FINAL REPORT OF THE VIRTUAL DIALOGUE:

PROFESSIONALIZATION OF GENDER TRAINERS



TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

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I. Introduction

The UN Women Training Centre's <u>9th Virtual Dialogue</u> (24th of October – 12th of November, 2016) was a unique opportunity for participatory reflection on the professional qualifications of trainers and measures for quality assurance for professionals in the sphere of training for gender equality. The event convened four expert Webinar panellists alongside over 250 participants, spanning gender experts, training practitioners, researchers, academics, representatives of NGOs and international development organisations (see the <u>Annexes</u> of this Report for details.)



The aim of this Report is to provide an analytical synthesis of the discussions during the Dialogue and explore ideas for future research and debate concerning the professionalization of gender trainers.

Background

According to UN Women, training for gender equality is "a feminist project" which concerns "feminist knowledge transfer". The way in which trainers work, however, is not always

aligned with this understanding. Currently, anyone can call themselves a "gender trainer" and any organisation can offer training for gender equality.¹ Training's popularity tends "to shape what [...] training [for gender equality] looks like; it also makes the tools and methodological approaches developed by trainers a competitive matter, as trainers need to sell their competences on a developing market."²

Questions abound about how to reconcile these practical demands with the aim of social transformation at the heart of training for gender equality. In response to this scenario, and informed by the recommendations of the Training Centre's <u>Expert Group Meeting</u> on strengthening quality assurance mechanisms, the UN Women Training Centre is working on avenues to make the professional development of gender trainers more coherent.

Objectives and Format

Objectives of the 9th Virtual Dialogue

To discuss the professionalization of gender trainers – reflecting on how trainers are currently trained, developed or "made"; what qualifications they should have; what criteria and credentials they should meet; what kinds of professional ethics and standards they should aspire to uphold; how this should be decided and by whom; and what the opportunities and limitations of such classifications are.

What are Virtual Dialogues?

Virtual Dialogues are online discussions aimed at promoting debate, dialogue, ideas and information on topics related to training for gender equality that respond to the interests, needs and motivations of the <u>UN Women Training Centre's Community of Practice</u> <u>(CoP).</u> They aspire to develop effective and inclusive processes of collective knowledge production, to improve the quality and impact of training for gender equality, while highlighting its transformative potential.

The Virtual Dialogue comprised a 3 week online discussion forum on the <u>UN Women Training Centre CoP</u> <u>platform</u> and <u>an hour-long English Webinar</u> during which 4 invited speakers gave short presentations on

¹ EIGE (2014) *Quality assurance mechanisms for gender training in the European Union: Reflections from the online discussion*. Vilnius: European Institute for Gender Equality. Available: <u>http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/MH0113604ENC.PDF</u>, p. 5.

² OPERA Team (2011) *OPERA Final Report: Advancing Gender+ Training in Theory and Practice*. Prepared by L. Ferguson and M. Forest. QUING: Quality in Gender+ Equality Policies. Available: <u>http://www.quing.eu/files/results/final_opera_report.pdf</u>, p. 55.

professionalization of gender trainers and responded to questions from the audience. The Webinar was introduced by Clemencia Muñoz, Chief of the UN Women Training Centre, and moderated by Lucy Ferguson, Consultant for the Training Centre. Details of the format of the Virtual Dialogue and the key questions that guided it are outlined in the event's <u>Concept Note</u>.

II. Professionalization of Gender Trainers

This section presents an analytical summary of the Virtual Dialogue, focusing on key questions and insights which emerged during the Webinar and forum discussion.

The meaning of "professionalization"

Participants took a broad view of **what the "professionalization of gender trainers" means**. Overall, the discussions proposed different understandings for the term, such as:

- Some level of professional standards;
- Formal certification or qualification certificates;
- A screening process for gender trainers;
- An informal check-list of criteria which gender trainers should uphold; and
- A profession whose working conditions promote gender equality for practitioners themselves.

