Country Teams (UNCTs) to integrate gender and engage with human rights mechanisms, and enhanced the capacity of inter-agency regional theme groups agencies to mainstream a gender inclusive human rights-based approach in their work. The OIOS (2017) evaluation came to similar conclusions about OHCHR as a whole.

Efficiency

Within the context of very limited financial resources, the RGA structure has used resources effectively to achieve planned results, and overall the results achieved justify the invested resources. Effective support was provided by WRGS at HQ on an ongoing basis. There are two caveats:

- Many of the outputs stated in work plans are not robust results statements, making efficiency more difficult to assess.
- While RGAs working in individual ROs largely used funds efficiently, the lack of clarity as to the main purpose of the RGA structure hindered greater efficiency of the structure as a whole.

Because of a lack of clear conceptual direction the RGA structure has not as yet become larger than the sum of its parts, and has therefore not achieved the efficiencies that would be expected from a network. The RGAs tended to be involved in a wide range of activities, and in some cases were reactive rather than basing their work plan on a clear thought out strategy.

Impact

The RGA structure contributed to all the appropriate Office wide thematic strategies in the Office Management Plan (2014-2017). It likely contributed, through strategic choice of programming, to removal of the structural causes of gender inequality and discrimination against women, promoted women's rights over the longer term, and fed into transformational change. In terms of internal organizational culture, the introduction of the RGA structure has not made significant or transformational changes within the Office.

The RGA structure has been highly relevant to both duty-bearers and rights-holders, and has tailored its activities to the regional contexts to support appropriate counterparts. As is common with much of the UN system, use of tools for measuring impact was one of the weaker elements of the RGA structure.

Sustainability

Overall the RGA structure capacity development initiatives were well received by participants, however these initiatives could have contributed more to institutional sustainability for counterpart organizations if they had developed long term strategies for building regional institutions and networks, and been organized around the capacity assessment and development cycle recommended by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). The OIOS (2017) evaluation of OHCHR similarly found that follow-up

is an organization-wide issue, e.g. to recommendations from the UPR, treaty bodies and special procedures.

There is some evidence to support the argument that, given outstanding senior manager leadership and adequate RO staffing, funding and resources, ROs can make significant contributions to gender equality and women's rights without the presence of an RGA. Finding the right balance between specialized staff and gender integration by general staff has challenged the entire UN system over the last decade. Currently there are no entities in the UN system that could meet their gender-related mandates without specialist gender staff.

It would not be feasible for the ROs to sustain the same level of commitment to, and programming on, gender without the RGA structure. This is not only related to levels of expertise and commitment, but also to a shortage in staffing and resource limitations in ROs.

Conclusions

Lessons Learned

Senior management leadership - The experience of the RGA structure mirrors that of most gender-related initiatives in the UN. Senior managers at RO level have for the most part supported and facilitated the work of the RGA structure, without which achieving results would have been much more challenging.

Strategic planning - OHCHR thematic initiatives that are rolled out to regional level need to be based on a sound conceptual framework preferably with a theory of change or equivalent from their inception. Effective strategic planning does not require additional resources, but rather a different way of doing business. The implications of not carrying out effective strategic planning are - confusion about the purpose of programming, a decrease in efficiency, and lost opportunities. Similarly, staff at RO level need to carry out effective strategic planning and retain a longer-term perspective rather than being continually caught up in the logistics of everyday work.

Regionalization - ROs which are closer to and can support regional and country level initiatives can be highly effective, and there are strong arguments for having specialized staff located in ROs. When working on rights issues there is no substitute for a thorough understanding of the socio-political and cultural contexts.

Support from HQ - Networking of RO thematic staff requires consistent and strategic support from HQ to adapt global learning for regional contexts, and to achieve necessary economies of scale in knowledge transfer between regions.

Gender, women's rights, and inter-sectionality - The decision as to where to focus the RGA structure's work on gender equality and women's rights is complex but needs to be clearly articulated so that staff are aware of how to develop programming. If this is

not done the challenges OHCHR faced in 2009, as evidenced in its 2010 gender equality evaluation, such as conflating work on gender equality with targeting women, will not be resolved.

Partnerships - A focus on integrating a human rights-based approach in partner organizations, for example through work within UN Regional Theme Groups, in national governments through work with Parliamentarians, and with CSOs, can be a highly effective and strategic use of RO staff time. Partnerships were critical to documenting, monitoring and investigating cases of gender-based violence and feeding this information to regional and international human rights mechanisms.

Advocacy - In situations where rights are consistently denied, the role of OHCHR as a public advocate cannot be under-estimated. There is an expectation that OHCHR will speak out on gender equality and women's rights issues, and a disappointment when this does not happen. OHCHR has a key role to play in supporting civil society, in particular in contexts where rights are challenged. Using existing regional frameworks and institutions provide OHCHR with an entry point to raise politically sensitive issues at national level.

OHCHR's convening power - OHCHR has a unique role to play in convening human right's institutions at the regional level. Undertaking inclusive, participatory processes leads to improved results, although it is more time consuming and costly in staff time.

Capacity development - A thorough planning process ensures the relevance of Capacity development initiatives to specific audiences, and contextualizing trainings to particular audiences and geographical settings is key to ensure their relevance. Capacity development needs to follow a regular cycle of capacity assessment, planning and implementation. If this is not done it is challenging to determine if the right kinds of capacity are being developed in the most effective ways. The sustainability of capacity development initiatives needs to be considered from their inception.

Continuity and contingency planning - Human rights work needs a long-term planning horizon, which is often challenging given short-term budget planning by donors and OHCHR itself. Continuity of work over several years facilitates effective results, and conversely lack of continuity can have negative impacts. During periods of unstable funding and short-term staff contracts it is essential to develop contingency plans to ensure continuity.

Recommendations

I. Retain current RGAs and post RGAs in all other Regional Offices

Given minimal differences between funding for GTA and regular posts, all RGA posts should be regularized. Given the proven added value of the RGA structure the posts should be extended to all ROs.

2. Strategic planning for the RGA structure

A four-year planning framework should be developed for the RGA structure as follows:

- I. The planning framework should include the results that the RGA structure as a coherent structure plans to deliver in promoting gender equality and women's human rights. The results in the framework should be at a high level and be directly connected to the main thematic priorities of the next OHCHR strategic plan. These results should have corresponding measurable indicators. That is, the structure should have its own logical framework or equivalent. As well as being essential for planning purposes this is also necessary for fund-raising, as it is a minimum requirement of donors, and hence is also key to the future sustainability of the structure (see recommendation 5). For example, taking a Thematic Priority from the current OMP, the planning framework for the RGA structure would look as follows:

Office Thematic Priority	RGA structure result	Indicator
Widening the democratic space	30 civil society organizations enabled to undertake effective advocacy work on gender equality	Number of civil society organizations whose capacity is adequately built

The planning framework will not require a significant shift in current plans of the RGA structure, or a delinking from RO planning, but rather establish what the structure plans to achieve as a structure.

- II. The planning framework should include a rationale of how its results have been prioritized, taking into account the mandate of the Office, the Gender Equality Policy and Strategic Plan, and regional differences.
- III. The planning framework should set out how the structure will operate. The RGA structure should be renamed as, and operate as, a network, using the results in the planning framework as a basis for the network. To operate as a network the current structure should increase its focus on: achieving network-level results (as in the table above); inter-regional learning, including cross-regional missions where RGAs visit ROs other than their own; and joint programming by several regions where there is commonality in programming, e.g. advocacy, work on Women Human Rights Defenders, SRHR and LGBTI rights. Current monthly conference

calls should include an increased focus on transferring programming experience between regions.

- IV. WRGS should establish and maintain a shared drive with documents accessible to WRGS and RGAs for knowledge sharing purposes, which is a working repository of RGA structure documentation. The focus on the knowledge hub should be on disseminating relevant information between ROs.
- V. The planning framework should set out the frequency and type of communication between WRGS and Regional Representatives. It is recommended that at a minimum a conference call takes place every six months between WRGS, each Regional Representative and the corresponding RGA, to discuss progress against the planning framework, alignment with RO priorities, and logistics such as contingencies for staff turnover.
- VI. The planning framework should be developed by the end of 2017, at a joint meeting of WRGS, Regional Representatives, RGAs, FOTCD, PPMES and EOS Donor and External Relations Section, based on an initial draft to be produced by WRGS.
- VII. The planning framework should be an OHCHR wide framework with clear accountability for results as part of regular OHCHR accountability mechanisms.

3. Strategic planning for individual RGAs

Based on the planning framework, an updated Terms of Reference should be developed for individual RGAs, and reviewed during the gender architecture Annual Meetings to assess their relevance on an annual basis, including the following:

- the importance of maintaining a focus on strategic areas of importance outlined in the planning framework;
- the connections between work on gender equality and women's rights; it is recommended that WRGS develop a short note on these connections to guide the work of the RGAs and the Office as whole;
- the role of RGAs in relation to work on LGBTI issues; it is recommended that WRGS develop a short note on this area to guide the work of the RGAs;
- it is recommended that RGAs develop and support networks of gender focal points in OHCHR field presences in relation to knowledge exchange;
- the ways in which the RGA structure will support organizational change for a more gender-sensitive Office; it is recommended that that RGAs carry out an annual training for RO staff on the *Gender Equality Strategic Plan*, and organize one other annual event for RO staff, e.g. on unconscious bias.
- the optimal balance between integration of gender into the work of the ROs and support to colleagues in the RO, and substantive programming on women's rights run mainly by RGAs; it is recommended that RGAs spend approximately 30 per cent of their time on integration of gender into the work of the office, and 50 per cent on substantive programming which they mainly run.

- the optimal balance for RGAs between work on gender equality and women's rights, and general work of the RO; it is recommended that no more than 20 per cent of an RGA's time should be dedicated to general work of the Office.

4. Capacity development and building and supporting networks

Ensure that capacity development initiatives follow a cycle of capacity assessment, planning, implementation and follow up, as recommended by the UNDG. The sustainability of capacity development initiatives should be considered from their inception, including the long-term institutionalization of initiatives.

The RGA structure should establish a monitoring system for capacity building that measures both the immediate reaction of trainees to the training event, and follow-up after six months with a questionnaire and/or direct contact to determine the extent to which the trainees have used the training material in their organizations. The Methodology, Education and Training Section should develop a standard format for this monitoring system, based on the Kirkpatrick model of assessing training.

Carry out an assessment in each region of current regional networks, and determine if these are adequate for supporting and ensuring the sustainability of RGA structure initiatives. Based on this assessment, develop plans for building and supporting networks to promote long-term sustainability of work on gender equality and women's rights.

5. Fundraising

EOS Donor and External Relations Section, WRGS, FOTCD and Regional Representatives should develop a joint fund-raising initiative to be sent to donors for the RGA network as a whole. The initiative should be based around the planning framework which will direct the RGA network over the next four years (recommendation 2). OHCHR should make clear in this joint fund-raising initiative how the RGA network as a whole will deliver results by working effectively as a structure, and how funding will be used to deliver results effectively and efficiently over a five-year period, based on the findings in this evaluation. That is, the joint fundraising initiative should focus less on funding for individual RGA positions and more on the combined results of the RGA network in terms of promoting gender equality and women's rights. This joint fundraising does not preclude other fundraising such as by Regional Representatives.

I. Intervention background

This report constitutes an independent evaluation of OHCHR Regional Gender Advisor (RGA) structure, with a focus on the years 2014-2016.

OHCHR's consistent strong policy commitments to gender integration¹ provide the overall framework for this evaluation and the investment in the RGA structure. This has included the Gender Equality Policy (2011) and Gender Equality Strategic Plans (2012-2013 and 2014-2017), which were developed to systematize gender integration in all OHCHR policies, programmes and processes. The expected results of the Strategic Plan (2014-17) included:

- All OHCHR staff are held accountable through their performance evaluation for integrating a gender perspective in their work.
- Women's rights and gender equality permeate OHCHR programmes.
- Resources to deliver on women's human rights and gender equality steadily increase.
- The conducive nature of OHCHR's working environment vis-a-vis gender equality improves.
- All OHCHR staff are equipped with knowledge and tools to integrate a gender perspective.
- OHCHR delivers planned results on women's rights and gender equality in its priority areas.

Implementing the Strategic Plan is considered the responsibility of the whole Office, supported by an Office-wide gender architecture including: the central coordinating WRGS in Geneva; gender facilitators; gender focal points - human rights officers working in field presences with responsibility for gender integration; and RGAs.

To contextualize the RGA structure and its results it is necessary to provide an organizational overview of OHCHR. OHCHR ROs are established on the basis of a standard agreement between OHCHR and the host country, following consultations with countries of the region. ROs focus on crosscutting regional human rights concerns and also support, at national level, follow-up to treaty bodies and special procedures as well as matters relating to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). They work closely with regional and sub-regional inter-governmental organizations. They are also intended to complement the expertise of human rights country presences by providing support on institutional and thematic issues. ROs are funded both by regular and extra-budgetary contributions. They vary in size, with a minimum of three professional officers, and work mainly in countries where there is no OHCHR field presence.²

An important contextual feature is that OHCHR has a different organizational structure vis-à-vis its RO to other UN entities. For OHCHR the ROs cover and support countries in the region where there is no OHCHR presence; and there is no formal reporting from field presences to ROs. RGAs do not therefore review field presence project proposals or provide technical support to field presences in a systematic fashion, as with other UN agencies. Rather field presences report directly

¹ OHCHR uses the term "integration" as opposed to mainstreaming more commonly used across the UN system. The two terms are interchangeable in this evaluation.

² <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/Pages/RegionalOfficesIndex.aspx>

to dedicated country desks at the Field Office Technical Cooperation Division (FOTCD) in Geneva. At the country level, OHCHR works with national counterparts to strengthen national protection systems and support the implementation of effective measures to overcome obstacles to the realization of human rights. This includes efforts to establish or reinforce justice and accountability mechanisms at the national level, such as undertaking effective monitoring and investigation, and helping to secure redress for victims of human rights violations. The ultimate aim of these efforts is to strengthen national human rights capacities and national human rights.³

During the period under review RGAs were placed in New York, and the ROs for East Africa (EARO, Addis Ababa), Central America (ROCA, Panama City), Middle East and North Africa (ROMENA, Beirut), West Africa (WARO, Dakar), and the Pacific Region (Suva). In addition OHCHR has regional offices covering Southern Africa (Pretoria), South America (Santiago de Chile), Europe (Brussels), Central Asia (Bishkek), and South East Asia (Bangkok).

RGAs were intended to provide advice on and support the integration of women's human rights and gender perspectives in OHCHR's work globally, regionally and nationally. They were intended to work in line with WRGS strategic objectives by providing expert advice on the integration of women's human rights and gender perspectives into the work of their respective office, and undertake initiatives in the area of women's human rights and gender equality, in partnership with other UN entities, regional organizations, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, and regional and international human rights experts. A Terms of Reference was prepared for the RGAs, included as Annex I, which includes four main functional areas to support programming: capacity development, advocacy, networking, and partnership building. Funding for the RGA structure is discussed in Section 3.3 under efficiency.

In addition, OHCHR has been planning for a Change Initiative and pursuing a strategy for strengthening its ROs, not as yet approved by the UN General Assembly. The Change Initiative plans that a number of desk officer functions currently in the FOTCD move to the ROs, while the Division in Geneva maintains responsibility for normative and communication functions. The Change Initiative rationale is to deploy resources for greater impact and to increase efficiency and reduce costs, and bring OHCHR closer to Member States and other regional and national stakeholders, including UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and other UN partners (OHCHR 2016). This evaluation has taken these plans into account, and the fact that they have not fully come to fruition, during interviews and the drafting of this report.

