

SDC Gender Focal Points

Guidance for Terms of References



Gender Focal Points juggling three roles: Advisor, facilitator and leader

The SDC Gender Unit leads and facilitates the SDC thematic network on gender equality (Gendernet) as a crosscutting outreach and learning structure that links headquarter and cooperation offices. Each division at HQ and each SDC office abroad appoints a gender contact person (commonly called ‘Gender Focal Points’) who is responsible for the topic in the respective unit and is a member of the SDC Gendernet¹.

Key areas and responsibilities

The gender contact person in a cooperation office, a geographic division or a global program at headquarters has multiple tasks and functions to fulfil. First and foremost, they are advisors to colleagues for operational and institutional questions and assure the flow of information and know-how between their unit and the SDC Gendernet; they may also facilitate and organize learning events for colleagues and partners, network with relevant stakeholders in the country context or within a given sector. Finally, they provide strategic guidance and make sure gender equality remains high on the agenda of the office /unit. The image of triple role as advisor, facilitator and leader symbolizes the multiple tasks and

¹ Clarification of the terminologies: The SDC Gender Unit at headquarter is in charge of the Gendernet and the topic at SDC. Gender contact persons are responsible for the topic within their units. The assignment is only a part of their ToRs. As it has become common to use the term Focal Point for colleagues who are in charge of gender in a unit, we will use this term.

roles focal points have to balance, each requiring a specific set of skills, competences and experiences.

Based on the triple role model, this guidance sheet provides recommendations for establishing Terms of References for gender contact persons / Gender Focal Points.

Clearly defined ToR will sharpen the profile of the gender focal points. It allows for better monitoring and clarifies tasks, roles, responsibilities and accountability when integrated into the MbO of both the staff responsible and the management.

The definition of clear ToRs for Gender Focal Points and the allocation of respective resources (time/percentage) are management instruments to steer strategic priorities. Recommended is the allocation of a minimum of 20% of time available for the tasks related to being a Gender Focal Point. Unfortunately reality is seldom so generous and the actual time available is often much less, as the function of Gender Focal Point is always in concurrence with other responsibilities and tasks. Hence clearly defined ToR will help to plan, manage and make use of the available time more effectively.

Elements for ToRs of gender contact persons/Gender Focal Points*

The external effectiveness report on SDCs work towards more gender equality stressed – among other points - the importance of quality assurance to improve the effectiveness of our programs in the field. In this regard, the Gender Unit of SDC recommends the allocation of a minimum of 20% within the ToR of a gender focal point. Depending on the % within the ToR reserved for gender equality the number and types of elements below may vary.

Operational Guidance

- Advising colleagues: Advice and support colleagues in the mainstreaming and systematic integration of gender into cooperation programs and projects in the different thematic domains; share relevant information and available tools for guidance and promote the collaboration and cross-fertilization among domain responsibles. Explore and advise how to strengthen gender-specific /targeted interventions as feasible.
- Quality Assurance: Ensure that the Gender Policy Marker is applied in all credit proposals in a correct and consistent manner; and that a proper gender analysis is conducted; that gender is integrated in a systematic way in monitoring, reporting and evaluation of all projects/programmes and in all quality assurance activities, in particular annual reports and end of phase reports.
- Policy dialogue: Lead a strategic dialogue (or advise colleagues to do so) with implementing partners, government and non-governmental partners, and relevant stakeholders. Provide /organize guidance, support and capacity building measures as needed to strengthen a gender-specific policy dialogue.

Capacity Building

- Capacity building: Assess needs, organize and/or provide capacity building measures /learning events for colleagues and partners (as feasible, as needed).
- Local /expert network: Develop and maintain a network with relevant stakeholders (governmental, non-governmental, sectorial) and other networks and organizations providing specialized expertise, knowledge and resources.
- Knowledge management, peer exchange: Participate in Gendernet activities and learning opportunities (f2f, trainings, webinars, e-discussion, learning journey etc.); make use of the shareweb as a virtual learning platform and community, and use and disseminate the available tools and resources, contribute actively to learning and capitalization in the Gendernet by sharing experiences from the respective unit /office in the Gendernet.
- Liaising and networking among peers:
For Gender Focal Points at HQ: Liaise with gender contact persons/Gender Focal Points in the respective offices of your geographic region and act as first contact and intermediary between the SDC Gender Focal Point and the Focal Points in the field;
For Gender Focal Points in cooperation offices: Promote collaboration among Gender Focal Points in the region (regional networks) to share experiences, good practices, joint approaches (regional Gender Action Plans) and strategies. Facilitate, if feasible, joint regional capacity building events.

Strategic Leadership

- Gender Action Plan: Coordinate and supervise the development, implementation and monitoring of Gender Action Plans as a strategic instrument to steer the systematic implementation of a gender transformative approach in all intervention areas (operations, partners, institutions, policy dialogue).
- Context monitoring: Monitor the national /sectoral policy contexts regarding positive /negative developments for gender equality and ensure that relevant information is being included in MERVs and context assessments.
- Advocate: continuously engage with the management to make sure that gender is systematically integrated in strategic moments / planning (i.e. cooperation strategy management) as well as in daily business (Entry Proposals, Credit Proposals etc.). Promote and support strategic gender policy dialogues (sectoral, national, and international).