During the Webinar, Clemencia Muñoz, Chief of the UN Women Training Centre, noted that professionalization is an effort to enhance and ensure quality standards and norms for training for gender

"[Professionalization] is an attempt to clarify what, why and how to professionalize gender trainers. This is an opportunity to nurture consensus on minimum requirements to assure quality and standards. It [allows] further recognition of training [for gender equality] as a profession and its contribution to advancing human development and social justice." - Clemencia Muñoz, Chief of the UN Women Training Centre & Webinar panellist equality. To situate the professionalization of gender trainers within broader debates, panellist Soline Blanchard defined "professionalization" as a process by which a group of workers gains:

1) "A monopoly over the exercise of a professional activity", and

2) "The ability to independently define the content of this activity – what is to be done and how".

Expertise plays a key role in professionalization processes. This ties into the achievement of social

recognition, political legitimacy and autonomy. Professionalization also justifies privileged access within the labour market, as it validates the notion that a group of people possesses the expertise needed to tackle a public concern – and implies that other groups do not possess this knowledge. While this was seen as a challenge, as it may exclude certain knowledge(s) or practitioners, many contributors noted that a lack of professional standards means that many individuals without necessary competencies or professional are hired as gender trainers. In the view of contributors, a far different profile is needed if gender trainers are to contribute to transforming mindsets and practices. Forum participants also stressed the importance of considering working conditions for gender trainers and experts within professionalization processes. Feminist ethics should not just pertain to the contents of trainings – e.g. empowerment, equal pay, non-discrimination, etc. Rather, trainers should remember that these claims also apply to themselves as workers. They called for practitioners to promote gender equality in their work spaces

"It is part of our political feminist commitment to claim equal work conditions, equal pay, equal opportunities and so on for gender equality practitioners." – Sepideh Labani Motlagh, forum participant

and labour relations, following the maxim "the personal is political". Given the complexities of translating this into practice, since commissioning institutions may not be committed to feminist ethics, practitioners should establish limits to what they can accept – e.g. whether to leave out the term "feminism" from trainings – and explore how to use challenges strategically to promote change.

Box 1 - The development of gender trainers in Mexico, a case study by Hector Frías

Webinar panellist Hector Frías, of the National Women's Institute of Mexico, noted that knowledge of "gender issues" has grown steadily as the country affirmed its commitment to international treaties on women's rights and developed a *National Plan for Gender Equality*. As this requires public servants to have conceptual knowledge of gender equality, so as to mainstream gender in their projects and programmes, training for gender equality has gained pace. Training itself has evolved, with trainers using a broader range of resources for online and face-to-face learning while employing pedagogical instruments. This evolution corresponds to the changing needs of public servants, with trainers adjusting training to meet these needs.

Complexities surrounding the professionalization of gender trainers

Debates over the course of the Virtual Dialogue drew attention to the complexities of professionalizing gender trainers. Participants voiced a range of different approaches and reflected on the challenges and opportunities inherent in professionalization processes. These included:

- The challenges of exclusive and inclusive definitions of who is a gender trainer
- Issues of accountability
- External and internal tensions in training for gender equality and feminist knowledge transfer
- Different understandings of quality assurance mechanisms
- Issues of who has the authority to "professionalize" or "certify" gender trainers

The fact that training for gender equality is an evolving field, very much "in the making", was regarded as both a challenge and an opportunity by contributors. Thus, the professionalization of gender trainers requires a process of continuously updating knowledge, skills and experience. In terms of **opportunities**, CoP members noted that professional standards can be useful guidelines as long as they are neutral/objective and do not favour one culture over any other. As such, some participants posited that professionalization has the potential to strengthen trainers' commitment; can enable trainers to achieve the training's goals more easily; make feminist knowledge transfer more efficient; and better equip trainers to apply theories of change and feminist pedagogy. Yet professionalization debates are steeped in issues of privilege and access, and questions of whether any professionalization drive can truly be neutral. For instance, international debates on this subject automatically give more space to the voices of English-speakers, given the language in which international discussions are typically held.

Many contributors voiced concerns about the very nature of "professionalization", fearing that this may **exclude** the knowledge of gender experts without access to avenues for "formal" qualification. Overall,

participants elaborated on the two-fold difficulties of certification processes. Broad, inclusive, accessible, and non-exclusionary processes can mean that individuals become certified trainers without being truly competent in training for gender equality. On the other hand, rigorous certification demanding more resources and skills could be exclusionary and perpetuate elitism. Contributors feared that "professionalization" could lead to certain visions/versions being prioritized over others, or certain types of practitioners (e.g. with higher education) being prioritized over others.