1.1 The RGA structure and strategic planning

The evaluation team found no overarching strategic planning document or concept note initiating the RGA structure. Documentation was provided on three initiatives that led to the formation of the structure. The first was a Senior Management Team meeting (April 29th, 2008) the minutes of which note:

In response to the criticism of the “gender blindness” of OHCHR's strategic plans, MR [head of the then gender unit] gave a brief assessment of gender mainstreaming activities in the Office which revealed a number of initiatives

³http://www2.ohchr.org/english/OHCHRreport2016/allegati/9_OHCHR_s_approach_to_field_work_2016.pdf

focusing on women's rights planned for 2008-2009, both in the field and in Headquarters. Nonetheless, most of those activities seem to be reactive or ad hoc, rather than the result of a systematic gender analysis....what is needed is to build the capacity of the Office with more expertise and some sort of continuity so as to ensure that gender mainstreaming is institutionalised (i.e. by placing some gender advisors in regional offices to provide help and advice across their regions).

Evaluation respondents were not aware of the origins of the criticism "gender blindness", however the original intention of the structure as implied by this discussion was for institutionalization of gender mainstreaming in particular in relation to strategic planning.

Subsequently a request was made from the then gender unit to the Programme and Budget Review Board (PBRB) in February 2009, which mainly focused on logistical issues but included the decision that the RGA Terms of Reference be revised to ensure that there were clear and included reference to the activities of the Human Rights Council, particularly UPRs and CEDAW, as well as the need for the RGA structure to develop capacity of RO staff. A request was then made to PBRB in June 2009 for two Gender Advisor Consultants (Senegal and Panama) and two Gender Advisor Posts (Fiji and Lebanon). The request noted that: "The role of the Gender Advisors will mainly focus on assisting the regional offices in integrating gender into their work." Terms of Reference were attached with the request (see Annex I to this report). The request continued: "Under the overall guidance and direct supervision of the respective Regional Representative, and the Coordinator of the Women's Rights and Gender Unit at HQ, the Gender Advisors will work on integrating gender into the work of the four selected Regional Offices, in line with the approved strategic plan, particularly related to strengthened country engagement.... The deployment of the four Gender Advisors is a pilot with a specific objective; to integrate gender into the work of the ROs. Sustainability will be further explored after an evaluation is undertaken to assess the impact of deploying Advisors as such." Again the intention from this request was clearly integration of gender into the work of the ROs, although what this meant is not clearly explained.

The original RGA Terms of Reference while emphasizing the importance of integrating gender into the work of the office included six main areas: facilitating a women's human rights and gender perspective in the recommendations of human rights mechanisms; technical support to the Office with regard to women's human rights; advocacy; reports for the General Assembly and Human Rights Council; liaison within and outside the UN; and "other related duties as required".

The Terms of Reference therefore defines integrating gender into the work of the RO quite broadly. This is positive from one perspective in that it gave the RGAs room for manoeuvre, but negative in that it may not have provided adequate direction to the RGAs work. In particular, the phrase all "other related duties as required" has led to lack of clarity in terms of RGA work planning, (discussed in Section 3.3 - efficiency).

The 2010 OHCHR gender integration evaluation similarly found that (p. 17): "The evaluation has reviewed the Terms of Reference for the P-4 Human Rights Officer cum Gender Advisor [RGA] in the MERO [Middle East Regional Office]. The Terms

of Reference (TOR) list myriad responsibilities and there is a substantial risk that the position could become overburdened and be relied upon to do all of the RO's external activities on women's rights, without a sufficient focus upon integrating gender internally and across the entirety of its activities." The evaluation therefore recommended (ibid.) that: "In addition to working on priority women's rights issues, gender should be more systematically integrated in human rights issues within the RO program, and particular attention should be given to strengthening the capacity of staff on gender analysis." The 2010 evaluation therefore recommended an adequate balance between working on priority women's rights issues and integration of gender in the work of the RO, an issue discussed again in Section 3.3 on efficiency.

The lack of clarity in the RGA Terms of Reference are symptomatic of a broader lack of clarity concerning the purpose RGA structure as a whole. Even though the introduction of the RGA structure was envisaged as a pilot it could have been accompanied by a more detailed concept note or theory of change setting out the main functions of the RGA structure as a structure or network. The origins of the idea of the RGA Advisors as a "structure", and what differentiates a structure e.g. from a network or an "architecture" is also unclear.

To place this finding in context, it is not uncommon for programmes and policies in the UN system to be developed without an explicit theory of change. For example WFP's gender policy evaluation found (2015: v): "The policy's objectives were broad, and the absence of a theory of change limited common understanding of what results were intended, why and how they would be achieved, and what assumptions were embedded in the policy's logic." UN Women's evaluation of its work on peace and security found (2013: 37): "Most UN Women programmes on peace and security lack an explicit theory of change or programme logic." And the OHCHR National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) evaluation found more generally (2015: 51): "The principal weakness detected lies in the absence of a robust, proactive strategic institutional interlocutor at OHCHR that can contribute to shaping the institutional policy debate on NHRIs, consolidate lessons learned, strategically link different institutional services, participate in shaping support strategies in key thematic areas and interact strategically and systematically with regional networks."

Several respondents noted that at the inception of the RGA structure OHCHR did not carry out effective strategic planning related to gender equality and women's rights. The lack of an overarching concept note had implications for the operation of the structure, and led to a lack of clarity as to the role of both individual RGAs and the structure as a whole. These include, discussed throughout this report: the ways in which the RGA structure was to function; what results the structure as a structure should be achieving; the extent to which RGAs should be prioritizing "integration in the work of the office" as opposed to substantive programming specifically designed and implemented by the RGAs; and whether RGA structure should focus on global office priorities on women's rights and gender or regional priorities.

The lack of an overarching mandate and strategy for the RGA structure can also be contrasted with the introduction of the Treaty Body Advisors and the Treaty Body Capacity Building Programme under General Assembly Resolution 68/268 which established the Programme to "support States parties in building their capacity to implement their treaty obligations" and set out the parameters of the programme.

The main differences are that there is a Member State mandate and a clear direction for Treaty Body staff, as well as regular funding.⁴

2. Evaluation background

2.1 Overall context for gender integration

It is important to contextualize OHCHR's efforts at promoting gender through the RGA structure within the overall UN and development system experiences with gender mainstreaming, as many of the challenges and opportunities that OHCHR experienced are generic. The overall context is that gender mainstreaming has proven challenging across the UN system over the last 20 years, as evidenced by numerous reviews and evaluations. The African Development Bank (2012) synthesis of 25 gender equality evaluations found that:

- Leadership has not consistently supported the implementation of gender mainstreaming policy, resulting in policy evaporation.
- The absence of accountability and incentive systems limited the achievement of results.
- Financial and human resources were not sufficient to enable effective mainstreaming.
- Many procedures and practices were introduced following the adoption of new gender policies or strategies, but were actively pursued for only a short period before gradually declining in use.
- Results reporting and learning were seriously challenged by inconsistent approaches to monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming.

An evaluation of the Office's performance in gender mainstreaming (OHCHR 2010) highlighted that, despite establishing a strong knowledge base and programmes focused on women's human rights, the integration of a gender perspective in all OHCHR programmes, policies and processes was not systematic, as with the rest of the UN system. The 2010 evaluation demonstrated that gender integration was largely driven by individual interest, rather than through institutionalized guidelines and Office-wide commitment. The broader question for this evaluation, discussed throughout, was therefore whether developing the RGA structure has helped to overcome these generic challenges.

2.2 Evaluation purpose and focus

The RGA structure evaluation comes at a timely moment for OHCHR. As it is five years since the adoption of the OHCHR Gender Equality Policy, the Network of Evaluation Focal Points during the preparation of the OHCHR Evaluation Plan 2016-2017 decided it was an appropriate time to evaluate the RGA structure. Posting of the RGAs has been a significant investment intended to promote OHCHR gender integration and results, as well as for strengthening RO capacity; therefore it is important to determine the results of this investment.

⁴ The Treaty Body Capacity Building Programme purpose is clearly set out in the minutes of the WRGS Section meeting of 2nd March 2015.

A key first step in evaluation practice is to determine if the evaluation primary purpose is for lesson learning or accountability, as these two evaluation purposes usually require different conceptual approaches and methodologies (Patton 2008). The OHCHR Policy, Planning Monitoring and Evaluation Service (PPMES) determined that the main focus of the evaluation should be on lessons learning, with accountability and reporting to donors a secondary focus. The main reason for this was to inform future steps towards strengthening the gender architecture and implementing the Gender Equality Policy and Plan.

2.3 Evaluation methodology

This Section provides a summary of the evaluation methodology, with further details provided in Annex 2. The evaluation Terms of Reference are included as Annex 3. In consultation with the evaluation team PPMES constituted a Reference Group to guide the evaluation (see Annex 4 for members). The Reference Group held its first meeting during the evaluation team inception mission to Geneva during the week of the 6th February 2017, and supported the evaluation throughout. Annex 5 includes biographies of the evaluation team members.

Evaluation drivers

The evaluation was guided by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG 2016) Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System, the OHCHR (2013) Evaluation Policy, and the UNEG (2014) Handbook for Conducting Evaluations of Normative Work and (2014) Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality into Evaluations. These documents provided general background and direction concerning approaches and a menu of methodologies from which to choose. The evaluation is organized around the five OECD-DAC evaluation criteria.

Utilization focused evaluation

The UNEG (2016: 20) Norms and Standards emphasize that evaluations should promote: “evidence-based learning through the application of a utilization focused approach and the engagement of users and beneficiaries.” A utilization focus approach was the main organizing approach of this evaluation, following the schemata in Annex 2.

In addition to engaging the Reference Group and identifying key users, engagement with users included:

- In person feedback sessions at the end of each RO mission.
- Preparation of dedicated mission reports (for internal purposes only).
- An initial in person feedback session with PPMES and WRGS in Geneva on the 25th April 2017, at the evaluation mid-point.
- A one-day workshop in Geneva with users including RGAs, PPMES and FOTCD, on the 1st June 2017.

Evaluation Instruments

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach and triangulated between different quantitative and qualitative sources of data, with a particular focus on methods to determine lessons of what worked or not and why. Methods used are as follows:

- Desk review of key documents including planning, monitoring and reporting documents at HQ and ROs. The evaluation assessed the RGA structure against RO and WRGS annual work plans given that both were used in planning. The

evaluation team searched for comparable evaluations of regional architectures, however, as the OHCHR RGA structure has a different function to other UN entities no comparable evaluations were found. The report draws on thematic findings from other evaluations as relevant. In addition, this evaluation concurs with many of the findings of the recent global review of OHCHR (OIOS 2017), and areas of concurrence are included in the conclusions Section.

- An inception phase involving both evaluation team members, including one week of key stakeholder interviews in Geneva and an initial feedback to PPMES and WRGS, during the week of the 6th February 2017. This resulted in an Inception Report including the evaluation methodology which guided the evaluation throughout.
- Face to face and skype interviews with a representative sample during one week missions to HQ and four of the five ROs where RGAs are currently located (see Annex 6 for a full list of respondents, and Annex 7 for the questionnaire used). The first mission to Panama was conducted by both evaluation team members to ensure consistent application of the evaluation methodology during the other missions. The mission to Dakar was conducted by the evaluation team leader, the missions to Addis and Beirut by the evaluation team member. The fifth RGA in the New York RO was also interviewed in person by the evaluation team leader, but other stakeholders in New York were not interviewed given resource and time constraints, so the main focus of this interview was coordination. For each mission all internal relevant planning and reporting documents were reviewed, including sub-regional notes, work plans and End of Year Reports, as well as reports to donors. Particular care was taken by the evaluation team to ensure that a representative range of regional counterparts was selected by reviewing the full set of OHCHR counterparts before RO missions.
- Case studies to understand causality, capture lessons learned, and include OHCHR work outside of the country in which the RO was located, based on interviews and document review. One case study was completed for each region where one-week missions were conducted, based on the RO and WRGS perspectives on what constituted the most effective programming in the region.
- Counterfactual analysis, including a review of OHCHR evaluations, and interviews with two ROs (Bangkok and Brussels) which have not had a RGA in place, and one RO (Suva) where an RGA was located between 2009 and 2012, to determine programming sustainability. The evaluation team was only partly successful in attaining relevant details from the Suva RO.
- A web survey (included as Annex 8), targeted to relevant OHCHR staff and counterparts not otherwise covered by the evaluation. There were however insufficient responses to the survey to use it as evaluative evidence.
- Appreciative Inquiry, a methodology with a lesson learning approach focused on asking specific visioning questions concerning what worked well, why it worked well, and how what has worked can be scaled up to wider organizational processes. Details are provided in Annex 2.

The Evaluation Analytical Framework which was used to develop questionnaires for the various stakeholders, including specific questions asked, and sources of data, is included as Annex 9.

The evaluation took a rights based approach to identify and analyze the inequalities, discriminatory practices and unjust power relations that are central to development problems (Annex 2). It did this through including specific questions related to the extent to which the RGA structure challenged and changed unjust power relations in the region, as well as analyzing the extent to which the RGA structure challenged power relations within OHCHR, which the OHCHR 2010 gender evaluation and numerous other evaluations have identified as negatively affecting gender integration.

2.4 Limitations and their mitigation

Coverage

The evaluation team visited five ROs where RGAs are currently located, however, Evaluation Reference Group members emphasized the importance of capturing OHCHR work in the wider region. Visiting countries in the region was beyond the scope of the evaluation, however, the evaluation team interviewed a representative range of stakeholders in other countries by phone/skype, and also completed four regional case studies.

Access to counterparts. In all missions access to some counterparts was not possible mainly because they did not respond to requests for interviews, or had left the region and their replacement was unfamiliar with the cooperation with OHCHR. This was a particular problem with the WARO case study where six key respondents were not available. Overall however the evaluation team interviewed an adequate sample of stakeholders to reach sound conclusions.

Access to documentation. In some cases, key documentation was not provided to the evaluation team until after the missions were completed. This is part of a more general issue with the RGA structure information management which is discussed in Section 3.3.

Time period to be covered. RGAs were first placed in ROs in 2008, however given staff turnover and OHCHR reporting systems it was challenging to find substantial and valid data before 2014. The evaluation therefore focused more on the period between 2014 and 2016 as it is the beginning of the current Gender Equality Strategic Plan, and includes assessment prior to 2014 wherever feasible.

3. Results against the OECD-DAC criteria

3.1 Relevance

Overarching evaluation question: the extent to which the RGA structure supports women's human rights and gender equality programming relevant to OHCHR's global Expected Accomplishments and appropriate for the regional context.

Overview: OHCHR has on-going decisions to make about the location of the RGAs within particular ROs, as well as how RGAs prioritize areas of work to ensure that these are the most relevant given regional contexts and OHCHR areas of comparative advantage.

The location of RGAs is based on funding availability, donor requests, and regional needs. Given their added value it would be appropriate for OHCHR to place an RGA

in each RO, as part of the strengthening of ROs. If funding does not permit a full complement of RGAs then further strategic planning exercises may be needed to determine their optimal locations.

Minutes of the OHCHR gender architecture annual strategic planning meetings coordinated by WRGS suggest that there has been effective strategic prioritization in relation to the results of the Gender Equality Strategic Plan (2014-2017). This has played to the comparative advantage of the RGA structure and regional priorities. It also appears that strategic planning for the RGA structure has improved over time. This may not however have addressed the issue of what the RGA structure as a coherent structure is planned to deliver in terms of results.

EQ1 - How successful has the RGA structure been in integrating gender in OHCHR's work in relevant countries/regions?

