EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT EVALUATION

20 20

1.EVALUATION OVERVIEW

Knowledge Management (KM), as the process through which organizations create and use their institutional and collective knowledge, has been increasingly recognized by UN Women West and Central Africa (UNW-WCA) as its intangible asset and a major component of its comparative advantage. The entity's relative advantage depends in turn, on its ability to quickly learn from experience and integrate it into everyday practice and into the body of knowledge generated by the organization over the years. This inevitably translates into better capacities to share knowledge for promoting and advancing the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) and Human Rights (HR) agenda. One of the most important KM objectives of UNW-WCA (hereinafter also referred to as 'the Organization') is therefore to ensure that the creation, storage/retrieval and dissemination of reliable, timely, high quality data, information and knowledge on GEWE and HR (GE/HR) is seamless. Organizational Learning (OL) is also a major priority for the Organization. Indeed, KM has been prioritized as the third core function of UNW-WCARO's Strategic Note.

UNW-WCA Evaluation Unit recruited Pan African Research Services (hereinafter referred to as 'the Consultant') to conduct a Knowledge Management Evaluation (KME) to help in finding out how well the Organization was performing in its KM function.

The key objective of the KME was to provide an assessment of (1) the current state of the KM function within the organization by department/CO across the region and (2) identify opportunities for and barriers to its successful role as a knowledge broker and provider. The KME would also assess aspects of Organizational Learning and ultimately provide recommendations for improving KM and

Organizational Learning as part of the envisioned UN Women's regional KM strategy and country-level KM work plans.

The KME was conducted in three main stages: inception; data collection and analysis; and writing of the KME report. The KME covered the UN Women West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO), country offices in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Liberia, Mali and Senegal Program Presence.

In order to achieve the evaluation objectives, the KME used the four Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development /Development Assistance Committee (OECD/ DAC) criteria - Relevance, Effectiveness, Sustainability and Efficiency – to guide the conduct of the evaluation. Gender Equality and Human Rights – a cross cutting dimension, was also assessed as part of the KME.

The evaluation utilized a mixed method approach and was informed by data triangulated from three main sources: qualitative primary data obtained from field interviews conducted using semi-structured key informant interview questionnaires and focus group discussion guides; quantitative primary data obtained from structured questionnaires administered online to UNW-WCA staff; and a comprehensive desk review of relevant literature. Key literature reviewed that informed the KME is indicated in the reference section of this report and in Annex 2 (Documents Consulted). The KME utilized foundational information obtained from the 'Stock-taking' mission conducted by the Regional Office (RO) which initiated a documentation process of knowledge products generated by the region during the period 2011-2018. The KME thus provides a good baseline from which UNW-WCA can plan the envisioned regional KM strategy.

2.SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

2.1 RELEVANCE

i. The evaluation found that there were many promising KM practices and Knowledge Products (KPs) within UNW-WCA. These practices were however found to be mostly disparate and non-standardized across the region. Knowledge is also mostly stored in non-centralized locations, mostly domiciled in personal computers and/or offices/work spaces that are often not readily accessible to other staff members. Different units and departments had however developed creative ways of relatively effective KM - despite the prevailing high KM-resource constrained settings. The KME also confirmed that, with the exception of the RO, countries have not allocated resources (mostly financial and human) for KM.

ii. We found that the region has invested significant resources towards overall capacity building and the development of information management systems and digital platforms. However, utility of the digital platforms and information management systems was found to be very low - a proxy indicator for the sub-optimal levels of organizational learning within UNW-WCA region that were also found. As noted earlier, Organizational Learning was also significantly hampered by the notably high inaccessibility of GE/HR knowledge that is domiciled in personal computers rather than being stored/backed up either in centralized locations or in the information systems that were accessible to all staff.

We further found that there are very limited avenues that have been entrenched into KM practice to tap into the rich tacit knowledge and inherent wisdom available in the Organization. However, there were a few instances where mentorship, peer-to-peer learning and communities of practice were mentioned.