Box 2 – Power relations inherent in professionalization processes, case study by Soline Blanchard

Panellist Soline Blanchard argued that it is challenging to ensure that the professionalization of gender trainers is developed in a participatory, inclusive and bottom-up manner, since there is an inherent tension between professionalization *per se* and feminist principals of **space and inclusion**. Professionalization comes with the establishment of power relations. It is about giving professionalized gender trainers authority and excluding others by choosing which criteria are "in our out". It is a source of hierarchies, as it implies that certain professionals are more "legitimate" at undertaking training for gender equality than others, and it provides a blue-print of "very good professionals" that not everyone can meet. These questions should be borne in mind by any attempt to professionalize gender trainers.

To overcome these tendencies, Soline argued that it is crucial to:

- Recognise the variety of sources of feminist knowledge; and
- Tackle the multiple power relations that training for gender equality entails in and may contribute to (re)produce, both internally (among gender trainers) and externally (with different stakeholders).

Overall, forum participants felt that the absence of quality standards can problematically lead to almost anyone claiming to be a gender expert. Webinar panellist Lina Abou Habib pointed out that "gender trainers" are currently often self-appointed based on their experience, contacts and supply/demand. Many have little formal training themselves, and limited knowledge of feminist theory. Most are highly concerned with being "acceptable" to their audience, meaning than that they may not tackle issues related to patriarchy, inequality and power relations. There is a tendency for trainers to dilute such issues so that they will be hired again, which curtails their capacity to promote meaningful change.

Box 3 – Implications of the lack of quality standards for gender trainers, shared by Almut Rochowanski

An example from Ukraine pointed to the challenges of having no overarching criteria for gender trainers. Volunteers trained for a few days on gender-based violence in turn offered training within communities. Contributors questioned whether they could be seen as "gender trainers", given their questionable gender expertise, experience, knowledge and ability to apply feminist training methodologies. Thus, participants agreed that a set of professional standards or a screening process is needed to distinguish professional gender trainers.

To strike a balance between processes that are too broad or exclusionary, contributors suggested that the professionalization of gender trainers should not only consider educational attainments, but also pay attention to activist passion, feminist conviction and a record of change-making commitments. How it should do so, however, was a matter of some disagreement, reflecting the complexities of this debate. Many contributors favoured strategies like practical, participatory standards that inform flexible processes e.g. a checklist of diverse criteria for trainers. Others called for more "formal" mechanisms, e.g. "grades" of professionalization akin to formal degrees (see <u>Quality Assurance Mechanisms</u>).

"Gradual steps are a start. If you have a pretty good idea who the training participants will be, in advance [...] involve them in the trainer's selection process (and in all the other preparatory steps, on content, format, needs, interests etc.). Participatory approaches are a must." – Almut Rochowanski, forum participant Contributors called for participatory approaches that involve trainees in the trainer's selection process. For instance, creating a multilevel, open and autonomous collective space, where all gender trainers can discuss quality standards and professionalization. They should seriously consider the tensions between cooperation and competition among professionals within the labour market, alongside questions of gender, race, class, language and other power relations among trainers.

Others, like panellist Hector Frías, posited how we can use challenges as opportunities:

Challenges

- Many gender trainers have no academic background on gender or pedagogy.
- High staff turn-over in public institutions responsible for gender training and mainstreaming.
- Lack of agreed minimum standards/criteria for gender trainers at the national, regional and international levels.

Opportunities we can derive from these challenges

- The possibility of leveraging the diversity of knowledge and skills in training for gender equality, and enriching these with pedagogical instruments.
- Exploring the experiences of people who have shown they are competent professionals able to manage gender concepts and deliver training, offering them (up-dated) training to become better professionals and "certified" trainers.

Another complex issue concerns the question *"To whom are gender trainers accountable?"*. Participants pointed out that, in practice, trainers are accountable to whoever has hired them, i.e. commissioning agencies. As a result, panellist Lina Abou Habib felt that many trainers simply focus on imparting skills, like developing checklists, which is very far from a commitment

"Unfortunately, we [gender trainers] are faced with a situation in which what counts is what the client wants." – Lina Abou Habib, Webinar panellist

to transformative change. Contributors noted that this may conflict with trainers' accountability towards trainees or communities. To address these complex issues, discussions suggested gradual steps and participatory approaches. Participants called for re-thinking to whom trainers are accountable and how this influences processes of developing quality standards.