The technical expertise provided by the RGA structure has contributed substantially to improved gender integration in RO activities at the regional and country levels. Interviews with OHCHR staff provided evidence of the effective contribution of the RGA structure to gender integration in all four ROs, including in: strategic planning exercises; trainings and country missions; integration of gender in a number of United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAFs); specific projects ranging from UPR trainings, to collaboration on activities related to indigenous peoples and afro-descendants and Syrian female refugees.

The OHCHR 2010 gender integration evaluation found (p. 11): "Regional and country programmes often identify priority gender and women human rights issues as part of their human rights situation analysis. Issues are usually identified in an ad hoc manner and do not include a systematic gender analysis; this means that the gendered nature of human rights challenges, root causes of gender inequality, and barriers to the achievement of human rights for all may not be adequately understood and addressed." The evaluation team found that this situation has improved since 2010. RO planning documents including sub-regional notes (2014-2017) for the four ROs for the most part included a sound gender analysis and tied this analysis to planned results. For example, the sub-regional note for ROCA included details on the causes of violence against women and femicide, and why ROCA prioritized this area in its programming. Similarly, the sub-regional note for WARO analysed the connections between gender equality and stable democracies, and tied this to its programming response on strengthening the capacities of women Parliamentarians.

While the RGA structure made a significant contribution in integration of gender into ROs, this was not carried out in a systematic fashion. Respondents noted an approach that was somewhat ad hoc, with varied scoping of all of the main regional issues to determine priorities. RGAs did not necessarily view supporting colleagues on integrating gender into their work as a priority, as opposed to developing specialized gender related programming. This is an important finding, because, as noted, the original intention of the RGA structure was focused on integration of gender into the work of the ROs.

Outside of the WRGS annual planning sessions and RO planning sessions (see EQ 3 and 4 below) the RGA structure tends to be pulled towards activities and events. In-person meetings and workshops were one of the main means of the RGA structure implementing its programming, and these events are very time consuming in terms of

logistics, in particular in the ROs where there are limited support staff. Overall, there were too many activities undertaken, which at times appeared to negate the potential for taking a longer-term perspective on regional priorities, and strategizing concerning how to make most effective use of limited time and resources given the regional challenges faced. Alternatives such as more planned and systematic building of the capacity of individual counterpart institutions could have been further explored. While many RGA supported activities and publications have been very successful as discrete events, and much appreciated by counterparts, a more strategic perspective would likely have produced results in a more efficient manner.

EQ 2 – Have the strategies used to achieve results been adequate to the regional and national contexts and stakeholders?

The RGA structure has used three main strategies to achieve results. The first was to use the functions of the Office to advocate for and promote gender equality and women’s human rights through public advocacy, publications and events. The second was to use the Office’s convening power to bring together diverse stakeholders around key regional issues through capacity development, networking and building partnerships. The third was to work through existing regional institutions attempting to integrate a human rights and gender perspective into these institutions. **The evaluation team concludes that the strategies have been adequate in relation to regional and national contexts and stakeholders, but development of strategies could have been more systematic.**

The RGA structure’s role as an advocate – speaking out where others, including other UN agencies did not do so – was considered highly relevant by respondents. This was particularly evident in areas such as abortion, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and rights of persons identifying as LGBTI. For all of the regions covered by the RGA structure there were major issues in terms of adherence to international human rights conventions, so the regional and national contexts demanded such advocacy and the RGA structure responded appropriately.

The RGA structure also used the unique convening power of the UN to bring together Parliamentarians and civil society (e.g. in the case of WARO), State representatives from different sectors, including the judiciary, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and National Women Machineries (NWM) (in the case of ROCA and ROMENA), and WHRDs from across the region (in the case of ROMENA and EARO). The effective interchange and dialogue during regional level meetings demonstrated a relevant strategy, although maintaining the networks created was under-emphasized in some cases (see Section 3.5).

The strategy of working through existing regional institutions, particularly where the RO as a whole was also working with these institutions, was a relevant and effective strategy, for example in the cases of the African Union (AU) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This has also supported greater integration into RO work as a whole.

The regions differ significantly in terms of gender dynamics, socio-economics, and culture. Overall the RGA structure has tailored its strategies as appropriate for these differences, while at the same time not shying away from controversy where women’s

human rights and gender equality were threatened. For example: in the West Africa region where there are established democracies WARO has focused on work with Parliamentarians; ROCA and EARO supported efforts to review discriminatory legislation; and ROMENA worked with young WHRDs seeking political transformation in their countries.

Concerning whether the RGA structure has pursued relevant strategies in integrating gender, confusion about gender integration is widespread in the UN system (African Development Bank 2012).⁵ The 2010 OHCHR gender evaluation found (p. xiii): “Many staff are confused about how the concepts of “gender mainstreaming” and “women’s human rights” relate to each other, and expressed the view that efforts to mainstream gender may lead to a loss of focus on women’s human rights. Staff also find it difficult to understand how gender intersects with other forms of discrimination.”

The RGA structure has brought some clarity to what gender integration means in the regional context, but challenges remain. A significant minority of external respondents noted that the RGA structure maintained a greater focus on women’s rights than gender equality. The RGA Terms of Reference also refer almost exclusively to women’s rights. The focus of the RGA “flagship” programming highlighted in this report is also more on women’s rights than on gender equality: the AU report on women’s rights, the work on femicide in Central America, the work with women Parliamentarians in West Africa, and ROMENA’s work with Women Human Rights Defenders. On the other hand, the focus of the RGA structure (in the case of ROCA and ROMENA) on LGBTI issues has expanded the concept of gender integration beyond women’s rights.

In some ways, the distinction between gender equality and women’s rights is an artificial one, because working on women’s rights should lead to gender equality, for example work on femicide should lead to less violence against women, and work with women Parliamentarians should lead to more gender-sensitive governance. What was missing was that the RGA structure did not always make this important linkage when outlining its programming in planning documents, e.g. sub-regional notes. The focus on women’s rights may also exclude what has been an increasing focus of gender equality programming, a more nuanced approach to discrimination which also facilitates programming where men’s and boy’s rights are violated, e.g. in relation to trafficking, child soldiers, or access to education.

The question on inter-sectionality, raised in the 2010 OHCHR gender evaluation, is also pertinent given the introduction of the SDGs, and the imperative to leave no one behind, and support the rights of those left behind first. Data suggests that those left furthest behind are subject to multiple forms of discrimination and least able to enjoy rights, in particular ultra-poor rural women who are also indigenous and/or have a

⁵ For example a recent UNDP gender evaluation found (2015: xvi): “Despite efforts to institutionalize gender thinking and the perception that the organization is now ‘gender aware’, the evaluation found a lack of deeper understanding of what gender means in relation to development programming. In practice, ‘doing gender’ in UNDP often comes down to a targeting perspective. Women are often framed in a context of vulnerability rather than as key actors in a transformative social and development change process.” The WFP gender policy evaluation (2014: vii) had the same finding: “The policy did not generate a clear and shared understanding of what gender means for WFP, nor of why gender issues matter for the realization of WFP’s mandate. Such an understanding is essential for the policy to gain traction. Gender was most commonly understood to mean ‘targeting women’....”.

disability.⁶ The RGA structure does not appear to have been involved as a structure in any strategic planning exercises related to the SDG agenda in terms of setting regional priorities, although individual ROs are aligning their programming to the SDGs.

A key priority area that is not being addressed by the RGA structure relates to the exploitation of natural resources - EA I in the OHCHR Office Management Plan (OMP) (2014-2017). The only sub-regional note that includes an analysis of the impact of exploitation of natural resources was ROCA and was mainly connected to the rights of indigenous peoples. To contextualize this finding, OHCHR does not appear to have a significant focus in this area. Only 18 out of 53 field presences are working on EA I during the current programming cycle.

EQ 3 – How is the process of planning and selecting the strategies and interventions conducted?

EQ 4 – Were the internal stakeholders, strategies and policy frameworks in each office consulted during the planning process?

The selection of priority areas of work and interventions was the outcome of internal planning processes with the WRGS and ROs. The RGA structure in all ROs participated in calls and exchange of information with WRGS to brainstorm, share regional priorities and better understand what was happening at HQ. The RGA structure also participated in strategic planning retreats at the ROs. During these exercises, staff took into account global and regional priority areas, commitments to donors as well as requests from partners to narrow priority areas of work and interventions. According to respondents these retreats provided a good opportunity for staff to reflect on OHCHR niche areas and how to maximize their limited financial and human resources. All respondents interviewed said that the RGA structure in each of the ROs was working on key issues where OHCHR brings added value and a comparative advantage.

Concerning the strategic interventions selected by the RGA structure, respondents at UN agencies and government and civil society counterparts throughout the region agreed that the activities responded to partner's needs. A review of the WRGS and ROs' work plans show that activities selected by the RGA structure are aligned with the priorities and strategies included in the sub-regional notes for the ROs. **However, the evaluation team concludes that a key concern is that the RGA structure is spread too thinly and did not always have a longer-term perspective on regional priorities, and could not follow up systematically on activities and support to partners.**

⁶ See DESA (2016). Determining who is further “left behind” is enormously challenging –how does a strategic planning exercise determine greater need and who is furthest left behind, e.g. between urban groups identifying as LGBTI which may be higher income but subject to extreme discrimination, and indigenous rural women attempting to protect their communities from foreign mining interests?

3.2 Effectiveness

Overarching evaluation question: the degree to which the RGA structure has achieved planned outputs in RO and WRGS planning documents and contributed to the achievement of the expected results and targets of the Gender Equality Strategic Plans and relevant expected results in the OMP.

EQ 5 – What evidence of contributions of the RGA structure to the expected results on gender integration of the Gender Equality Strategic Plan (2014-2017) and more broadly to the Office Management Plan can be found?

Overview

The overall consensus among internal and external stakeholders was that the RGA structure was highly effective in achieving planned results. The evaluation team estimates that a significant majority of outputs in 2015 and 2016 RO work plans were achieved as planned, or were on track to be achieved.⁷ Interviews with respondents and review of RO and WRGS end of year reports and reports to donors provided evidence that the RGA structure has contributed positively to the achievements of the expected results of the Gender Equality Strategic Plan (2014-2017) – see Table I. This Section first sets out the overall contributions of the RGA structure, then outlines the RGA structure performance in relation to knowledge generation and dissemination, networking, and partnerships. Although the Evaluation Question refers to contributions to the Gender Equality Strategic Plan (2014-2017), as noted in Section 3.3 the RGAs also organized their work around the RO work plans, so both WRGS and RO work plans have been considered in this Section. Contributions to the Office Management Plan are considered in Section 3.4 under impact. Capacity development is covered in Section 3.5 under sustainability.

Table I sets out the contribution of the RGA structure to the expected accomplishments and thematic strategies in the Gender Equality Strategic Plan (2014-2017).

⁷ Mission reports include an assessment of performance per RO work plan outputs by output, however further details are not provided here for reasons of brevity.

Table 1: Contributions of the RGA structure to the results of the Gender Equality Strategic Plan (2014-2017)

Thematic Strategy	Expected accomplishments	Contributions the RGA structure
Strengthening the effectiveness of international human rights mechanisms and the progressive development of international human rights law and standards	<p>Early warning functions of human rights mechanisms are enhanced, including providing information for the UN crises response Centre (EA8)</p> <p>Enhance synergies, complementarity and coherence within and between human rights mechanisms (EA9)</p>	No major contributions mainly carried out from HQ.
Enhancing equality and countering discrimination, in particular racial discrimination, discrimination on the ground of sex, religion and against others who are marginalized	<p>Increased use of anti-discrimination and equality standards by judges and prosecutors (EA 1)</p> <p>Legislation, policies and practices increasingly comply with anti-discrimination and equality standards (especially in relation to those groups where OHCHR has an added value e.g. LGBT, caste-discrimination, older persons, disability...) (EA 4)</p> <p>Increased number of specialized equality bodies, focal points and national human rights institutions working on equality and non-discrimination in line with international standards (EA 4)</p> <p>National human rights institutions and civil society create and support participatory mechanisms to enhance equality</p>	<p>OHCHR has used its comparative advantage to build the capacity of government and CSOs on how to engage with human rights mechanisms, and how to use human rights standards to influence national legal frameworks. Important work carried out on human rights sensitive budgeting.</p> <p>Support provided to NHRIs, CSOs and WHRDs strengthened these actors' capacity to carry out gender-sensitive monitoring and documentation of cases.</p>

	and counter discrimination (including in the media and especially in relation to those groups where OHCHR has an added value) (EA 5)	The RGA structure has significantly advanced OHCHR's work on sexual and reproductive rights.
Widening the Democratic Space	<p>Increased participation of rights-holders, including women, in public life (including legislative and political processes) at the national and local levels (EA5)</p> <p>Civil society, in particular youth and women, increasingly advocate and claim their rights and protect themselves more effectively from reprisals (EA5)</p>	<p>Facilitating the participation of women Parliamentarians and women's groups in regional meetings contributed to increased participation.</p> <p>Significant support to civil society groups, including WHRDs.</p>
Combating impunity and strengthening accountability and the rule of law	<p>National justice systems, including informal justice systems when relevant, function in accordance with international human rights norms and standards, and increasingly apply them (including economic, social and cultural rights, women's human rights) (EA1)</p> <p>Increased compliance of national legislation, policies, programmes and institutions with international human rights norms and standards relating to torture and ill-treatment, and to the deprivation of liberty (EA1)</p> <p>Transitional justice mechanisms established and increasingly operating in accordance with international human rights standards and good practices (EA3)</p>	<p>Significant work on justice systems related to femicide in one RO.</p> <p>Development of a number of relevant knowledge products, including: The Model Protocol on femicide; Guide des Parlementaires sure les droits de l'homme, genre et budget; and the Women's Rights in Africa Report.</p> <p>Work carried out on deprivation of liberty in two ROs but this EA is not a main focus of programming.</p> <p>Work carried out on transitional justice in one RO but this EA is not a main focus of programming.</p>

	Increased use of national protection system by rights holders (including through strategic litigation) in relation to ESCR (EA5)	This EA is not a major focus of programming.
Integrating human rights in development and in the economic sphere	<p>Constitutions, laws and policies relevant to development, including in the context of exploitation of natural resources, increasingly promote and protect human rights, especially land and housing rights and with particular attention to non-discrimination and gender equality (EA1)</p> <p>Human rights considerations are integrated in the formulation of and follow up to the post 2015 Development Agenda (EA10)</p> <p>Human rights standards and principles are increasingly integrated into CCAs/UNDAFs/CAPs and the work of UN agencies, particularly on housing, water, sanitation and land (EA11)</p>	<p>No specific focus on the exploitation of natural resources.</p> <p>No specific focus on this area of work.</p> <p>Effective contributions to integrating human rights standards and principles in UNDAFs.</p>
Early warning and protection of human rights in situations of conflict, violence and insecurity	<p>Legal frameworks, public policies and institutions are in place and functioning to combat all forms of human exploitation, including trafficking, and sexual and gender-based violence (EA 1.2)</p> <p>The protection of human rights is effectively integrated in the mandates, policies and actions of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions (EA 11.3)</p>	<p>Some contributions to this EA but not a major focus of work.</p> <p>Significant support to integration of human rights and promotion of SCR 1325 in one Special Political Mission.</p>

3.2.1 Effectiveness of the RGA structure in knowledge generation and dissemination

Knowledge generation and dissemination contributed to strengthening the capacity of partners to advocate on gender issues. For example during the ROCA mission most interviewees highlighted the value of sharing information on recommendations from human rights mechanisms and materials produced by the Office on sexual and reproductive rights.

The RGAs structure successfully worked with partners to produce research on gender-related topics that influenced national and regional agendas. Producing collaborative research with partners has provided leverage to raise politically sensitive issues in all ROs. Box I highlights joint research with partners which brought to the AU agenda issues that are not commonly covered during regional discussions.