Gender Cafe's, Peace Huts, Gender Resource Centres, Gender Knowledge Centres, Gender

corners in academic institutions were found to be highly effective and efficient practices in dissemination of GE/HR knowledge thus examples that should be emulated within the greater UNW-WCA region.

iii. Although UNW-WCA was generally perceived and viewed as the GO-TO place and hub for GE/HR related data, there are several barriers that significantly hinder the effective utilization of GE/HR knowledge. External stakeholders highlighted that while they perceived UNW-WCA as a credible source of GE/HR knowledge, the UN Women Africa and West Africa sections of the UNW HQ websites mostly lacked relevant local context stories/examples despite the large number of GE/HR related programs implemented in the region. External KME respondents frequently mentioned that in addition to the UN Women sources available, they also sought for GE/HR knowledge from the various government institutions including gender ministries, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) so as to get more holistic and complete GE/HR data, information and knowledge.

iv. The use of English as the main language used in the production of KPs meant for predominantly francophone countries and poor accessibility of the said knowledge products were identified as arguably the most significant internal and external barriers to the utility of GE/HR knowledge produced by UNW-WCA. Another barrier to timely production and utility of knowledge produced by UNW-WCA was the inherent systemic bureaucracy in the process of approving KPs within UNW-WCA which often resulted in outdated GE/HR information being produced that reportedly often rendered the same irrelevant.

2.2 EFFECTIVENESS

We found that UNW-WCA generates, stores and disseminates credible and reliable evaluation-based GE/HR knowledge, however the Organization has an overwhelming number (over 40) of information management systems and digital platforms that can be used for KM. This has ultimately resulted in only a very small proportion of highly adept Information Technology (IT) staff members optimally utilizing these platforms. This means that optimal utility of information management systems is notably low for the majority of UNW-WCA staff. This was seen to work counter-productively against efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability within UNW-WCA, and was also found to be a significant barrier to Organizational Learning. In addition, a number of staff did not receive any orientation upon joining the organization thus some did not know of the existence of a number of platforms at the time of data collection. The aforementioned factors have generally resulted in the low uptake of data, information and knowledge found within these systems / platforms and also low rates of storage/ uploading of the same.

Within UNW-WCA's programmes, the human resource technical capacity to effectively and efficiently navigate and optimally utilize these systems and digital platforms (with the exceptions of operations, finance and IT), was mostly reported as being highly compromised as most staff mentioned that high workloads leave them with little or no time to access and/or navigate through all the available platforms. – the 'Digital Library' was however lauded as being intuitive, straightforward and more easily navigable compared to e.g. the RMS; in addition, a majority of staff do not know how to access/ use/ navigate most of the information systems. Indeed the study confirmed

that while the Organization has invested significant resources in training UNW-WCA staff at various levels, there were no standardized methods or ways of accounting for the benefits accrued from the trainings.

While UNW-WCA generates, stores and disseminates credible and reliable evaluation-based GE/HR knowledge, staff awareness on the availability of evaluations was found to be generally low. A review of the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation use (GATE) indicated that 86% (6/7) of the units assessed (including the regional office) had successfully uploaded 25 different types of evaluation reports on to the GATE portal between 2011 and 2018. A relatively low number (20) of knowledge products produced between 2011 and 2018 were localized on the Results Management System (RMS), a majority of which were in draft format. There were also many KPs stored in other numerous information management systems as documented by the 'stock-taking mission' commissioned by the Regional Office (RO) in 2018.

Key stakeholders who participated in the KME sought deeper collaboration opportunities with UNW-WCA in generating and disseminating good quality GE/HR knowledge. Academic institutions in particular viewed deeper collaboration as an opportunity that UNW-WCA could leverage on to conduct research. Qualitative interviews confirmed that the Organization's KPs were being utilized internally to provide information across programs and externally by other organizations (mostly the community-based organizations) as well as the media and individuals who frequently accessed the

UNW-WCA website. However, as earlier documented, the UN Women Africa website was reported as often lacking the most current country/context- specific knowledge products from UNW-WCA countries, which reduced the potential utility of these online resources.