Contributors also debated whether the professionalization of gender trainers can ensure the **production and transfer of feminist knowledge**. Panellist Soline Blanchard argued that it can, but that this is not selfevident. Her research reveals uncertainty and "internal" and "external" tensions:

Internal	Gender trainers' backgrounds, representations and practices vary widely, which results in internal fragmentation. E.g. the profiles of gender trainers are diverse –
Internal	
tensions	feminist activists, graduates, or those who have discovered "gender on the job".
	In practice, practitioners' interpretations of what "gender equality" means can be
	diverse. There is also a need to take into consideration the diversity of
	"feminisms".
	Practitioners do not agree on what training for gender equality is about, and what
	kind of expertise is required to develop such training.
	Support for gender equality varies in terms of time and is tied to the specific
	political and economic agenda of the client.
	Resistances to training for gender equality.

External tensions

The stigma faced by feminism.

The issue of gender equality being interpreted differently by different practitioners was addressed by several contributors. Many participants, like panellist Lina Abou Habib, argued that international human rights and normative women's rights frameworks – like CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action – offer us a common, internationally agreed understanding of what gender equality means. Despite diverse interpretations in practice, we must recall this shared understanding enshrined in normative frameworks, particularly in order to avoid the pitfalls of cultural relativism – e.g. oppression being perpetuated under the guise of cultural values.

Given the uncertainty surrounding professionalization processes, which are still a work in progress, contributors asked: "What kind of expertise will be established, by whom and how?". In Soline Blanchard's view, the ability to transfer feminist knowledge will depend on the ability of gender trainers to set on their own feminist quality standards. This requires:

- Paying special attention to resistances to gender training and addressing them; and
- Establishing principals about the way training for gender equality is designed and conducted, with respect to dimensions like space and inclusion.

Box 4 – Who should decide on professionalization criteria

Deciding "who" has the **authority and capacity to accredit** and **who should decide on the professionalization criteria** of gender trainers was identified as a major challenge. Webinar panellist Soline Blanchard noted that professionalization can take two paths:

- A top-down approach, led by public authorities, or
- A bottom-up approach, guided by the workers themselves.

In terms of whether the UN's role in accreditation is appropriate and feasible, contributors noted that it would be desirable for the UN to work alongside a group of credible institutions to build criteria and provide accreditation for gender trainers. To this end, the UN Women Training Centre has suggested a learning partnership where trainers can support each other and hold one another accountable.

Participants called for minimal criteria for gender trainers to be discussed further international actors including UN Women, governments, NGOs and local groups. They suggested using platforms like the Training Centre's <u>Community of Practice</u> to develop criteria in a collective manner. Others felt that this process should be led by organisations like UN Women at the international level, or national Women's Machineries at the country level. One CoP member suggested a neutral certification body to accredit gender trainers. Participants emphasised that any organisation that aims to "professionalize" or "certify" gender trainers should be sensitive to diversity and local contexts. Yet others warned against cultural relativism and advocated in favour of using internationally agreed human rights frameworks as a guide.

Professionalization criteria and standards for gender trainers

In terms of **professional ethics**, contributors highlighted the need for gender trainers to be committed to gender equality, to feel part of a feminist change project, and to be feminist activists. Viewing training for gender equality as a political undertaking, participants argued that gender trainers should be sensitive to injustice and oppression, striving to work towards change and disrupt hierarchies.

"Training for gender equality is 'a feminist project'. [...] that's an indispensable observation and a must-not-waive guideline. If we're serious about this, then a gender trainer would have to first and foremost be a feminist [...] who has worked and fought for change." – Almut Rochowanski, forum participant Trainers should be driven by the desire to "help actual women" and men. They should respect diversity and be open-minded. Other traits suggested included accountability, competence, honesty and sensitivity. It is imperative that they never practice favouritism or perpetuate discrimination. Panellist Hector Frías argued that being a gender trainer is, first and foremost, a personal, professional and ethical commitment. While he felt that trainers don't necessarily need to be feminist

activists, it is key that they are pro-feminist and committed to feminist ideals of challenging inequality.