Box I: Women's Rights in Africa Report

Relevance

In 2017, OHCHR, together with the Directorate of Women, Gender and Development, and the support of UN Women launched the “Women's Rights in Africa Report,” which takes stock of the status of women in the African continent since the adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol).

The report is the result of a collaborative effort between the AU Directorate of Women, Gender and Development, the African Union Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women, OHCHR and UN Women to raise awareness of women's rights and influence policy. The report assesses progress, highlights achievements and identifies challenges and gaps where action is needed. It also provides recommendations to governments to address existing gaps.

The report was developed in the context of the AU's adoption of 2016 as the Africa Year of Human Rights with a particular focus on the rights of women. The preparation of this report was timely and ensured that gender went beyond the AU 2016 theme and remained in the agenda of AU institutions and Member States. As one respondent remarked - “in Africa, this issue can disappear off the agenda if no one is keeping an eye on it.”

Effectiveness

The report brings together the AU's political capacity to convene States and OHCHR's human rights expertise. In addition to strengthening the relationship between AU institutions and OHCHR, the report contributed to raise awareness of African Union institutions and Member States on women's rights standards. The report provides concrete examples of areas where there are gaps in the fulfilment of women's rights, and illustrates steps taken by some States to advance women's rights in these areas.

A majority of respondents noted that the report has contributed to reflection on critical issues affecting women and States' commitments in relation to those issues. For example,

in the preparation of the report, the Directorate has been in contact with gender ministries of Member States that are in charge of reporting on the Maputo Protocol and Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and requested information from them for contributions to the report.

Although the report is not exhaustive, it provides an update on the implementation of the Maputo Protocol by tracking progress as well as remaining challenges and gaps. The analysis in the report is based on a large number of sources, including national and international civil society actors, UN and AU institutions and human rights mechanisms, including reports of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of women in Africa. Based on this data, the report assesses implementation of regional standards in the areas of sexual and reproductive rights, persons with albinism, sexual and gender based violence, harmful practices, discriminatory laws, women, peace and security, and women in prison.

The report has also facilitated a discussion of sensitive issues, such as access to safe abortion, sexual and reproductive rights, and the use of religion and culture to perpetuate and enforce discrimination against women. The report has been largely accepted by member States and AU institutions. The report will be presented for adoption by the Assembly of the Heads of States and Governments of the African Union in January 2018.

Impact and sustainability

Although it is too early to determine its potential, several respondents noted that without a strategy to follow up on the recommendations by Member States, the report will not have an impact at the national level. In this context, the AU Directorate and OHCHR are already discussing with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women the possibility of organizing a meeting of experts with the Special Rapporteur to bring together women's organizations and lawyers' associations to explore how they can take the report recommendations forward.

The report also has the potential to input a gender perspective into on-going discussions to develop the AU 10-Year Action Plan on Human Rights.

The dissemination of the recommendations will also contribute to national implementation. Once the report is translated into French, the Directorate is planning to distribute the report to all Member States. OHCHR and UN Women are also planning to distribute it to all ROs and field presences.

Additionally, to give continuity to this work, the AU Directorate and OHCHR are planning to periodically issue analytical reports that focus on specific issues affecting women's rights.

Lessons learned

Using existing regional frameworks and institutions provides OHCHR with an entry point to raise politically sensitive issues at the national level. For example, taking advantage of the AU 2016 theme on human rights and gender to work with the AU Directorate on the Women's Rights in Africa Report provided leverage to bring sensitive issues to the

attention of Member States, issues such as, access to safe abortion, and sexual and reproductive rights.

The wide range of data sources consulted from both the AU and the UN institutions—together with the specific focus on key thematic areas—makes the report a valuable tool that fills a gap in assessing progress and challenges on the situation of women’s human rights on the continent.

3.2.2 Effectiveness of the RGA structure in networking

Networking mainly focused on promoting information exchanges, sharing of strategies, holding workshops, and building dialogue and alliances among stakeholders. In some cases the RGA structure effectively contributed to build or used regional networks, e.g. for WHRDs in the Middle East and North Africa. In others the RGA structure missed opportunities to build and work through existing networks, for example through follow up to its work with Parliamentarians in West Africa through supporting nascent regional networks of women Parliamentarians, or through the Model Protocol in Latin America where the RGA structure could have established a network of institutions to support implementation and uptake of the Model Protocol. The evaluation team also found that it was only in ROCA that the RGA structure systematically supported OHCHR field presence GFPs, although this could have been an important method by the entire RGA structure to integrate gender into the work of field presences. And in the case of ROCA the networking with GFPs was not based on a regional plan, so that for example communication flows were mainly between the RGA structure and GFPs, rather than between GFPs.

Although networks were not always built or sustained, **OHCHR’s convening role was strategically used to facilitate dialogue among different stakeholders at regional and national levels.** The sub-regional meeting organized by the RGA structure in ROMENA to discuss current legislation and efforts to combat violence against women brought together representatives from Ministries of Justice, National Women Machineries and civil society organizations from nine regional countries. The meeting facilitated an in-depth discussion and review of experiences in implementing existing laws (Lebanon and Jordan) and draft legislation available in other countries (Morocco, Yemen and Iraq).

Many respondents noted that learning from experiences in other countries helped them identify gaps and improve the understanding of national needs in comparative perspective, such as reviewing the definition of the family, and addressing mediation and protection mechanisms. For example, in ROMENA the regional meeting which included participants from state and CSOs provided an opportunity for these actors to dialogue. This participatory approach was replicated in the discussions on the draft legislation in some countries in the region. The workshops for Parliamentarians and CSOs convened by the RGA structure in West Africa facilitated inter-country exchanges, and participants pointed to a number of important cases where they had been able to learn from other countries experience and adapt that experience for their own national institutions. The

issue therefore is not the networking/training event itself, but sustaining and building on the networks created.

The support provided to WHRDs has also led to the development of important informal networks. Trainings provided to WHRDs in the East Africa and MENA regions provided an opportunity to share information and build alliances with other WHRDs. Many respondents highlighted that building a partnership with OHCHR helped them break the isolation in which they operated, and position their organizations as legitimate actors.

The case study in Box 2 illustrates how OHCHR's support to WHRDs provided the opportunity to develop an informal network.

Box 2: Supporting WHRDs in the MENA region

Relevance

ROMENA's involvement with WHRDs started in 2011 working in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to organize a youth conference to discuss youth activism in the Arab spring. In 2012, OHCHR organized a two day meeting with WHRDs from six countries to discuss challenges and obstacles faced and identify areas where OHCHR could better support their work. Following recommendations from this meeting, ROMENA organized from 2013 to 2016 a series of workshops addressing specific capacity gaps identified by WHRDs attending these meetings.

These training workshops took place against the backdrop of the Arab uprisings and the emergence of popular movements demanding political reforms and social justice in the Middle East and North Africa. In this context, women, especially young women, were actively taking part in these movements, but were largely excluded from decision-making processes. The overall consensus among respondents is that these workshops were and continue to be critical to empower WHRDs in the region and identify their capacity-building needs to strengthen their participation in political transitions.

Effectiveness

In 2013 and 2014, ROMENA organized two trainings for two groups of WHRDs on monitoring and documenting human rights violations and gender based violence, as well as threats and violations faced by WHRDs. Fifty WHRDs from across the region participated in these trainings. In 2015, the Office organized a specialized training focused on monitoring places of detention and trial observation for a selected group of WHRDs from the original group. Similarly, in 2016, another selected group of WHRDs were invited to participate in a specialized training on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

The overall consensus among participants concerning these trainings is that they gained new skills on monitoring and documentation of human rights violations in general and

violations against women in particular. Participants also strengthened their understanding of human rights standards. This is corroborated by participant evaluations completed. Evaluations were also used in every workshop to identify needs and next steps.

The trainings gave WHRDs an opportunity to share experiences and to learn from each other's strategies. For example, a respondent highlighted the importance of learning from WHRDs in Jordan about the campaign and strategies used by CSOs to repeal legislation on rape marriage.

Trainings also built alliances between participants and supported development of an informal network of WHRDs. Participants in these workshops shared information on social media and participated in joint solidarity actions. For example, a participant from Yemen contacted other WHRDs through social media to launch a successful campaign for the release of a WHRD who was being detained and prevented from travelling. Many of the WHRDs in the network responded by gathering signatures requesting her release. WHRDs also participated in a solidarity action to support hospitals and doctors affected by bombings in Syria.

WHRDs from the network also nominated other WHRDs to participate in an event in New York on Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. They used the event as an opportunity to carry out joint advocacy efforts.

Impact and sustainability

The network has significant potential to enhance WHRDs' strategies in a region where they are confronted with significant threats from State and non-State actors. The network however will only be viable with the support of ROMENA to continue to strengthen WHRDs capacities and provide a space for them to meet and build alliances.

Lessons learnt

Continuity over several years has allowed WHRDs to build alliances and create an informal network. This sustained support to WHRDs has been an important reason for its success.

A thorough planning process ensured the relevance of capacity-building initiatives directed to specific audiences and contexts. The fact that these workshops have been based on needs assessments and evaluations ensure that the trainings fill in the gaps identified by WHRDs. A careful selection of WHRDs from the region also contributed to success. Many WHRDs selected were young women activists that did not necessarily work for NGOs but were very active in social justice movements and benefited from learning skills and being connected to a network.

Another lesson for OHCHR was the need to increase the impact of capacity-building activities by mentoring participants after each training so that they are able to build on the skills acquired in every workshop.

3.2.3 Effectiveness of the RGA structure in conducting advocacy

Interventions in the advocacy area included participating in country missions and meetings with different actors, organizing panels and events, facilitating the participation of women's groups in regional and national processes, and promoting the rights of persons identifying as LGBTI.

The document review and interviews with internal and external respondents demonstrated that the RGA structure's work led to increased and more systematic engagement with regional and national actors. Advocacy is an area where having a dedicated staff member in the ROs has significantly enhanced the quality of engagement, including with CSOs.

The RGA structure has effectively contributed to strengthening gender in regional and national agendas. Working with regional institutions has provided an entry point for OHCHR to work on gender specific issues. For example, the support provided by the RGA to the organization of the AU High Level Panel on gender equality and women's economic empowerment increased the awareness of regional bodies, governments and other stakeholders. The panel came up with specific strategies to accelerate the implementation of the Maputo Protocol. As a result the AU Gender Directorate organized ratification missions to countries that have not ratified or lagged behind on implementation. Similarly, the Model Protocol on femicide (Box 5) in the Americas has been an excellent advocacy tool in terms of raising the issue of femicide at regional and national levels and a capacity building tool and guidance for investigations. WARO's work with Parliamentarians has supported their capacity to advocate for both more women in Parliaments and human rights sensitive budgets.

The RGA structure enhanced cooperation in the area of women, peace and security. The RGA structure in WARO has effectively supported ECOWAS and United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWAS) in their work on Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security over a number of years, and was considered by respondents as an active participant and effective advocate on women's rights. EARO, in partnership with the African Union Commission and the African Centre for Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), supported the organization of a meeting to strengthen the gender dimension of programs and policies on violent extremism. The meeting provided an opportunity for participants to share good practices from Somalia, Mali, Nigeria and Algeria. The meeting helped identify gaps in research on the social and political problems that push young women into extremism. The lessons from the meeting helped the Africa Union Mission in Somalia (AMISON) to identify priorities for their way forward, such as the need to engage with religious leaders to prevent violent extremism and to develop messages to reach out to communities.

In ROMENA, the RGA structure provided technical advice and supported ESCWA in developing the guide *Security Council resolution 1325 and its complementary resolutions, and the role of parliamentarians in their implementation*. The guide has been used in capacity-building workshops for government officials and national women's machineries. In Lebanon, the guide has been a useful resource to support the development of a national

action plan on women, peace and security. The RGA structure has also included this area in capacity building activities with NHRIs and NWM.

The RGA structure has significantly advanced OHCHR's work on sexual and reproductive rights. Facilitating dialogue between human rights experts, relevant national institutions and CSOs has been an important advocacy activity. In El Salvador, the RGA structure organized a dialogue with women and LGBTI groups and connected them to the special rapporteurs in Geneva. The RGA structure participation in these dialogues has changed perceptions on issues such as abortion and the Zika virus from a mainly health analysis to a human rights approach that looked at accountability of stakeholders. The RGA structure played a vital role as advocate speaking out on gender-related sensitive issues and to support rights based CSOs.

The joint work of the ROMENA RGA structure with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and NHRIs supported the important role that these institutions played in the protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights. In November 2016, representatives from eight NHRIs in the Arab region participated for the first time in a training workshop addressing tools and mechanisms for tracking, monitoring and reporting on sexual and reproductive health. The involvement and guidance provided by the RGA structure was critical to reach out to many of these institutions. Given the sensitivity of the topic, the trust developed by the RGA structure with NHRIs in the region over several years facilitated their engagement in a frank dialogue. Bringing all these NHRIs to the table was in itself a success.

Facilitating the participation of women's groups in regional meetings contributed to mainstreaming gender in regional processes, ensuring that the voices of women and other groups working on gender equality are heard in meetings and forums is likely to increase the possibilities of integrating gender in action plans and policy documents. Key examples include the facilitation of the participation of women organizations working on gender equality in the AU Gender is my Agenda Campaign as well as in the consultations related to the Ten Year Action Plan and Implementation Plan on the Promotion and Protection of Human and Peoples Rights in Africa, and the work with Parliamentarians in West Africa.

EQ 6 – Where positive results of the RGA structure were found, what were the enabling factors and processes? Are these notable differences in the results obtained in some particular geographical zones or thematic areas of intervention?

The positive results identified in this section are a consequence of several internal and external factors, including: expertise, commitment, and accessibility; building strong partnerships; substantive support from WRGS and FOTCD; and continuity in programming.

Expertise, commitment, and accessibility: The technical expertise provided by the RGA structure was highly valued by a significant majority of internal and external stakeholders. In addition to gender mainstreaming, many respondents highlighted the

expertise on monitoring and documentation, and capacity building as critical. Particularly important was having RGAs with a human rights background combined with expertise in gender. This enabled the RGAs to more effectively integrate gender into the work of the ROs and subsequently engage with colleagues.

The RGA structure evidenced strong commitment by the RGAs to their area of work, without exception. OHCHR was able to field high caliber staff who have both the relevant technical expertise and dedication. The importance of fielding high quality staff, particularly in a situation of job insecurity, should not be under-estimated.

A majority of respondents stressed that a good understanding of the political context and the cultural specificities were essential for the success of the RGA structure. Without the political assessments provided by the RGA structure, it would be much more difficult for HQ to work on gender related issues. Accessibility was also highlighted as an important enabling factor. Having technical expertise closer to the field and able to speak the main regional language enabled the RGAs to communicate directly with partners and facilitated the development of strategic relationships.

Building strong partnerships: key to the success of the RGA structure has been the development of partnerships with national and regional actors and other UN agencies. The 2010 OHCHR gender mainstreaming evaluation found (24-25): “Staff across the Office also demonstrated some confusion over how to influence partners on gender equality. In some cases, staff expressed that they felt they had a good understanding of how they could influence partners, but further probing often revealed that this focused largely on ensuring the participation of women in activities such as training, rather than more strategic influencing on the aims and objectives of the partner organisations themselves[...]the role of OHCHR is not to advocate or influence on gender equality issues per se, but to work strategically with other partners to bring a human rights-based approach to their work on gender equality... this is an area of work which could be strengthened.” The current evaluation found that there had been progress in this area, with a greater focus on integrating a human rights based approach in partner organizations, for example through work within UN Regional Theme Groups, in national governments through work with Parliamentarians, and with CSOs.

