



Gender focal Points (GFPs) are change agents who have been designated within an institution or organization to monitor and stimulate greater consideration of gender equality issues in daily operations. This document gives an overview of the profile and functions of a GFP, and offers a guide on how to write the Terms of Reference of a GFP in your organization.

The role of a Gender Focal Point

Profile

- A GFP is a staff member who is responsible for facilitating the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality issues in the activities of his or hers working unit.
- The GFP can be a male or a female staff member. Care should be taken not to automatically assign this task to female staff members.
- The time devoted by the GFP to this function should be duly reflected in the latter's job description and objectives and the assignment is included in the official's staff performance appraisal report.
- GFP's are part of a broader network. The network (internal or external), as a team, contributes to the promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities for women and men throughout an organization or institution. It is good practice to organize regular meetings of the network to share experiences and learned lessons.
- GFP networks have proven to be effective when they are part of a systematic and well-resourced strategy to operationalize a gender mainstreaming policy. In other words, they can be effective if they are truly considered and enabled to work as "change agents".

Role

Although the role of GFPs varies from one country and one organization to another, some of the tasks are common to most of them, including the following:

- Contribute in identifying partner organizations representing women's interests related to the different technical areas of interest. Solicit gender-balanced participation of the experts deployed for the organization's activities;
- Collect relevant information, documentation, good practices, in collaboration with the Gender Network;



- Disseminate (design) gender-sensitive project materials and/ or assist colleagues in the delegation to gender-screen existing projects (to eliminate stereotypes, introduce gender analysis elements where necessary, add gender-balanced information);
- Provide briefing/training to other staff to update information and knowledge on gender equality issues;
- Assure that women and gender issues are correctly taken into account in strategy design, programming and implementing.
- A GFP supports the process of gender mainstreaming, but this **is a shared responsibility** in the whole organization. A successful gender mainstreaming process makes sure that gender equality becomes part of the “DNA” of an organization. This means first of all that the leadership must consistently lead and support the mainstreaming effort. Secondly, *“systems of accountability and incentives must have enough “bite” so staff cannot evade responsibility for delivering gender equality results”* (African Development Bank, 2011). Furthermore, there is a need for sufficient resources to support the process, as well as sufficient trained senior staff to gain traction over an organisation. Finally, a consistent approach to recording results and disseminating lessons is crucial (African Development Bank, 2011).
- A GFP is not intended to serve as a substitute for a full time institutional gender specialist. Rather the role of a GFP is often more one of advocacy and facilitating communication and connections related to gender equality and women’s empowerment. At times, depending upon his or her background a GFP may, however, be called upon to provide gender expertise. If the GFP does not have this expertise, his or her role could be to assist colleagues and development partners to identify potential national or international consultants or organizations that do have this expertise (ITC/ILO, 2013).

Challenges

Mainstreaming gender throughout an organization and its activities is often a challenging task. Advocating for change in the procedures and in an organization’s structure will usually meet some kind of resistance. The table below lists the types of resistant feelings that a GFP can encounter, and the factors on which he or she can or cannot have an influence.



**RESISTANT FEELINGS AND FACTORS
WHICH INFLUENCE ATTITUDES TOWARD A SPECIFIC CHANGE**

	Positive feelings towards change	Negative feelings towards change
Those factors the GFP can influence (to varying degrees)	Expectations for achieving personal aspirations confirmed	Specific apprehensions unanswered
	Past events supportive in favour of the change	Conflicts with cultural beliefs and norms
	Satisfaction with the manner of change	Past events prejudicial against the change
		Irritation with the manner of change
Those factors the GFP cannot influence	Sense of personal security	Predisposed apprehension about any sort of change
	Trust in management, union, work group	Inherent threat of specific change

Source: Adapted by NORAD, *Gender activities in MLME-NVE institutional cooperation program in Liberia, Annex 7q Unit 13* from Judson, A.J. (1991) *Changing Behaviour in Organisations: Minimising Resistance to Change*. Oxford: Blackwells Business.



Terms of Reference (ToR) for Gender Focal Points: examples

Example 1. Terms of Reference of Gender Focal Point in EU DEVCO¹

The document gives an overview of the profile and functions of GFP, as well as provides guidance on how to write Terms of Reference for GFP. The GFP functions should not be simply an additional burden to the official. It is important to counter-balance the function by corresponding autonomy and authority in order to avoid that the actions of GFP remain individual, isolated and become a source of frustration rather than a contribution to quality programmes and their implementation.