Box 4 – Elements to consider for professionalizing gender trainers, noted by the UN Women Training Centre

- Vision Situating training in a broader process of change for social and gender justice
- Knowledge Exploring the nature of knowledge, imparting knowledge and knowing
- Qualification Agreeing on a minimum set of requirements for trainers to ensure quality
- **Competency** Identifying level of practical experience in human development work, knowledge of learning methodologies and methodologies and experience in facilitation and communication

Participants suggested a broad spectrum of **professional standards and criteria** which gender trainers should adhere to. These can broadly be grouped into four areas, which relate to the elements highlighted by the UN Women Training Centre in Box 4:

Personal attributes	Knowledge and experience	Pedagogical and methodological approaches	Technical skills
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The criteria by which participants held that gender trainers are molded into "exemplary trainers", ranged from **personal attributes** – such as the trainers' energy, enthusiasm and professional ethics – to criteria that a trainer may or may not be able to control, such as the training initiatives' impact.

Contributors noted that, alongside the need for a political and personal commitment to gender equality and feminism, gender trainers should have wide-ranging **knowledge** and **experience** in the field of training for gender equality. While not all participants felt they must have a degree in gender studies, they argued that trainers require a command of historic and contemporary thinking around gender equality and an awareness of trends in gender training. Hector Frías suggested the following criteria:

- 1. Practical experience working with gender issues, as well as deep knowledge on theoretical aspects related to gender, and especially feminism;
- 2. Knowledge of pedagogical approaches, especially related to feminist pedagogy and adult learning and teaching methods.

Box 5 – Criteria for gender trainers, proposed by Webinar panellist Lina Abou Habib

- An uncompromising personal commitment to gender equality and women's human rights
- Understanding of gender in/equality and how patriarchy functions
- Challenging cultural relativism through a commitment to international human rights frameworks
- Challenging hidden agendas favourable to the status quo and inequitable power relations

These criteria were echoed by forum participants, who felt that trainers should be well-trained, possess

"Gender equality trainers must practice their teachings in their own personal space, otherwise teaching without selfimplementation is useless". -Fasiha Farrukh, forum participant extensive academic or theoretical knowledge, and have experience of designing, delivering and evaluating training for gender equality initiatives.

Participants argued that feminist **pedagogical and methodological approaches** should serve as a basis for developing a strong common understanding of the profile of gender trainers. These criteria made reference to different stages in the training cycle. They noted the need

for gender trainers to be self-critical and to practice reflexivity. Trainers should employ participatory methodologies that actively involve trainees. An intersectional approach is needed to address the diversity of participants. Accountability is also essential. Trainers should be accountable both to training participants and commissioners, while being accountable to their "profession" by upholding feminist principles of inclusivity, participation and horizontal learning.

Contributors felt that criteria put forth by Elisabeth Prügl could be used as a "professionalization" screen to identify "high quality" gender trainers:

- Rational deliberation that is founded on understanding, requiring an openness to changing points of view and to changing the way we are;
- Non-coercive deliberation, free from unequal power and enabling feminist social criticism;

"Gender trainers should use participatory, human rights approach and bottom-up manner, taking into consideration the differences between communities and countries." – Taroub El Bedour, forum participant

- Inclusiveness of diverse knowledges and participatory learning; and
- Reflexivity, requiring an appreciation for the power relations in which we are embedded.

Above all, participants held that gender trainers should understand the specific contexts within which they operate. While being well-versed in global perspectives, they should bear local particularities in mind. Understanding and respecting trainees' cultures, social values and customs is imperative, while maintaining a commitment to international human rights. Trainers must be able to communicate effectively in the context in which they work. Contributors deemed language skills essential, as the ability to deliver training in local languages allows trainers to connect with trainees.

This ties into the need for practicality and strong **technical or "managerial" skills**, e.g. a trainer's ability to plan and coordinate activities; build a rapport with trainees; promote dialogue, cooperation and communication between trainees; manage conflicts; undertake training at a minimal cost; and facilitate horizontal learning, whereby facilitators and trainees both learn from the training. In the view of forum participants, trainers should give space and time to real-life cases and questions. In response, they should be capable of contributing creative, practical and feasible solutions. As one CoP member argued, *"participants should walk out of a training feeling 'the trainer really helped me, answered my questions, gave me useful tools and ideas for dealing with the problems I have to solve'."* A gender trainer should be

capable of focusing on learning objectives while being flexible enough to adapt to the needs of their target audience while tackling power dynamics. In many training initiatives, trainees work in contexts where they must think on their feet, spot problems and resolve them. In such settings, it is useful for trainers to