The KME confirmed that WCA units do not have dedicated KM units that are intentionally fully funded and fully-fledged with requisite human and financial resources, time, infrastructure/ equipment, among other resources. With the exception of WCARO that has approximately 13% of its core functions budget dedicated to KM, all other units in the UNW-WCA have not had resources (mostly financial and human) that were directly and intentionally demarcated for use in relation to KM implementation. Indeed, slightly more than half (56%) of respondents from the six countries also reported that there were no departments that were solely dedicated to knowledge management. Program Units have however creatively aligned their scarce program resources to meet their KM needs, but these resources are far from optimal and significantly inhibit effective and efficient practice of KM. This therefore means that various knowledge sharing practices and activities (e.g. trainings, documentation and use of lessons learnt and good practices, conferences etc.) are not centrally planned/coordinated hence their implementation remains sub-optimal. As earlier stated however, it is important to note that UNW-WCA has invested significant resources in the development of information management systems that are adequate for KM.

The KME found that there are significantly high levels of institutional memory loss which resulted in equally significant knowledge retention gaps and notably low levels of organizational learning across the region. This loss was mostly occasioned by the general lack of standardized knowledge storage, archival and retrieval processes/practices for both print and digital forms of knowledge, e.g. standardized guidelines or processes that should be used to guide document archiving and storage have not been outlined across the Organization. The resultant knowledge losses coupled with ineffective staff hand-over and induction processes (among others) are key factors that significantly affect the Organization's efficiency and ultimately the overall sustainability of KM within all units in the UNW-WCA region. However, there were a few programs effective practices of creating, archiving, storing knowledge, e.g. the Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) program in Liberia.

There was evidence of UNW-WCA's engagement with organizations that ranged from international development partners to community-based organizations within the GE/HR arena. However, qualitative interviews pointed out that UNW-WCA frequently missed out on meaningful engagement with community members. This is probably due to low collaboration with GE/HR related organizations working directly at the grass root levels. Collaboration with other UN agencies in GE/ HR knowledge management was also reported as not meeting its full potential in the area of KM.

2.4 SUSTAINABILITY

The evaluation found that there are significant bottlenecks (and opportunities) in the coordination / collaboration processes with key national stakeholders that hampered the creation and flow of good quality GE/HR data, information and knowledge within the gender machinery in the region as a whole. These include (but are not limited to): (i) weak technical capacity for mainstreaming and implementing GE/HR in many government ministries, which meant that government data sources and national statistics - which also have low Quality Assurance (QA) levels - were generally viewed by respondents as unreliable across the region. (ii) across all WCA countries, Civil Society Organizations (CSO's) and indeed governments lacked a minimum standardized set of national GE/HR indicators.

QA was also not adequately embedded into the national GE/HR knowledge creation systems. Similarly, overall national GE/HR data aggregation processes was also lacking. This lack of coordination in aggregating national GE/HR data creation and reporting mechanisms is seen as a key entry point for UNW-WCA towards strengthening national GE/HR data repositories within the constituent countries. It would also serve to increase the Organization's visibility which was found to be very low (compared to larger UN agencies e.g. UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA).

These factors were found to significantly compromise the overall quality of available national GE/HR statistics which should provide the foundation informing all programs and initiatives in the West and Central Africa region.

2.5 GENDER EQUALITY & HUMAN RIGHTS (GE/HR)

UNW-WCA countries have evidently adopted various KM practices, however these practices are inconsistent. The practices vary; they include (but are not limited to): translation of knowledge products into local languages (however, being a predominantly francophone region, most written/print knowledge products are developed in English which is a key barrier to utility by both internal and external stakeholders); some programs use creative GE/HR messaging in the forms of short videos and documentaries; a number of countries disseminated GE/HR knowledge through the use of radio and further trained media houses which broadcast in local languages on GE/HR etc. With the exception of the Gender Resource Centre (GRC) in Liberia which is perceived as more accessible since it is located within the Ministry of Gender offices, KPs were perceived by respondents as relatively difficult to access due to security clearance processes at the gate of UN Women premisses. Geographical access was also noted by respondents who observed that UN Women offices were mostly located in capital cities and thus were inaccessible to rural populations. Collaboration of UNW-WCA units with devolved government ministries was seen as a solution to facilitate better dissemination of GE/HR knowledge products in rural areas.