The RGA structure has built strong partnerships with national and regional CSOs and WHRDs. The evaluation team found that these partnerships were critical to integrate gender in documenting, monitoring and investigating cases of gender-based violence and feeding this information to regional and international human rights mechanisms. CSOs have also valued OHCHR’s support, as this partnership gave legitimacy to their work at national level.

Substantive support from WRGS and FOTCD: support from the WRGS was important for maintaining oversight of the RGA structure. Having a supportive structure in HQ, and a coordination lead point was an important factor in the RGA structure’s success. The connection to the New York RGA structure was considered to be particularly important given the largely normative functions of that structure. It was key

for both Geneva and New York offices to stay abreast of current normative developments.

Regular communication was important for keeping the RGA structure focused on planned strategies. Regular conference calls supported inter-regional sharing and lesson learning, and annual meetings in Geneva with all RGAs (except New York) were also helpful for strategizing, lesson learning and strengthening the RGA structure as a network. Budget cuts, however, prevented the continuation of these meetings (see Section 3.3 for more details).

Examples of substantive contributions made by WRGS and the FOTCD to the RGA structure over the last several years can be found in Boxes 3 and 4.

Box 3: Substantive support from the Women’s Rights and Gender Section to the RGA structure

Below is a selection of technical inputs to the RGA structure by WRGS.

Joint SRHR Workshops: substantive and organizational support to the RGA structures in WARO and EARO through the organization and facilitation of three regional workshops on Promoting Human Rights Standards and Guidance on Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights, which brought together more than 70 participants from 19 countries.

Cameroon Conference on Women's Political Participation: coordinated substantive notes to the RGA structure in preparation of a background note for OHCHR’s intervention at the Conference the Cameroon Conference Women's Political Participation in February 2016, which also included collecting concrete and relevant examples of the work of the other RGAs to highlight at this conference.

State of Women's Rights in Africa publication: substantive inputs on multiple drafts of this publication which launched the Africa Year of Human Rights, with a particular focus on women.

Reparations: provided the RGA structure with all relevant documentation to prepare a presentation on women's access to justice and reparations as part of the AU Summit on Gender.

Regional Sensitisation workshop ACHPR Campaign for Decriminalisation of Abortion: prepared presentation for the RGA structure in EARO presented at a “Regional Sensitisation workshop on African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) Campaign for Decriminalisation of Abortion in Africa”.

Monitoring project on women in elections: provided advice for the elaboration of monitoring project on women’s participation to elections that took place in Burkina Faso from September 2015 - January 2016.

Legislative reform: the Section has supported the involvement of the RGA ROCA structure in key legislative reform processes in particular in Honduras, El Salvador and Chile.

The Model Protocol on femicide: provided substantive inputs into the Protocol, participated actively in two of the EGM in Panama, worked on the outline of the Protocol and provided inputs to several iterations.

RGA NYO: generally assists with the preparation of statements, talking points for the ASG in NYO on women's rights and gender issues, in coordination with the RGA structure. Also provided comments to several policies of the development of which the NYO engages - for example all those related to the implementation of the conflict-related sexual violence mandate by peace missions and related to women, peace and security.

Box 4: Support from the Field Operation and Technical Cooperation Division to the RGA structure

Below are some examples of FOTCD support to the RGA structure.

Support to the RGA in ROCA has included funds to cover the position of the RGA for six months, as well as funding for the preparation and launching of the Latin America Model Protocol for investigation of gender-motivated killings of women.

Support to the work of the RGA in EARO. In 2016, FOCTD provided financial support for the side event on gender, human rights, and countering or preventing violent extremism and the Third High-level panel on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in Africa. Similarly, in 2017, FOTCD supported the organization of the Fourth High Level Panel on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in Africa as well as a regional meeting to strengthen women human rights defender's engagement with human rights mechanisms.

FOTCD has contributed to promoting the work of the RGAs in house and advocating for sustainability of the RGAs structure. For example, during the annual sessions of the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights, FOTCD organized focused sessions for Board Members to understand the work and contribution of the RGAs at the regional and country levels. The connection of the RGA structure to desk officers in FOTCD and their technical input has also been an important element in high quality programming.

Continuity in programming: A consistent engagement with partners over the course of several years was integral to achieving results. The continuity of the work with WHRDs since 2011 in the MENA region has allowed these activists to build alliances, learn from each other's strategies, and develop informal networks. Similarly, the work on the Latin American Model Protocol on femicide spanned a period of several years, which allowed

ample consultation with a wide range of partners and practitioners in different phases of development, from drafting to implementation. WARO's work with Parliamentarians also took place over several years and meant that OHCHR partners were less concerned about staff turnover (which they increasingly considered the norm) than continuity in programming.

EQ 7 – What has been the roles of other internal and external stakeholders, including other UN agencies and regional organisations, in the achievement of results? What has been the strategy and methodology used to work together, communicate and disseminate results among them?

The technical assistance provided by the RGA structure has strengthened the capacities of OHCHR field presences and UNCTs to integrate gender and engage with human rights mechanisms. Support in this area is important as UNCTs often lack the necessary capacity to address the human rights aspects of gender concerns in their CCAs/UNDAFs. The RGA structure in ROCA effectively provided technical assistance to UNCTs to prepare a shadow report to the CEDAW; and in Lebanon the RGA structure participated in UNCT discussions for developing a national plan on women, peace and security.

The RGAs structure has enhanced the capacity of inter-agency regional theme groups to mainstream a gender inclusive human rights-based approach in inter-agency work. All members of the inter-agency groups interviewed in ROCA and ROMENA identified the added value of technical advice provided by the RGA structure to inter-agency work. In ROCA, for example, this collaboration has resulted in an Inter-Agency statement to end violence against women. The RGA structure helped raise the visibility of the Office with other agencies and partners. In West Africa the RGA structure's technical contributions to the Working Group on Women Peace and Security of UNOWAS were valued.⁸

3.3 Efficiency

Overarching evaluation questions: The extent to which the OHCHR ROs and gender architecture have supported the RGAs; the success or otherwise of gender integration in the ROs; and the extent to which resources have been efficiently used to achieve intended results, and funds have been raised.

This Section answers six evaluation questions (including EQ 8 which was originally included under effectiveness) related to the ways in which the RGA structure operated and added value. The gap in conceptual planning, noted in Section 1.1, has had implications for the ways in which the RGA structure functioned since its inception. Therefore, the answer to this evaluation question needs to be considered in the overall context of RGA structure planning, expanded under EQ 9.

⁸ The RGA structure in EARO is somewhat new and has not as yet developed this work component. It was not possible to interview a representative sample of UN agencies during the WARO mission concerning the regional gender thematic group.

EQ 9 – How efficiently has the RGA structure been in using the human, financial and intellectual resources at its disposal to achieve its targeted outcomes? To what degree do the results achieved justify the resources invested in them?

Chapter I outlines the limited human and financial resources with which RGA structure operated. The main resources (upwards of 90 per cent) were for staff salaries, with very limited funds for activities and travel. As noted below, this limited the ability of the RGA structure to carry out planned activities.

Within the context of very limited financial resources, overall the RGA structure used resources effectively to achieve planned results. A number of examples were provided to the evaluation team of RGAs using resources creatively, e.g. working with law students, developing strategic partnerships, and combining travel to multiple locations. This has proved to be an efficient use of resources leading to a high rate of achieved outputs.

Overall the evaluation team concludes that the results achieved justify the invested resources. There are two caveats to these conclusions which are expanded upon in this section. The first is that many of the outputs stated in work plans are not robust results statements, making efficiency more difficult to assess. The second is that while RGAs working in individual ROs largely used funds efficiently, the lack of clarity as to the main purpose of the RGA structure hindered greater efficiency of the structure as a whole.

The ways the RGA structure functioned as a structure could have been more efficient if based on a conceptual model of what the structure intended to achieve. In particular what is meant by “integration into the work of the RO” as set out in the original RGA planning documents; this led to some confusion for both RGAs and Representatives as to the role of the RGAs. While the annual planning sessions and conference calls were appreciated by participants, they did not appear to cover how the RGA structure should be set up.

Gajda (2004) sets out a typology for evaluating networks, with a scale of increasing cooperation from networking to cooperating to partnering, merging and unifying (see Annex 10). Currently, as defined by Gajda, the RGA structure is a loose network with the majority of communication flows being facilitated by WRGS as the structure hub. The evaluation team concludes that because of a lack of clear conceptual underpinnings the RGA structure has not yet become larger than the sum of its parts and has therefore not achieved the efficiencies that would be expected from a network. As one respondent put it, the global organizations which achieve economies of scale through managing transfer of knowledge from one region to another will be the organizations which thrive in a context of budget restrictions.

EQ 10 – To what extent has the work of RGAs attracted specific funding – both for posts and activities?

The WRGS obtained earmarked funding from the Government of Finland to temporarily cover the RGA position in EARO for two years (2016 -2017) and the RGA position in ROMENA from 2009 until March 2016. Other than this, funding for the RGA positions has come from extra budgetary funding from WRGS, with some support from FOTCD and ROs (see EQ 8).

Several respondents noted that donors are more driven to fund country work and highlighted the need to re-package the RGA structure as positions reinforcing country work. This would require a greater involvement of FOTCD and ROs in fundraising efforts towards the RGA structure.

EQ 11 – Have the organizational arrangements used to support the RGA architecture been adequate to achieve the intended results?

Overall the evaluation team concludes that the organizational arrangements to support the RGA structure were adequate to achieve the intended results, but not optimal to maximize the efficiency of the RGA structure as a system. More clarity in the areas specified below would contribute to a more cohesive and strategic structure.

Under current arrangements, the RGA has a double reporting line to WRGS and the respective ROs, with the Regional Representative being the first line of reporting except in the case of New York. This arrangement allows a flow of information between HQ and ROs – noted as particularly important for the New York RO - and enables knowledge and experience sharing among RGAs stationed in different regions. This arrangement also brings some coherence to the RGA structure. The reporting line to the WRGS is important to ensure accountability, as the funding for both the staff and the activities are included in the WRGS budget. Nevertheless, the majority of funds for the RGA structure to date have originated from the WRGS budget, so the first line of reporting to Regional Representatives obscures accountability for results.

The double reporting also has implications for the prioritization of programming. As one respondent remarked, “Reporting lines are clear on paper, but there is some confusion in practice.” An area that needs greater clarification is whether the RGAs structure should focus on global office priorities on women's rights and gender or regional priorities. The RGA structure contributed to outputs in both the ROs and the WRGS work plans. Some outputs were common to both work plans, while other outputs were different and encompassed a different set of activities. In one RO, a core set of outputs were included in a separate document as part of a contract with the donor. Reporting on at least two work plans creates a double burden in terms of planning and prioritizing of activities, as well as in the reporting of results. Clarity in this area is particularly important when the RGA position and activities are covered with earmarked funding from a specific donor and priorities are set up in the contractual arrangement with the donor.

The second area to clarify is the optimal balance between integration of gender into the work of the RO (e.g. working to integrate gender into on-going programming such as support to Treaty Bodies, work on the rights of persons with disabilities or specific

country work) and discreet substantive work run mainly by RGAs (such as development of the Model Protocol on femicide or work with female Parliamentarians). As the inception documents for the RGA structure didn't make clear what "integration into the work of the RO" meant in practical terms, there is a danger that RGAs will undertake discreet programming not sufficiently linked to the on-going work of the RO. This has already occurred in at least one instance, and in two cases the evaluation team were informed that it took several months before senior managers understood the role of the RGA.

The evaluation team estimates that since its origins the RGA structure has allocated some 50 per cent of its time to programming run mainly by the RGA; roughly 20-30 per cent to working with colleagues; and the remainder of time to more general office work (e.g. supporting the Representative). It would be useful to clarify whether this is the optimal division of time in terms of integration into the work of the office, networking with other RGAs, support to the UN system, and fund raising.

The third area in which greater clarity is required is the balance between work on gender and more general RO work. In a small office all staff can be expected to cover multiple areas. The majority of respondents agreed that the contribution of the RGA structure to the general work of the office was important to ensure that these positions were well integrated in the ROs. However, in some cases the RGAs were required to spend more than 20 per cent of their time on non-gender work. RGAs were also asked to carry out activities that were not related to gender, work as desk officers for a particular country or act as the acting head of office during absence of the Regional Representatives and Deputies.⁹ Defining the right balance between gender and general work is important to determine whether resources are invested in an efficient way to lead to expected results.

EQ 12 – How efficient has the communication and coordination been between the RGAs, the Offices where they are located, WRGS and other units within OHCHR in terms of programmatic, financial and administrative issues?

Interviews with staff in all ROs indicate a very good level of communication and coordination between the RGA structure and WRGS. The RGA structure participated in regular conference calls with WRGS which provided an opportunity for the RGA structure to learn about developments in the other regions, share their experiences, and raise any substantive issues about their work. Regular communication was also important to keep RGAs working on the envisioned strategies. All respondents agreed that the WRGS communicated effectively with the RGA structure outside those monthly meetings for support and advice. Maintaining regular communication and coordination has brought some coherence to the RGA structure.

⁹ This is a generic issue for gender focal points and specialists. For example a World Bank evaluation found (2010: 35): "Interviews with RGCs [Regional Gender Coordinators] suggest that the time spent on gender work has declined over the evaluation period, with RGCs and country focal points taking on multiple responsibilities unconnected with gender, or the gender responsibility being added to the work of staff fully engaged with other responsibilities."

Annual meetings in Geneva were also very helpful to brainstorm, identify opportunities and contribute to the overall office strategy. These meetings also contributed to team building and to the strengthening of the RGA structure. Budget cuts, however, prevented the continuation of these meetings.

The evaluation team were informed of some direct region to region communication, for example between WARO and EARO, however for the most part the communications facilitated by WRGS did not lead to programme revisions through knowledge exchange between regions. This may partly be because of regional variations in the RGAs' work, although for some areas of work such as on CEDAW and mainstreaming gender and human rights into UNDAFs there are similarities between regions.

The RGA structure also has good communication and coordination with RO staff. Interviews with OHCHR staff provided evidence of the collaboration between staff in ROs and the RGA structure in relation to gender integration and planning and programming, although as noted in Section 3.3, which also provides examples, this could have been more systematic.

Communication and coordination between the ROs and the WRGS appears to have been ad hoc and taken place on a needs basis to discuss allocation of time to gender related work vis-a-vis general support to ROs, as well as to align priorities between the RGA structure and the ROs.

The RGA structure also worked closely with FOTCD. The vast majority of respondents noted the RGA structure was instrumental for FOTCD to identify and communicate with partners in the regions, to engage with national authorities, and to share ideas and strategies. Several respondents, however, drew attention to the difficulties of communicating directly with the RGA structure and noted that they went through WRGS and the Regional Representative to communicate with the RGA structure.

EQ 13 – How effectively does the WRGS monitor and evaluate the performance and results of the RGA structure? Is relevant information and data systematically collected and analysed to feed into management decisions?

As there was no overarching conceptual framework of theory of change for the RGA structure there were no overall high-level results statements for what the RGA structure was attempting to achieve. WRGS did not therefore have the means for overall reporting on the RGA structure as a structure, which may have hindered fund raising at a programmatic as opposed to an individual RO level.

The RGA structure provided regular reports to WRGS through teleconferences and also submitted regular reports for the Office weekly updates. This reporting was usefully tied to Expected Accomplishments and outputs, but tended to be at the activity level, as would be expected in a monthly or bi-monthly report.

The main method for reporting on performance and results at the RO level was through the RO and WRGS End of Year Progress reports, which provided a narrative summary and rating of performance against outputs on an Office-wide scale. The evaluation found that for the most part the ratings provided in the End of Year Progress reports gave an accurate picture of performance against RGA structure outputs. In addition, WRGS reported to the donors, and the evaluation team also considers this reporting to be balanced and accurate.