"[A] point to consider is the inherent hierarchy of knowledge production. Whose (gender) knowledge counts? How do gender trainers foster critical thinking to deconstruct practice of power-over (a) without imposing knowledge, (b) within global normative frameworks for gender equality, and (c) recognizing hierarchy of knowledge production and diversity of human experience?" – Khamsavath Chanthavysouk, UN Women Training specialist and forum participant function as mentors, role models and allies, drawing on a background of experience and activism to encourage empowerment among trainees.

Trainers should also be prepared to call out oppressive or inequitable language and attitudes. Doing so is difficult as trainers should simultaneously refrain from imposing their values or beliefs on trainees. To this end, participants discussed the hierarchies of knowledge production. This relates to debates during the Training Centre's 8th Virtual Dialogue on Theories of Change and Feminist Pedagogies, where strategies for negotiating the hierarchies of knowledge production were put forth. These included the validation of trainees' personal experiences and the participation of facilitators and trainees as

equals in the construction of knowledge.

Quality assurance mechanisms for gender trainers

Some of the quality assurance mechanisms for gender trainers suggested by participants included:

• A participatory, inclusive, human rights-based and bottom-up approach, considering the specific **context** of each country. To develop professional standards in a participatory, inclusive manner, forum

contributors recommended involving a **multidisciplinary team** and participants from different regions. This process could be led by UN Women or another international organisation which works on women's rights. Clemencia Muñoz clarified that any such process should be spearheaded by a group of credible institutions, not just UN Women. One CoP member stressed that the process should begin at the local level, moving through the national level to the global level.

"Those who will be charge for that task must be very conscious by managing it well because empowerment and participation of women [is necessary] to our development /.../ it is the key for our success and also because, the freedom of women is the freedom of men". - Alain Philippe Binyet Bi Mbog, forum participant

- The establishment of an international curriculum, considering international standards, and the
 inclusion of gender relations and equality according to country contexts. Contributors felt that
 international agencies like UN Women could have certification (and re-certification) courses to
 "professionalize" gender trainers, as well as a roster with "approved gender trainers" subject to
 international audits. One contributor suggested "grades" of professionalization, similar to those in the
 formal education system, e.g. a Bachelor's degree, a Master's and a PhD.
- Instead of a full-blown certification process, some contributors advocated for practical, pragmatic standards and values that inform flexible, participatory processes. For instance, a flexible checklist of diverse components – work experience, record of feminist activism, experience as a non-formal educator, feedback from past participants and employers, formal training, level of awareness of

feminist issues globally and in specific country/cultural contexts, etc. Such a checklist would be in constant development as it would be reviewed each time a new training role is assumed.

• A screening process for gender trainers, employing agreed criteria to determine their "professional quality". Some contributors felt that applying an "ideological screening" would be awkward and problematic. Others argued that it would be possible and useful to determine whether trainers are committed to feminist change, doing so by reviewing their professional backgrounds. Thus, they suggested a peer review of a trainer's CVs before they are hired. This should include both the trainer's academic background (they should have a degree in gender or women's studies), as well as experience, skills and competences, including a record of feminist activism. Determining quality could involve looking at the extent of training for gender equality which the trainer has delivered, the kinds of training initiatives they have taken part in, and the impact of these trainings.

Further specific quality assurance mechanisms put forth during the Virtual Dialogue included:

- A **learning partnership** and **mutual accountability approach** proposed by the UN Women Training Centre, in response to the challenges of developing monitoring and accountability mechanisms. In this context, trainers would support each other and hold each other accountable.
- A trail period, during which the trainer is peer reviewed to assess the methods they employ during trainings. Participatory approaches, like involving trainees in the trainer's selection process, were recommended. Others suggested looking at the following aspects to evaluate the "quality" of gender trainers: whether the trainer strives to impart an understanding of feminist knowledge and theory; whether the trainer has inspired their audience to question the ways they think about inequality; whether trainees are left with an interest in disrupting patriarchal realities and a political commitment to gender equality, beyond technical skills for gender mainstreaming; and whether trainees are able to link the "private" and the "public".