Although it was clear that all countries had in place KM measures, it is evident that there remains a large cross-section of non-intellectual and marginalized populations, including those left behind that were not being effectively reached with GE/HR messaging. We did not find any references of GE/HR knowledge products designed in Braille for the visually impaired or screen readers for those with low vision across all the visited countries. However, the consultants observed that most UNW-WCA buildings had ramps, lifts and clear signage that made them easily accessible to people living with physical disabilities. This therefore calls for more deliberate knowledge management strategies to ensure that marginalized populations and those left behind are reached.

Internal standardization of KM processes and practices (most importantly back-up, storage and archives) of data, information and knowledge needs to take place with high urgency. This is necessitated by the fact that although the UNW Corporate Strategy 2018-2021 provides initial guidance on the aforementioned, it does not comprehensively cover all aspects that KM entails. The first step therefore, is for the West and Central Africa Regional Office to build upon the Corporate KM Strategy and clearly outline a standard minimum set of KM practices that will guide the region and provide clear standards for all units. The proposed/ongoing development of the regional KM and Organizational Learning (OL) strategy should provide standardized guidance of what KM practice should entail across the UNW-WCA region.

KM practices that should be considered include: delineating, communicating and inculcating (through management) clear and centralized in-house data/information/ knowledge storage processes to ensure knowledge is readily available and easily accessible to all staff; increase the rate of Organizational Learning by implementing practices e.g. formation of small learning teams comprising staff who have superior Information Technology (IT) skills and staff with lower IT competency; inculcating peer-to-peer learning and mentorship; encouraging open information sharing within and across programs; implementation of good induction/ orientation processes that provide access to existing institutional memory; ensuring that there is the full buy-in and support from management for KM while encouraging staff to take personal interest in KM.

Replication and implementation of the following highly promising and good practices is highly recommended for the greater UNW-WCA region:

'Gender Cafes', 'Peace Huts,'

Gender Resource Centers (housed within easily accessible devolved ministries of Gender),

Gender Knowledge Centers in UNW offices,

Gender Corners within academic institutions as they provide opportunities for dissemination of knowledge to GE/HR stakeholders and ensures sustainability of GE/HR knowledge dissemination at all levels.

High loss of institutional memory is currently the greatest risk posed to the sustainability, efficiency and effectiveness of UNW-WCA's overall knowledge management, thus it is critical to enact immediate and urgent stop-gap measures to counter any further institutional memory loss. It is strongly recommended that all units within UNW-WCA urgently organize and implement centralized knowledge repositories/ databases/ servers for storage and archiving of knowledge products to ensure that previous and ongoing production of knowledge within the Organization is secured and readily retrievable to all staff members. The following are 'quick-wins' that can be implemented immediately at no cost to the Organization:

Every unit (CO/PP) in the region should designate one central server (as simple as one desktop or cloud storage) to serve as a central repository and back-up for all knowledge products and it should be

accessible to all country staff. A similar repository should also be available at the RO. IT departments would provide staff and external stakeholders with various access levels to knowledge products . This will ensure that all GE/HR data and information are retained in case of staff departure or loss of electronic equipment through e.g. computer crashes, inaccessibility etc.

Develop a standardized folder nomenclature system and require all staff to save their work on the central server system. Alternatively, IT departments could develop computer pathways that automate the process of saving documents in the central repository to forestall loss of information and institutional memory. Automated back-up practices can be incorporated to make these practices highly efficient and counter occurrences of low computer-based skills.

Sensitize staff on the importance of creating and sharing KPs internally with their colleagues. Designing a recognition or rewards system for staff who develop a culture of sharing quality knowledge products can act as a form of motivation.