However, the quality of outputs and indicators is variable across the RGA structure planning documents. Results statements tend to be vague, e.g. “greater capacity of women to participate in public life”, and indicators do not tend to be based on RBM principles, e.g. “Level of meaningful participation of right-holders, especially women and discriminated groups, in selected public processes”.¹⁰ To put OHCHR’s planning and reporting in context, weak RBM is a generic issue across the UN system.

Beyond output reporting in the End of Year Reports there were limited mechanisms in place in all of the ROs for capturing RGA structure results. The RGA structure tended to capture results at a somewhat basic level, for example evaluation forms completed by workshop participants immediately after the workshop, or to report on activities, e.g. workshops or reports completed, or meetings held. Again, this is typical of the ways in which many UN agencies report.

There was some consideration given by the RGA structure to introducing more robust monitoring systems, for example indicators to measure retention of participants taking the online course on the Model Protocol on femicide. However, these systems have not been introduced to date, even in initiatives which have been on-going for several years, such as WARO’s work with female Parliamentarians. In ROMENA’s work with WHRDs monitoring and evaluation was mainly limited to immediate evaluations after trainings and meetings, however the RGA structure contacted WHRD between activities to assess use of acquired skills and identify gaps for future workshops.

The evaluation team concludes that while data is systematically collected it was not of adequate quality to feed into management decisions about the role of the RGA structure. The RGAs appeared to receive no feedback on End of Year reporting – again this is typical of the UN where monitoring information tends to flow vertically from the field to HQ rather than horizontally.

EQ 8 – What prevented the RGA structure from achieving certain results? What lessons can be drawn from this?

Lack of broader strategic planning: The lack of an overarching strategic planning document or concept note setting out the main functions of the RGA structure lead to a lack of clarity as to the role of both individual RGAs and the structure as a whole.

¹⁰ The issue with these indicators is that what is meant by “meaningful” participation is not clear and does not provide an adequate measure of the results statement. These examples were selected from the End of Year Report of WARO for 2016, but are generic examples evidenced by all End of Year Reports.

Systematic exchange of experiences: The lack of conceptual clarity about the main purpose of the RGA structure has impacted its potential as a network. Regular communication between the RGA structure and the WRGS facilitated the exchanges of experiences between the RGAs, but these exchanges were ad hoc rather than constituting a systematic transfer of knowledge from one region to another.

Contractual arrangements: The contractual arrangements (consultants, general temporary assistance (GTA), and fixed contracts) and sources of funding (earmarked and extra budgetary funding) for these positions differed between ROs and evolved over time. A common thread is the instability of the funding situation.

The RGA positions in ROCA and WARO moved from consultancy positions (2009 -2013) to GTA positions (2014 to present) covered by extra budgetary funding. The RGA position in EARO started in 2016 as a temporary position covered with earmarked funding with a two-year grant from the Government of Finland. The RGA position in ROMENA was also covered by earmarked funding from Finland from 2009 until March 2016, when it became a regular position covered by extra budgetary funding. The WRGS bore the financial responsibility for the posts and activities, with some support for activities from FOTCD.

The contractual arrangements and the sources of funding impacted the posts' stability. The positions covered with earmarked funding were only covered for the duration of the contract with the specific donor. In principle, the RGA position in EARO was only covered until the end of 2017. The two GTAs (ROCA and WARO) positions were the least stable. GTA positions provide an equivalent salary to regular staff, right to a pension, insurance and family benefits. GTAs, however, are temporary positions. PRPB must approve GTA positions on a yearly basis and the approval is based on budget projections. Thus, there is no guarantee that they will be renewed from one year to the next.

GTA positions also impacted the WRGS's allocation of funding for activities. Because GTAs are considered activities in the budget, when WRGS was asked to reduce its overall budget and respect its budget ceiling, the Section subsequently needed to reduce other activities in order to maintain these GTA positions. The WRGS negotiated to raise the Section's ceiling in the budget to maintain these GTA positions without reducing its core activities, but this could change again in the current context of budget restrictions.

Funding insecurity and contractual arrangements affected sustainability and programming in several ways:

- It brought uncertainty to planning processes and the stability of programming for gender work. It is challenging to carry out long term planning with partners without the certainty that GTA funding will be approved or that the donor will renew the contract.
- It affected the continuity of the work. For example, in ROCA, there were four different RGAs since 2011. As one respondent noted "we lose many people because of lack of stability." On-going work in WARO was disrupted when office files were

lost during the handover from one RGA to another, leading to significant knowledge gaps.

- It affected the sustainability of the RGA structure's work. Lack of sufficient funds jeopardized implementation and follow up of activities.

Funding for activities: Lack of funding was most often cited as a barrier to implementing activities. Almost all respondents highlighted that trainings did not reach enough people and needed to be followed up more thoroughly. Respondents noted that a lack of funds to travel limited on-going support to different actors at the national level, including UNCTs. Without specific budget allocation for travel and activities it was challenging for the RGA structure to plan its work.

Funding for activities was mainly covered by extra budgetary funding from WRGS or earmarked funding from donors. Exceptionally, some activities were covered by Regular Program of Technical Cooperation funds (a small percentage of activities in EARO) or covered by the ROs (e.g., the WHRDs annual meeting/training organized by ROMENA).

Focus on activities and events: The RGA structure tended to be pulled towards activities and events as opposed to taking a longer-term perspective on regional priorities and strategizing concerning how to make most effective use of limited time and resources given the regional challenges faced.

3.4 Impact¹¹

Overarching evaluation question: the extent to which the RGA structure is likely to make a significant contribution to broader, long-term, changes in both gender integration, support to rights holders claiming their rights, and gender equality; the extent to which RGA supports transformational change both within OHCHR and related to regional level results

The potential for the RGA structure to promote the rights of rights holders needs to be viewed in the context of its scale – essentially five staff members working on gender equality and women's rights issues for 70-80 per cent of their time, as opposed to the larger scale of the regional challenges. What the RGA structure can achieve in terms of longer-term changes, no matter how strategic it is, needs to be seen in this context. Nevertheless, the RGA structure has likely contributed, through strategic choice of programming, to removal of the structural causes of gender inequality and discrimination against women, promoted women's rights over the longer term, and fed into transformational change. Nonetheless, impact could likely have been stronger if the RGA

¹¹ EQ 17 on contributions to the Gender Strategy (2014-2017) Expected Accomplishments has already been covered in Section 3.2 under effectiveness, in particular Table 1. EQ 18 on what can be replicated from the RGA structure for OHCHR as a whole is answered in Section 4 on lessons learned.

structure had a sounder conceptual basis and RGAs were focused at a higher strategic level with the benefit of secure funding.

Coverage of impact in this evaluation also includes transformational changes within OHCHR as a result of the RGA structure. As noted in Section 2.3 on methodology, the evaluation team asked internal stakeholders about any changes in power relations and hierarchies that the RGA structure brought about, given that these hierarchies have been linked to weakened performance on gender integration (e.g. by the 2010 OHCHR gender evaluation, and many other evaluations and reviews in the UN system).

Some of the work of the RGA structure covered organizational culture aspects of Global Management Output 3 in the OHCHR Management Plan (2014-2017), including briefing staff on the Gender Strategy (2014-2017) and working on gender parity in staffing. However, this was not a major function of the RGA structure, and there appeared to be no intention that the RGA structure would challenge existing hierarchies.

The evaluation team were provided with a few examples of changes in organizational culture. In ROCA and WARO, the RGA structure conducted internal trainings to sensitize staff about gender issues, which enabled staff to bring forward gender issues to management, concerning maternity leave and other entitlements. The RGA structure in EARO supported OHCHR in Uganda to develop an office gender strategy, which has resulted in some organizational culture changes. OHCHR Uganda allocated a dedicated room for lactating mothers and allocated a budget to furnish the room. However, the evaluation team concludes that overall the introduction of the RGA structure has not made significant or transformational changes within the Office.

EQ 14 – What have been the relevance of the RGA structure to the situation and the needs of the duty-bearers and right-holders in the regions covered in the areas of women’s human rights and gender equality?

Part of this question has already been covered under relevance; this section covers specifically duty-bearers and rights holders. The evaluation team concludes that the RGA structure has been relevant to both duty-bearers and rights-holders. For example, the RGA structure in ROCA has been a significant advocate for minority rights and there has also been important work carried out on SRHR. There was a good balance overall between support to duty-bearers and rights-holders, with the latter mainly through work with CSOs. This support has led to challenges to the underlying causes of gender inequality and lack of access to rights, and if maintained over the longer term (at least another 10 years) has the potential to be transformational. For example, ROCA’s work on the Model Protocol on femicide has the potential to reduce violence against women, and WARO’s work with Parliamentarians could also lead to long-term changes in national budgeting.

In EARO and ROMENA, the support provided by the RGA structure to both duty-bearers and rights-holders is likely to result in laws and policies that comply with anti-discrimination and equality standards. Additionally, there is a plausible assumption that the

support provided in both ROs to WHRDs will lead to women increasingly claiming their rights and strengthening their protection.

The RGA structure does not appear to have adapted its focus in relation to the SDG principles of leaving no-one behind and supporting the rights of those left furthest behind first. Given that those left furthest behind are likely to face multiple forms of discrimination – in particular gender, socio-economics, disability, and ethnicity – the SDG agenda offers an opportunity for the RGA structure to tie directly to this agenda and strengthen its work on inter-sectionality (see DESA 2016).

EQ 15 – What has been the contribution of the RGA structure to the achievement of the results of OHCHR thematic priorities, global management outputs, regional and country notes?

The RGA structure contributed to all the Office wide thematic strategies in the Office Management Plan except ***strengthening the effectiveness of international human rights mechanisms and the progressive development of international human rights law and standards***. The strategic interventions under this thematic strategy are focussed on integrating gender in the work on human rights mechanisms and ensuring connections among them, which seems to mainly have been done from HQ.

An important part of the RGAs work focused on ***enhancing equality and countering discrimination***. The RGA structure built the capacity of a wide range of partners, including governments, NHRIs and CSOs, on how to engage human rights mechanisms and use human rights standards to influence national legal frameworks. Advocacy work was also important to advance sexual and reproductive rights. ***Widening the Democratic Space*** was also a significant area of work. This included facilitating the participation of women Parliamentarians and capacity development for female candidates in elections, women's groups and WHRDs in regional and national processes to ensure that their voices were heard. The RGA structure also provided significant support to WHRDs networks in two ROs.

Under ***combating impunity and strengthening accountability and the rule of law***, the RGA structure developed relevant materials to enhance the capacity of judicial and other national stakeholders on the implementation of human rights standards related to women's rights and gender equality. The work with UN partners, such as the AU and ECOWAS in this area was also significant. Transitional justice mechanisms, deprivation of liberty and ESCRs were not a main focus of programming. Regarding the ***integration of human rights in development and in the economic sphere***, the RGA structure focused on collaborating with other UN agencies and UN country teams to integrate human rights standards related to gender and women's rights. The RGA structure did not develop a focus on natural resources. Finally, the work on ***early warning and protection of human rights in situations of conflict, violence and insecurity*** was not a major focus and mainly revolved around strengthening capacities of stakeholders on integration of human rights in relation to women, peace and security and inter-agency collaboration.

EQ 16 – Which tools have been used to measure impact?

As is common with much of the UN system, use of tools for measuring impact was one of the weaker elements of the RGA structure.¹² The need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems, for example in relation to follow up to reports and trainings, was covered in Section 3.2. While there was reporting against outputs in End of Year reports, and these outputs are nominally tied to higher level results linked to impact, it would be challenging to determine from this reporting what impact was achieved. ROMENA was the most consistent RO in terms of reporting, as narrative reports were required from the donor funding the RGA position.

Among the reasons for lack of attention to tools to measure impact are:

- A focus on multiple activities rather than a strategic overview.
- Lack of incentives for effective reporting, which was seen by respondents as an administrative chore with limited or no feedback from HQ.
- The need for greater capacity in the ROs, e.g. the ROs visited did not have specialist monitoring and evaluation officers which may have been able to support the RGA structure.

3.5 Sustainability

Overarching evaluation question: the degree to which the RGA architecture is sustainable given funding and organizational challenges, and whether results achieved are likely to be sustained over time.

As a baseline, the 2010 OHCHR gender evaluation found (p: 33): “On their own, the structures and mechanisms that OHCHR has developed, both in headquarters and in the field, to promote gender equality are insufficient to bring about sustainable change. This is largely because there is a need to foster change across OHCHR at the strategic level, rather than continuing to input into gender equality work at the lower (activity) level. Although work to-date on gender within OHCHR has brought about important successes this way of working is unlikely to enable or ensure that gender equality issues are adequately and sustainably addressed.” This Section addresses the question of progress since this evaluation report.

EQ 19 – Is the RGA structure as it stands today sustainable in terms of financial and human resources?

While the WRGS made considerable efforts to ensure the sustainability of the RGA structure, the evaluation team concludes that the RGA structure is not sustainable as it currently stands. As discussed in Section 3.3 on efficiency, the RGA structure was able to attract limited funding from external donors, and funding insecurity at OHCHR has affected the stability of posts. To ensure the long-term sustainability of the RGA structure,

¹² E.g. from recent gender evaluations, among many others: UN Women (2016); UNDP (2015); WFP (2015); and African Development Bank (2012).

OHCHR needs to make a strategic choice to prioritize the use of non-earmarked funds and commit longer-term resources to support this work.

EQ 20 – Are the results, achievements and benefits of the RGA structure on gender integration likely to be durable?

Capacity development made up a significant element of the RGA structure's work. It is also central to the Gender Equality Strategic Plan (2014-2017), and the UN's attempts to meet globally agreed goals including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and SDGs. One of the main purposes of capacity development is to foster sustainable regional and national institutions, which can promote the global development agenda, including human rights (UNDG 2017).

Overall the RGA structure capacity development initiatives were well received by participants, however the evaluation team found that these initiatives could have contributed more to institutional sustainability for counterpart organizations if they had developed long term strategies for building regional institutions and networks, and been organized around the capacity assessment and development cycle recommended by the UNDG. The cycle involves identifying the root causes of lack of capacity, and developing a capacity development plan based on a theory of change.¹³ Capacity development activities would also likely have been more sustainable if there had been stronger monitoring and evaluation of these activities.

Nevertheless, the support that the RGA structure provided to enhance the capacity of partners on gender was highly valued by a significant majority of external stakeholders. Capacity building was a key area of work of the RGA structure in all ROs. It mainly focused on strengthening the capacity of Parliamentarians, governments, judicial operators, NHRIs, NWM, CSOs and WHRDs to engage with human rights mechanisms in the application of a gender inclusive human rights based approach; human rights sensitive budgeting; and monitoring, documenting and investigating human rights violations.

The support provided by the RGA structure to NHRIs, CSOs and WHRDs strengthened the capacity of these actors to carry out gender-sensitive monitoring and documentation of cases. This support was particularly relevant in countries where the space for independent CSOs is limited and few organizations have the capacity to handle cases of female victims. For example, the trainings provided to the NHRIs and CSOs in East Africa enhanced the capacity of these actors to monitor and document human rights violations with a particular focus on gender. Respondents in these regions provided examples of how the trainings successfully impacted the collection and

¹³ (UNDG 2017: 13): "The CCA [Common Country Assessment] includes an assessment and analysis of the capacities of government and relevant stakeholders. It articulates the root causes of the lack of capacity, and explores broad approaches to developing capacities such as through South-South and triangular cooperation. The UNDAF strategic prioritization process enables the United Nations to identify those areas of capacity development where it can have a maximum impact in supporting the achievement of the SDGs. The paths to capacity development (that is, the explanations of why certain results and activities are believed to lead to increased capacity) are articulated in the theory of change, while the goals of capacity development actions (that is, measurable changes in capacity) are laid out in the UNDAF results framework." See also <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/321-capacity-development-.html>

handling of evidence, the inclusion of disaggregated data and the way they communicate with victims during investigations.