PROFILE FOR A GENDER FOCAL PERSON (GFP)

- Gender Focal Person is responsible for advising and coordinating all efforts and actions to implement the EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 (GAP II) in the activities of the EU Delegation/Unit/Directorate. GFP supports the process of gender mainstreaming, which is a shared responsibility of the whole EU.
- GFP can be a male or a female staff member. However, care should be taken to seek gender balances and not to automatically assign this task to female staff members on the mere basis that they are female.
- GFP should have technical capacity and sound knowledge of gender issues. In particular the GFP should :
 - Have knowledge of the EU (EC) policies and key documents enshrining gender equality and its role in development.
 - Have at least some personal commitment to gender equality.
 - Have knowledge of the available resources, methodologies and tools for planning, designing and implementing gender specific or sensitive actions.
 - Have knowledge of international, regional and national legal frameworks, policies as well as of existing gender equality mechanisms and coordination groups in the geographical area of competence.
 - Have knowledge of the gender equality situation in relevant country context.
 - Have knowledge of the PPCM and whole programming cycle of operations at the EC.
 - Be able to identify the most appropriate approach for gender equality mainstreaming
 - Be able to use “equal opportunity language” enhancing the visibility of and actively advertise for gender equality.
 - Knowledge on the critical allies and networks within the organization that can provide support for gender mainstreaming.

If nobody with these characteristics is available in the Unit/EUD, access to training will need prioritising, depending on individual capacity.

- A fully trained GFP should be able to
 - Have knowledge to identify discrimination based on gender and be able to explain this to others colleagues as trainer and advisor.
 - Be able to read and use sex-age disaggregated statistics, elaborate gender sensitive indicators and gender analysis.

¹ Adapted from: “Guidance Note on the EU Gender Action Plan for DEVCO HQ and EUD operational staff” (Unofficial document for internal use)



- Be able to support gender budgeting
- The Gender Focal Person should be senior enough (at least two year experience in the EU) to be able to be fully involved in relevant decisions making process in the EU Delegation/Unit/Directorate. Staff with high seniority should be encouraged to be appointed as GFP.
- The time devoted by the Gender Focal Person to his/her function has to be duly reflected in the job description to guarantee adequate allocation of working hours to the tasks (at least 40-60% time of a regular working week).
- He/she should be supported and have the backing of the hierarchy to carry out the job effectively. The assignment should be included in the official's staff performance appraisal report.
- The role of GFP may be rotated at reasonable intervals among the staff of the EU Delegation/Unit/Directorate, to ensure the largest possible exposure of staff members to the gender issues. This could be also reinforced by training sessions for each by EC.
- The Gender Focal Person should be part of a broader gender network (DG, inter DG, at regional level...), having a good practice attending regular meetings to share experiences and learned lessons.

DESCRIPTION OF FUNCTIONS OF A GENDER FOCAL PERSON (to be adapted according to the needs of the EC offices and the country context)

Under the direct supervision of the Head of the EU Delegation or Geographical and Thematic Directors in EC HQ, the Gender Focal Person has the mandate to undertake the following functions for coordinating all efforts and actions to implement the GAP II:

- Facilitate and assure that women's empowerment and gender equality are correctly taken into account in the programming, design, and implementation of overall Delegation/Unit/Directorate's activities.
- Organise information / dissemination sessions on the GAP II for colleagues and for networks such as gender coordination groups, thematic groups etc.
- Provide or coordinate elaboration or updating of the Gender Analysis (at country, sector or programme level).
- Assist and support colleagues in revising and updating relevant documents to better mainstream gender in line with priorities set by the EUD through the gender analysis.
- Follow relevant training activities and/or self-learning courses on gender when necessary to fulfil her/his role.
- Provide briefing/training to other staff to update information and knowledge on gender equality (i.e how to apply the gender equality screening lists, how to use properly the gender equality policy marker, etc...).
- Raise awareness on existing tools for non-gender sensitive sectors (i.e EC Toolkit on mainstreaming gender, EU Resource package on gender, capacity4dev.eu, etc...).
- Liaise with other Gender Focal Persons at the EC (EUD and HQ) to maintain an effective network for exchanging and sharing e experiences and to provide mutual support.
- Join existing, or explore opportunities to set up new, gender coordination mechanism at country level.
- Map EU and other donor's programmes on gender to identify most appropriate lead at country level.
- Maintain contact with CSO, women groups, European and global networks and collaborate in identifying partner organisations representing women's and gender equality interests related to the technical areas of interest of the Delegation/Unit/Directorate.