Implement comprehensive standardized staff handover and staff induction processes to ensure that there is seamless knowledge transfer and storage. An excellent handover report/template from Liberias WEE program is provided as an example that can be emulated across the WCA region.

Production of bilingual French-English knowledge products , translation of existing knowledge products into local languages and knowledge products for the visually handicapped need to be

factored into the processes of UNW-WCA to ensure wider, relevant, effective reach of the GE/ HR messaging. In addition, country-specific portals hosted by the 'mother' UN Women website need to be regularly updated with current country/context specific real-life stories, data, information and knowledge to increase relevance and utility by internal stakeholders - more so by external stakeholders to whom this dissemination initiatives are targeted at. This will require a reduction in systemic bureaucracy where knowledge products pass through lengthy time-consuming approval processes. It is highly recommended that significant autonomy be accorded to WCARO to allow for quick approval and dissemination of country-specific knowledge products and information that is uploaded onto country-specific websites. Simplifying and reducing the turn-around-time for knowledge products approvals for the UNW Africa website or even the HQ website by "de-risking of the approval process of knowledge products " as practiced by the African Development Bank will enable units to quickly disseminate GE/HR data, information and knowledge. The UNW- WCA regional office can also grant COs a significant level of autonomy to approve certain knowledge products and information that they can quickly and effectively upload for dissemination using social media channels so as to stay relevant and increase brand visibility.

Simple efficient avenues for GE/HR knowledge dissemination include (but are not limited to) radio or SMS, creative arts e.g. music, theatre, production of short films, videos and documentaries to reach the general public, marginalized groups and those left behind. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

targeting the youth is strongly recommended to capture events as they occur in real time thus solicit instant knowledge sharing for greater relevance, elicit feedback while increasing UNW-WCA's visibility. This will also enable UNW-WCA better transmit GE/HR knowledge to more people and especially the rural, non-intellectual and marginalized populations ensuring no one is left behind.

Delineation of a minimum set of the existing digital platforms and information management systems that will be utilized across the UNW-WCA region is paramount for greater organizational effectiveness, efficiency and heightened Organizational Learning. New staff joining the organization can be provided with an orientation kit/ training package that outlines the key KM platforms that they will need to use in the course of their duties.

It is also imperative to conduct an ICT-based needs assessment for all staff to inform the Organization of the gaps in its overall capacity to effectively utilize the well-developed and readily available information management systems and platforms. Staff capacity enhancement to increase Organizational Learning and better utilize the excellent information management systems available also needs to be systematically carried out. The following key modalities are recommended to facilitate higher Organizational Learning: development of knowledge products should be embedded into organizational and staff annual work plans at all levels; a requirement that units/departments engage in the production and dissemination of various forms of knowledge or require them to develop a minimum number of knowledge products annually should be provided; use mentorship, peer-to-peer learning and IT staff to provide on-the-job trainings that would

grow internal staff capacity for better utilization of information management systems and enhance Organizational Learning.

- Dedicated resources (human, financial, time, equipment etc.) need to be urgently allotted to the KM process so as to ensure that there are requisite resources dedicated specifically to KM and that these resources are further accessible to all UNW WCA units.

  a. It is imperative that a KM team/ unit is constituted in each of the units within UNWWCA. The formation of a team comprising a combination of (but not limited to) research/statistics, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), communications/public relations and knowledge management staff members to drive the KM agenda in each of the UNW-WCA units/countries is crucial.

  b. Oversight, coordination and implementation support for the country-based KM teams/ units would be provided by the KM unit at WCARO - a senior-level (P5) staff is recommended to lead this unit at the regional level.

  c. Allocation of financial resources in the core budgets of UNW-WCA units for conducting KM needs to be prioritized for more effective and relevant KM within countries.

- Provision of coordination support by UNW-WCA towards strengthening of the national GE/ HR data collection systems/ gender machinery would further increase the visibility of UNWWCA and firmly secure its position as the lead of GE/HR knowledge in the West and Central Africa (WCA) region.