The case study from ROMENA in Box 2 also demonstrates the impact of these trainings on strengthening WHRD's skills to mainstream gender in their monitoring and documentation work.

OHCHR used its comparative advantage to build the capacity of government representatives and CSOs on how to engage with human rights mechanisms and how to use human rights standards to influence national legal frameworks.

The work of the RGA structure in this area demonstrated that national actors can be powerful allies to integrate women's rights standards in court rulings, legislation and national policies. A case in point is workshops organized by ROMENA on how to engage with CEDAW. All respondents interviewed during the mission to ROMENA provided evidence of how these capacity building exercises enabled them to influence the drafting of national laws on VAW and include a gender-based approach in national action plans and budgets.

The RGA structure also organized a large number of trainings and workshops at both regional and country levels, and participated in trainings and missions with their RO colleagues. This included training on gender integration in UNDAFs, for Parliamentarians, trainings on monitoring and documentation for NHRIs and CSOs, and organizing workshops on how to engage with CEDAW. These trainings were highly rated by over 80 per cent of participants, according to interviews and training and workshop evaluation forms. However, the evaluation team noted there was limited follow up after training exercises in terms of ensuring that the knowledge generated was effectively used by participants over the longer-term. Similarly, the evaluation team found that there could be more systematic follow-up relating to knowledge products through development of communication strategies for these products.

The case study from ROCA outlined in Box 5 illustrates how building the capacity of judicial operators has influenced the adoption of new legislation and guided the implementation of existing laws on violence against women. The case study from WARO outlined in Box 6 demonstrates how the RGA structure has strategically used staff time and resources to build the capacity of Parliamentarians in human rights sensitive budgeting and enhanced the participation of women in politics.

Box 5: The Latin American Model Protocol for Investigation of gender-related killings of women

“The foundation for the successful institutionalization of the Model Protocol is reflected in the fact that its purpose is practical; its content responds to an authentic demand from national institutions; and its participatory writing process involved judicial practitioners from throughout Latin America and beyond.”

Professor Rashida Manjoo, former Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences¹⁴

Relevance

The Model Protocol is a joint initiative of OHCHR and UN Women developed under the framework of the UN Secretary General's UNiTE Campaign to End Violence against Women. Following an initial drafting by OHCHR, the Protocol was validated in two regional consultations (in Central American and South America) with high-level judicial authorities. The Protocol was also validated through various national meetings in the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Panama and Ecuador. This created awareness about the gravity of the problem and the need for specialized training to deal with cases of femicide.

The RGA, in coordination with partners, also promoted the incorporation of the Protocol through several trainings. For example, the Public Ministries Training Schools in Panama, El Salvador and Costa Rica incorporated the study of the Protocol in their curricula. The Inter-American Commission for Women (CIM) and the Latin American Council on Social Sciences (CLACSO) included the Protocol in an on-line course that has been taken by 52 judicial actors from eight different countries in the region.

The protocol was turned into an online virtual course that was tested in August 2016 by 28 participants from across the region from the judiciary, public attorney offices, forensic specialists, psychologists and academics. Respondents and post-course survey data point to the high quality of the course material. The first online training took place in Argentina in March-April 2017.

There was overall consensus among respondents that the Protocol is a valuable resource given the region has the highest rate of femicide in the world, relative to population size. The case study illustrates how OHCHR can play to its comparative regional advantage by working on an area not systematically covered by any other agency.

Effectiveness

The Protocol provides guidance to judicial operators during the different phases of the investigation and the judicial process. It explains not only how to do the investigation, but also why it must be done differently. It clarifies the linkages between discrimination and the violent killing of women. According to external stakeholders, the Protocol has both influenced the adoption of new legislation and guided the implementation of existing laws on violence against women adopted in several countries (e.g. Panama, Honduras and El Salvador).

Respondents noted that the pilot trainings and presentations on the Protocol were “an eye opener” for staff working in the judicial system. It has raised awareness about discrimination against women and contributed to changing mentalities for both men and women.

¹⁴ Source: *Latin American Model Protocol for investigation of gender-related killings of women*, p. xi.

The Protocol has also impacted data collection systems. For example, in Panama, the State statistics system now includes femicide in its database. More generally, the Protocol has positioned the concept of femicide and the discrimination attached to it on the agenda of state representatives, civil society organizations, and the media.

Impact and sustainability

The Protocol highlights that even with limited resources, and mainly based on staff time, OHCHR is able to demonstrate significant results, providing evidence of the importance of the RGA position. Lack of funding, however, is a barrier to implementing the Protocol. Some respondents highlighted that the trainings have not reached enough people, which in some cases is aggravated by high turnover in state institutions. A further lesson for OHCHR is the importance of establishing monitoring and evaluation from an early stage to track results, for example systematically following up with institutions to assess the use of the course material in their organizations – something currently being considered by ROCA.

Lessons learned

The wide range of partners and practitioners consulted in different phases of development of the Protocol, from drafting to implementation, has been a key factor in its success. Judges, prosecutors, lawyers, forensic specialists, representatives of police institutions, academics and civil society organizations have participated in meetings and consultations to develop the Protocol. This is a lesson learned for OHCHR as a whole in terms of the need to undertake an inclusive, participatory process as the Model Protocol provides evidence that such a process leads to an improved and widely accepted product.

Another lesson learned is the need to contextualize trainings for relevant audiences and geographical settings. Testing the training on the Protocol through several pilots has ensured that the methodology and content is particularly relevant to judicial operators in Latin America. Another lesson for OHCHR is the need to make trainings more widely accessible. Having online trainings can lower the cost and make it more feasible for stakeholders to participate.

A further lesson is that the sustainability of OHCHR's capacity development initiatives needs to be considered from their initiation, particularly given RGA funding challenges, for example in the case of the Protocol whether there are regional institutions that could house the on-line training.

Box 6: West Africa Regional Office and capacity development for Parliamentarians

Background

WARO has consistently worked on capacity development for Parliamentarians in the region since 2012. The work has followed two interconnected streams. The first has been work on gender-sensitive budgets, focusing on the integration of human rights and gender issues into legislative and budgetary procedures. The second stream has revolved around

strengthening the capacity of Parliamentarians and civil society in general to increase the focus on gender and human rights and the numbers of women being elected to national Parliaments.

Relevance

Both of the work streams are highly relevant to regional priorities and OHCHR strategic planning. There is significant support for the work streams from both current women Parliamentarians as well as regional civil society organisations. It also feeds directly into the planned RO Thematic Expected Accomplishment: “Increased participation of rights-holders, including women and discriminated groups, in public life at the national and local levels.” Strategically the interaction with Parliamentarians has been an effective and efficient use of RGA structure time and resources.

Effectiveness

The work on human rights and gender-sensitive budgets began in Senegal with a workshop for women Parliamentarians co-organized by the Senegalese legislature and WARO in October 2012. This led to the development of the *Guide des Parlementaires sure les droits de l’homme, genre et budget* which provides guidance on integrating human rights and gender into national budget processes. According to all stakeholders interviewed, the process before and after the development of the Guide as well as the Guide itself has effectively strengthened the capacity of parliamentarians in Senegal and increased the focus on universality and Indivisibility, equality and non-discrimination, participation and the inclusion of marginalized groups in the legislative and budgetary processes. Subsequently the RGA structure organized a workshop in January 2017 to promote regional gender and human rights sensitive budgeting, and the information in that workshop has already been used by Parliamentarians in one regional country to revise its national budget. OHCHR plans to develop a guide for the whole region based on this workshop and experiences in Senegal.

Similarly, according to respondents and OHCHR reporting, the project in Burkina Faso in collaboration with Oxfam on monitoring women’s rights during the elections effectively provided support to women’s organizations and coalitions related to their participation in the combined legislative and presidential elections in November 2015. Subsequently a successful regional workshop on the theme of Gender, Human Rights and Participation in Elections in West and Central Africa was held in May 2016 jointly organized by OHCHR and ECOWAS. The workshop included over 40 participants - including former women Presidential candidates, Electoral Management Bodies, NHRIs and CSOs - from 15 countries that had recently organized or were preparing for elections in 2017 and 2018. All respondents interviewed noted the effectiveness of the workshop in particular the exchange information about country-level specifics on gender and elections and the opportunities to network.

Lessons learned

Working to OHCHR’s comparative advantage. For example, in the case of gender and human rights sensitive budgets, OHCHR added the element of human rights to budget

analysis building on work UN Women has carried out over several years on gender-sensitive budgeting at the national level.

Maintaining a focus on gender equality as well as women's rights. There is a tendency to equate women with gender in programming; men have participated in RGA structure workshops and events, however these events have tended to focus on women.

Focusing on events and publications as opposed to processes. There is a tendency to focus on organizing events such as workshops, with less focus for example on maintaining networks created during these events. This is perhaps a consequence of the limited duration of individual RGAs in the RO which has hindered continuity, staff turnover in partner organizations, and limited resources (see Section 3.3).

3.5.1 Counterfactual evidence

There is some evidence, from previous OHCHR evaluations, and interviews from this evaluation, to support the argument that ROs can make significant contributions to gender equality and women's rights without the presence of an RGA, given outstanding senior manager leadership and adequate RO staffing, funding and resources.

The 2010 OHCHR gender evaluation found, referring to the period prior to the placement of the RGA in ROMENA (Annex 7: 83):

The RO has demonstrated a consistent commitment to gender equality issues over the evaluation period. The Regional Representative played a strong role in advocating women's human rights issues with partner organizations and he actively promoted gender parity among office staff. Staff were aware that there was strong commitment to the issue by the Office. The principle of gender equality was highly valued by the staff and women's human rights issues were readily addressed and integrated into their work.

The evaluation report includes a number of examples of successful work on gender equality and women's rights from the Middle East (e.g. p. 24).

Similarly, the evaluation of OHCHR's (2014) Central Asia Regional Office found (p. 40):

The publication of a report on the discrimination and violence suffered by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) people in Kyrgyzstan by Human Rights Watch (HRW) in February 2014 had sparked a vigorous political debate on sexual orientation and numerous homophobic statements by some leading Kyrgyz politicians [...] Most of those interviewed who knew about this described the intervention as extremely helpful. ROCA [Regional Office for Central Asia] did take proactive measures to mainstream gender equality into all of its work. Its planned activities challenged discrimination against women and violations of women's human rights.

Another reference point is the work on gender developed by the RO for South-East Asia in Bangkok. Following a gender assessment conducted by the Representative in 2013, the office developed, with the support of WRGS, its own strategy on gender integration. The strategy addresses a wide range of issues, including: capacity building for staff; gender sensitive recruitment; integrating gender in work plans; gender in the work place; and integrating LGBTI rights in the work of the office. To implement the strategy, the RO established a gender unit coordinated by the gender focal point composed of the Representative, the Deputy Representative, and a national staff member.

The implementation of the strategy facilitated positive results in relation to gender integration. Regarding capacity building, in addition to online trainings, the staff also received trainings from UN Women, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on gender related topics, including in relation to persons identifying as LGBTI. The RO established a WHRD fellowship for four women annually from minority groups to come to the RO and work for several months, funded by Sweden. The office is also conducting a regional study looking at patterns of sexual and gender based violence in the region and developing a communication strategy to integrate gender in their messages. It also facilitated improvement in gender parity in staffing, including having more male staff to carry out administrative tasks.

The size of the RO has been an important factor on progressive work promoting gender equality and women's rights. In 2017 the RO had 17 staff and is planned to increase to 20 staff in 2018. This is significantly larger than the ROs where RGAs are currently located, and has enabled greater integration in the South-East Asia RO.

While in some circumstances ROs were able to carry out effective work on gender integration without an RGA, in most cases ROs do not have adequate dedicated capacity without specialized staff.

EQ 21 – Are the internal stakeholders in the ROs willing and committed to continue work on the issues of women rights and gender integration addressed by the RGA structure?

EQ 22 – Are the internal stakeholders able to continue working women's rights and gender equality? How effectively has the RGA structure contributed to build necessary capacity, including knowledge, tools, guidance and availability of resources?

All respondents agreed that without the RGA structure ROs would not be able to carry out the current level of activities related to gender. An alternative option of integrating gender throughout the work of other RO staff was considered by internal stakeholders to be unrealistic – they considered they could not become gender experts or provide the level of input of an RGA. The case for continuing the RGA structure according to all OHCHR stakeholders is its added value and current lack of capacity of other RO staff.

In relation to whether general staff can do gender related work, the OHCHR 2010 gender evaluation (p. 26) found: “The mystification of specific “gender expertise” which is seen as being located within the WRGU or gender advisors seems to be acting as a barrier which needs to be overcome if staff are expected to address gender as part of their routine work. This clearly has an impact on the ability of OHCHR staff to apply gender equality concepts to their work at all stages of their work cycle (e.g. design, implementation, monitoring, etc.). It also often means that where staff do apply gender equality concepts, this is done as a result of individual interest and skill rather than an institutional framework which supports this work.” The evaluation team came to similar conclusions based on RO missions where they found that a negative consequence of having a RGA structure is that staff may leave gender integration to the “expert”.

Over the long-term, OHCHR’s plan is to develop the capacity of all staff so that they are capable of integrating gender into their work, as set out in the Office Management Plan (2014-2017) in relation to Global Management Output 3: “100 per cent of OHCHR staff, irrespective of their grade, job function and duty station, will be equipped with basic knowledge and the tools to integrate a gender perspective in their daily work.” OHCHR UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) reporting for 2016 notes under capacity development that 92 per cent of staff had completed the online course “Gender equality, human rights and me”, with a 100 per cent completion rate planned for 2017.

As this is an evaluation of the RGA structure as opposed to the Gender Equality Strategic Plan (2014-2017) it is not possible to state where current capacity for gender integration; nevertheless, there are still likely to be significant staff capacity gaps vis-à-vis gender programming.

The balance between specialized staff and gender integration by general staff is one that has challenged the entire UN system over the last decade, and UN entities have experimented with a variety of mechanisms. One conclusion of these experiments is that where gender focal points are empowered at a senior level, and well-resourced, work on gender programming improves. However, the current model in the UN system, (promoted by the UN-SWAP), is that all staff have adequate expertise in gender as part of their everyday work, as noted in the OHCHR GMO 3. The exact make-up of technical and organizational support needed once expertise is widespread needs to be made on a case by case basis dependent on the mandate of UN entities. However, it is clear from global UN-SWAP reporting (ECOSOC 2017) that no entities in the UN system can currently meet their gender-related mandates without specialist gender staff.

The evaluation team found that at present it would not be not feasible for the ROs to sustain the same level of commitment to, and programming on, gender without the RGA structure. This is not only related to levels of expertise and commitment but also to a shortage in staffing, and resource limitations. In an understaffed office, it would be difficult to add gender responsibilities to the work of staff fully engaged with other responsibilities. In this report’s conclusions and recommendations, we expand on this finding in relation to determining the optimal balance in relation to the RGA structure’s work.

4. Lessons learned¹⁵

Senior management leadership - The experience of the RGA structure mirrors that of most gender-related initiatives in the UN. Senior managers at RO level have for the most part supported and facilitated the work of the RGA structure, without which achieving results would have been much more challenging.

Strategic planning - OHCHR thematic initiatives that are rolled out to regional level need to be based on a sound conceptual framework preferably with a theory of change or equivalent from their inception. Effective strategic planning does not require additional resources, but rather a different way of doing business. The implications of not carrying out effective strategic planning are: confusion about the purpose of programming; a decrease in efficiency; and lost opportunities. Similarly, staff at RO level need to carry out effective strategic planning and retain a long-term perspective rather than being continually caught up in the logistics of everyday work.