- Solicit a gender-balanced participation of experts used for the activities funded by the EC.
- Maintain a roster of gender-sensitised experts to call upon whenever needed for review, evaluation, etc... for all activities and not only gender techniques.

Example 2 – Gender Theme Group of the UN in Tajikistan

The following ToR's were developed by the Gender Theme Group of the United Nation in Tajikistan in 2008.

Appointment of Gender FP in UN (international agency) office is aimed at improved facilitation of implementation of an agency's gender strategy/action plan and activities related to incorporation of gender concerns into the CO's policy, programming and culture.

Gender FPs cannot be accountable for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in their organizations. Responsibility and accountability for gender mainstreaming rest with senior managers. They must have the commitment and competencies to lead. Staff appointed as Gender FPs should be on a regular posts, rather than short-term contracts, to create sustainability in knowledge and experience on gender equality. Diversity should be ensured by appointing more men as Gender FPs.¹

Suggested responsibilities and tasks:

Under a direct supervision of an agency's senior management and in close relations with Human Resources Unit, the Learning Manager and other respective staff, the Gender Focal Point will fulfill the following tasks and responsibilities:

- Serve as the office's Focal Point on gender mainstreaming issues, keep contacts with Gender Advisors and colleagues in a regional and HQ offices and ensure proper networking with respective colleagues in other offices/sub-offices. Making use of the Gender Networks;
- Ensure consultations and dissemination of the office's Gender Mainstreaming Strategy among the agency staff;
- Facilitate development of annual Action Plan for the office and its country programme to implement the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy;
- Monitor and report on implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy on a regular basis;
- Contribute to integration gender perspectives into the office programming and policy and ensure gender sensitivity in formulation, implementation and monitoring/evaluation of programmes and projects;
- Provide advice and consultancy on gender equality issues to relevant national and international partners;
- Support development of gender-related information materials;
- Compile and disseminate best practices and lessons learnt;
- Coordinate the preparation of gender briefs for each sectoral portfolio (including indicators and goals for advancing equality and correcting imbalance for relevant sectors);



- Introduce relevant gender dimensions at the office's meetings with partners, inter-agency and NGO meetings;
- Develop the office's approach and concrete activities on advocacy on gender equality issues, including plans for special events in occasion of the International women Day, International Human Rights Day, etc.;
- Identify the training needs of colleagues and facilitate mandatory training for the office staff on gender mainstreaming approach and tools (gender concepts, gender analysis, introduction of gender perspectives into planning, monitoring and reporting and evaluation of projects, strategic planning, development and analysis of projects, project management, etc.). Establish a monitoring mechanism to measure the impact of trainings;
- Prepare a short annual report of activities for the head of the office to indicate achievements, challenges and areas of support needed;
- Disseminate and brief colleagues on the agency's code of conduct or policy focused on non- discriminatory practices and monitor implementation of this policy;
- Participate actively and contribute to activities of the interagency Gender Theme Group.

The senior management shall ensure that the Gender Focal Point is provided with:

- recognition of mandate of Gender Focal Point in his/her ToRs;
- possible incentives through performance appraisal mechanism (Results Competency Assessment, etc.);
- training/learning and other capacity building actions and career growth opportunities;
- possibility for regular debriefing the office management and staff on a progress on implementation of gender mainstreaming policy.

References and further reading

African Development Bank. (2011). *Mainstreaming Gender Equality. Emerging Evaluation Lessons*. OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation .

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ITC/ILO. (2013). *Blended course for UN System GFP. MODULE 1 Understanding gender equality: a GFP perspective*. Turin, Italy: ITC/ILO.

UNESCO. (2005). *Handbook for Gender Focal Points in UNESCO National Commissions*. Paris: UNESCO.