Regionalization - ROs which are closer to and can support regional and country level initiatives can be highly effective, and there are strong arguments for having specialized staff located in ROs. When working on rights issues there is no substitute for a thorough understanding of the socio-political and cultural contexts.

Support from HQ - Networking of RO thematic staff requires consistent and strategic support from HQ to adapt global learning for regional contexts, and to achieve necessary economies of scale in knowledge transfer between regions.

Gender, women's rights, and inter-sectionality - The decision as to where to focus the RGA structure's work on gender equality and women's rights is complex but needs to be clearly articulated so that staff are aware of how to develop programming. If this is not done the challenges OHCHR faced in 2009, as evidenced in its 2010 gender equality evaluation (such as conflating work on gender equality with targeting women) will not be resolved.

Partnerships - A focus on integrating a human rights-based approach in partner organizations, for example through work within UN Regional Theme Groups, in national governments through work with Parliamentarians, and with CSOs, can be a highly effective and strategic use of RO staff time. Partnerships were critical to documenting, monitoring and investigating cases of gender-based violence and feeding this information to regional and international human rights mechanisms.

Advocacy - In situations where rights are consistently denied, the role of OHCHR as a public advocate cannot be under-estimated. There is an expectation that OHCHR will speak out on gender equality and women's rights issues. It is disappointing when this does not happen. OHCHR has a key role to play in supporting civil society, in particular in

¹⁵ This Section responds to EQ 18: What can be replicated from the RGA structure in increasing OHCHR's efficiency on the ground by deploying thematic expertise?

contexts where rights are challenged. Using existing regional frameworks and institutions provides OHCHR with an entry point to raise politically sensitive issues at national level.

OHCHR's convening power - OHCHR has a unique role to play in convening human rights institutions at the regional level. Undertaking inclusive, participatory processes, while more time consuming and costly in staff time, leads to improved results.

Capacity development - A thorough planning process ensures the relevance of capacity-development initiatives to specific audiences, and contextualizing trainings to particular audiences and geographical settings is central to ensure their relevance. Capacity development needs to follow a regular cycle of capacity assessment, planning and implementation. If this is not done it is challenging to determine if the right kinds of capacity are being developed in the most effective ways. The sustainability of capacity development initiatives needs to be considered from their inception.

Continuity and contingency planning - Human rights work needs a long-term planning horizon, which is often challenging given short-term budget planning by donors and OHCHR itself. Continuity of work over several years facilitates effective results, and conversely lack of continuity can have negative impacts. During periods of unstable funding and short-term staff contracts it is essential to develop contingency plans to ensure continuity.

5. Conclusions

Overview

The RGA structure was a highly effective mechanism for achieving regional level results, despite funding and staffing challenges. The vast majority of outputs as stated in WRGS and RO work plans were achieved, and respondents noted the importance of having a dedicated staff member working on gender issues in the ROs. OHCHR's advocacy and convening roles were particularly valued by partners. Considerable good practice was achieved in each of the ROs visited, highlighted in Boxes throughout this report:

- The Model Protocol on femicide led by the Regional Office for Central America was an outstanding and innovative initiative.
- Consistent support over several years to Women Human Rights Defenders led by the Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa significantly improved the capacity of Defenders.
- The West Africa Regional Office effectively supported the capacity of women Parliamentarians and civil society to contribute to Parliamentary processes vis-à-vis human rights.
- Systematic and well researched input by the East Africa Regional Office into the African Union report on women's rights in Africa has the potential to shape national and regional policy.

While there was significant support for the RGA structure from senior managers at RO level, OHCHR did not prioritize the provision of secure funding for the structure. The first priority of most OHCHR respondents was that the RGA positions be regularized. Without regular funding, the RGA structure has had to struggle in terms of continuity of staffing and this has had an impact on results achieved.

The evaluation team found no overarching strategic planning document or concept note initiating the RGA structure. Rather the RGA structure was initiated as a pilot during a Senior Management Team meeting and a request for funding with the intention of “integrating gender into the work of the ROs”; what was meant by this term was not fully clarified. A Terms of Reference was developed for the RGA position, however, these were broad and have not provided adequate clarity in terms of overall planning of the RGAs’ work. Overall the originating planning document for the RGA structure did not provide adequate direction concerning the purpose of the structure, or the nature of the pilot, although strategic planning has improved over time. To place this finding in context, it is not uncommon for programmes and policies in the UN system to be developed without an explicit theory of change.

The lack of overarching strategic direction had implications for the operation of the structure, and led to a lack of clarity as to the role of both individual RGAs and the structure as a whole. These include: the ways in which the RGA structure was to function; what results the structure as a structure should be achieving; the extent to which RGAs should be prioritizing “integration in the work of the office” as opposed to substantive programming specifically designed and implemented by the RGAs; and whether the RO or WRGS work plan should mainly guide the work of the RGAs.

Relevance

There was effective strategic prioritization in relation to the results of the Gender Equality Strategic Plan (2014-2017) at both HQ and RO levels, which has played to the comparative advantage of the RGA structure and regional priorities. Strategic planning for the RGA structure also improved over time. Technical expertise provided by the RGA structure contributed substantially to improved gender integration in RO activities at the regional and country levels, but this was not done in a systematic fashion

The RGA structure’s role as an advocate – speaking out where others, including other UN agencies did not do so – was considered highly relevant by respondents – a point also made in the OIOS (2017) evaluation of OHCHR. This was particularly evident in areas such as abortion, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and rights of people identifying as LGBTI. Advocacy is an area where having a dedicated staff member in the ROs has significantly enhanced the quality of engagement, including with CSOs.

The RGA structure also used the unique convening power of the UN to bring together Parliamentarians and civil society and human rights defenders from across the regions. The OIOS (2017) evaluation of OHCHR also noted the importance of OHCHR’s convening role. The effective interchange and dialogue during regional level meetings

demonstrated a relevant strategy, although maintaining the networks created was not sufficiently emphasized in some situations.

The RGA structure brought some clarity to what gender integration means in the regional context, but challenges remain, for example clarifying the connections between working on women's rights and gender equality, and more fully considering inter-sectionality in the context of the SDGs.

Effectiveness

The RGA structure was highly effective in achieving planned results, with a significant majority of outputs in 2015 and 2016 RO work plans achieved as planned, or on track to be achieved. The OIOS (2017) evaluation found a similar level of performance for the Office as a whole.

In some cases, the RGA structure effectively built or used regional networks, e.g. for WHRDs in the Middle East and North Africa. In others, the RGA structure missed opportunities to build and work through existing networks, for example through follow up to its work with Parliamentarians in West Africa, or through the Model Protocol in Latin America. Although networks were not always built or sustained, OHCHR's convening role was strategically used to create dialogue among different stakeholders at regional and national levels. Many respondents noted that learning from experiences in other countries helped them identify gaps and improve the understanding of national needs in comparative perspective. The issue therefore was not the networking/training event itself, but sustaining and building on the networks created.

The RGA structure's work led to increased and more systematic engagement with regional and national actors, which contributed to strengthening gender in regional and national agendas, e.g. working with the African Union in EARO and ECOWAS in WARO. The RGA structure enhanced cooperation in the area of women, peace and security in WARO, EARO and ROMENA, and significantly advanced OHCHR's work on sexual and reproductive rights in ROCA and EARO.

The technical assistance provided by the RGA structure in ROCA and ROMENA strengthened the capacities of OHCHR field presences and UNCTs to integrate gender and engage with human rights mechanisms, and enhanced the capacity of inter-agency regional theme group's agencies to mainstream a gender inclusive human rights-based approach in inter-agency work. The OIOS (2017) evaluation came to similar conclusions about OHCHR as a whole.

Efficiency

Within the context of very limited financial resources, the RGA structure used resources effectively to achieve planned results, and overall the results achieved justify the invested resources. Effective support was provided by WRGS at HQ on an ongoing basis. There are two caveats:

- Many of the outputs stated in work plans are not robust results statements, making efficiency more difficult to assess.

- While RGAs working in individual ROs have largely used funds efficiently, the lack of clarity as to the main purpose of the RGA structure has hindered greater efficiency of the structure as a whole.

Because of a lack of clear conceptual direction, the RGA structure has not as yet become larger than the sum of its parts, and has therefore not achieved the efficiencies that would be expected from a network. The RGAs tended to be involved in a wide range of activities, and in some cases, were reactive rather than basing their work plan on a clear though out strategy.

Impact

The RGA structure contributed to all the appropriate Office wide thematic strategies in the OMP (2014-2017). It likely contributed, through strategic choice of programming, to removal of the structural causes of gender inequality and discrimination against women, promoted women's rights over the longer term, and fed into transformational change. In terms of internal organizational culture, the introduction of the RGA structure has not made significant or transformational changes within the Office.

The RGA structure has been highly relevant to both duty-bearers and rights-holders, and has tailored its activities to the regional contexts to support appropriate counterparts. As is common with much of the UN system, use of tools for measuring impact was one of the weaker elements of the RGA structure.

Sustainability

Overall the RGA structure capacity development initiatives were well received by participants, however these initiatives could have contributed more to institutional sustainability for counterpart organizations if they had developed long term strategies for building regional institutions and networks, and been organized around the capacity assessment and development cycle recommended by the UNDG. The OIOS (2017) evaluation of OHCHR similarly found that follow-up is an organization-wide issue, e.g. to recommendations from the UPR, treaty bodies and special procedures.

There is some evidence to support the argument that, given outstanding senior manager leadership and adequate RO staffing, funding and resources, ROs can make significant contributions to gender equality and women's rights without the presence of an RGA. Finding the right balance between specialized staff and gender integration by general staff is one that has challenged the entire UN system over the last decade. Currently there are no entities in the UN system that could meet their gender-related mandates without specialist gender staff.

It would not be feasible for the ROs to sustain the same level of commitment to, and programming on, gender without the RGA structure. This is not only related to levels of expertise and commitment, but also to a shortage in staffing and resource limitations in ROs.

6. Recommendations

1. Retain current RGAs and post RGAs in all other Regional Offices

Given minimal differences between funding for GTA and regular posts, all RGA posts should be regularized. Given the proven value added of the RGA structure the posts should be extended to all ROs.

2. Strategic planning for the RGA structure

A four-year planning framework should be developed for the RGA structure as follows:

i. The planning framework should include the results that the RGA structure as a coherent structure plans to deliver in promoting gender equality and women's human rights. The results in the framework should be at a high level and be directly connected to the main thematic priorities of the next OHCHR strategic plan. These results should have corresponding measurable indicators. That is, the structure should have its own logical framework or equivalent. As well as being essential for planning purposes this is also necessary for fund-raising, as it is a minimum requirement of donors, and hence is also key to the future sustainability of the structure (see recommendation 5). For example, taking a Thematic Priority from the current OMP, the planning framework for the RGA structure would look as follows:

Office Thematic Priority	RGA structure result	Indicator
Widening the democratic space	30 civil society organizations enabled to undertake effective advocacy work on gender equality	Number of civil society organizations whose capacity is adequately built

The planning framework will not require a significant shift in current plans of the RGA structure, or a delinking from RO planning, but rather establish what the structure plans to achieve as a structure.

ii. The planning framework should include a rationale of how its results have been prioritized, taking into account the mandate of the Office, the Gender Equality Policy and Strategic Plan, and regional differences.

iii. The planning framework should set out how the structure will operate. The RGA structure should be renamed, and operate as, a network, using the results in the planning framework as a basis for the network. To operate as a network the current structure should increase its focus on: achieving network-level results (as in the table above); inter-regional learning, including cross-regional missions where RGAs visit ROs other than their own; and joint programming by several regions where there is commonality in programming, e.g. advocacy, work on Women Human Rights Defenders, SRHR and LGBTI rights. Current monthly conference

calls should include an increased focus on transferring programming experience between regions.

iv. WRGS should establish and maintain a shared drive with documents accessible to WRGS and RGAs for knowledge sharing purposes, which is a working repository of RGA structure documentation. The focus on the knowledge hub should be on disseminating relevant information between ROs.

v. The planning framework should set out the frequency and type of communication between WRGS and Regional Representatives. It is recommended that at a minimum a conference call takes place every six months between WRGS, each Regional Representative and the corresponding RGA, to discuss progress against the planning framework, alignment with RO priorities, and logistics such as contingencies for staff turnover.

vi. The planning framework should be developed by the end of 2017, at a joint meeting of WRGS, Regional Representatives, RGAs, FOTCD, PPMES and EOS Donor and External Relations Section, based on an initial draft to be produced by WRGS.

vi. The planning framework should be an OHCHR wide framework with clear accountability for results as part of regular OHCHR accountability mechanisms.

3. Strategic planning for individual RGAs

Based on the planning framework, an updated Terms of Reference should be developed for individual RGAs, and reviewed during the gender architecture Annual Meetings to assess their relevance on an annual basis, including the following:

- the importance of maintaining a focus on strategic areas of importance outlined in the planning framework;
- the connections between work on gender equality and women's rights; it is recommended that WRGS develop a short note on these connections to guide the work of the RGAs and the Office as whole;
- the role of RGAs in relation to work on LGBTI issues; it is recommended that WRGS develop a short note on this area to guide the work of the RGAs;
- it is recommended that RGAs develop and support networks of gender focal points in OHCHR field presences in relation to knowledge exchange;
- the ways in which the RGA structure will support organizational change for a more gender-sensitive Office; it is recommended that that RGAs carry out an annual training for RO staff on the *Gender Equality Strategic Plan*, and organize one other annual event for RO staff, e.g. on unconscious bias.
- the optimal balance between integration of gender into the work of the ROs and support to colleagues in the RO, and substantive programming on women's rights run mainly by RGAs; it is recommended that RGAs spend approximately 30 per cent of their time on integration of gender into the work of the office, and 50 per cent on substantive programming which they mainly run.

- the optimal balance for RGAs between work on gender equality and women's rights, and general work of the RO; it is recommended that no more than 20 per cent of an RGA's time should be dedicated to general work of the Office.

4. Capacity development and building and supporting networks

Ensure that capacity development initiatives follow a cycle of capacity assessment, planning, implementation and follow up, as recommended by the UNDG. The sustainability of capacity development initiatives should be considered from their inception, including the long-term institutionalization of initiatives.

The RGA structure should establish a monitoring system for capacity building that measures both the immediate reaction of trainees to the training event, and follow-up after six months with a questionnaire and/or direct contact to determine the extent to which the trainees have used the training material in their organizations. The Methodology, Education and Training Section should develop a standard format for this monitoring system, based on the Kirkpatrick model of assessing training.

Carry out an assessment in each region of current regional networks, and determine if these are adequate for supporting and ensuring the sustainability of RGA structure initiatives. Based on this assessment, develop plans for building and supporting networks to promote long-term sustainability of work on gender equality and women's rights.

5. Fundraising

EOS Donor and External Relations Section, WRGS, FOTCD and Regional Representatives should develop a joint fund-raising initiative to be sent to donors for the RGA network as a whole. The initiative should be based around the planning framework which will direct the RGA network over the next four years (recommendation 2). OHCHR should make clear in this joint fund-raising initiative how the RGA network as a whole will deliver results by working effectively as a structure, and how funding will be used to deliver results effectively and efficiently over a five-year period, based on the findings in this evaluation. That is, the joint fund-raising initiative should focus less on funding for individual RGA positions and more on the combined results of the RGA network in terms of promoting gender equality and women's rights. This joint fundraising does not preclude other fundraising such as by Regional Representatives.

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Note: References for individual missions can be found in the internal mission reports. Internal monitoring reports and reports to donors are not included in this list.

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