Box 6 – Collaboration between the UN Women Training Centre and KIT

Webinar panellist Clemencia Muñoz, Chief of the UN Women Training Centre, outlined the partnership between the Training Centre and the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) to devise a professional development course for gender trainers. The course, to be rolled out in 2017, is based on a joint <u>mapping exercise</u> that examined: what constitutes gender expertise; how training has been approached to date; the feminist implications for gender trainers, practice, and the contexts in which trainers work; current initiatives to professionally develop gender trainers, and their strengths, gaps and modalities.

In response, a number of participants posed questions that the organisations could bear in mind while developing this seminal course. For instance:

- How can one access the UN Women and KIT course/programme? What will be the requirements? Will it be only based on dominant languages?
- Access to specialized vocational training is limited by economic issues and knowledge of women who work in the communities [...] How will the KIT/UN Women initiative consider this?
- Wouldn't such a professional development course be exclusionary? Who could realistically access it, in terms of funding, language skills, networks, educational eligibility? [Could it] exclude some of the most effective, change-making feminist leaders and educators?
- How can an influential international organization (like the UN) encompass the diversity of feminist movements? How to deal with the fact that there are not only women's rights

organization[s] focusing on gender issues but also NGOs with a more broad definition of gender equality (and not committed to feminist theories)? How [can be inclusive of...] knowledge [at the] grassroots level if social (feminist) movements are getting more and more professionalized?

• Is [being] gender trainer really a "profession"? Should it be? I think that's problematic. If gender training is a feminist project, those who conduct training should be active, working feminist activists. [How can we reconcile this with the notion of] serving as a gender trainer for hire?

III. Conclusions and Key Messages

Participants in the Virtual took a broad view of what the "professionalization of gender trainers" means. Overall, the discussions proposed different understandings for the term, such as:

- Some level of professional standards;
- Formal certification or qualification certificates;
- A screening process for gender trainers;
- An informal check-list of criteria which gender trainers should uphold; and
- A profession whose working conditions promote gender equality for practitioners themselves.

Debates drew attention to the complexities of professionalization processes. For instance:

- The challenges of **exclusive and inclusive definitions** of who is a gender trainer and related tensions between professionalization *per se* and feminist principals of space and inclusion (e.g. broad, inclusive and non-exclusionary definitions may not be enough to guarantee competence; however, rigorous accreditation processes may exclude certain knowledge(s) and practitioners).
- Issues of **accountability** e.g. gender trainers are, in practice, simultaneously accountable to gender and social justice, feminist pedagogies, trainees and training commissioners.
- Internal and external tensions in training for gender equality and feminist knowledge transfer e.g. diversity of trainers' backgrounds; disagreements about what "gender equality" means in different contexts and what training is all about; resistances; fluctuating support for gender equality; and the stigma faced by feminists.
- Different understandings of **quality assurance mechanisms** e.g. some feel these should be flexible processes like evolving checklists of criteria; others argue that more formal certification is needed.
- Issues of **who has the authority** to "professionalize" or "certify" gender trainers e.g. whether this should fall to the UN in partnership with credible institutions; whether governments, NGOs and local bodies should be involved; or whether a neutral certification body is needed.

In discussing these complexities, contributors highlighted the **professional ethics** that should guide the work of gender trainers, particularly:

• A personal, professional and ethical commitment to gender equality and feminist change e.g. challenging injustice, oppression and hierarchies; feminist activism; working towards change.

Participants also highlighted a range of professional criteria and standards for gender trainers:

- Personal attributes like enthusiasm, open-mindedness, respect for diversity and professional ethics.
- Knowledge and experience of gender issues, feminism and training for gender equality (which does not necessarily imply a degree in gender studies), as well as of pedagogy and adult learning.
- Feminist pedagogical and methodological approaches, i.e. trainers should:

- Be self-critical and practice reflexivity;
- Employ intersectional and participatory methodologies that actively involve trainees;
- Be accountable to training participants, commissioners and their "profession" by upholding feminist principles of inclusivity, participation and horizontal learning; and
- Respect cultures/contexts while remaining committed to international human rights.
- **Technical skills** like the ability to plan and coordinate activities; build a rapport with trainees; promote dialogue, cooperation and communication between trainees; manage conflicts; minimize costs; adapt training to the needs of trainees; and function as mentors, role models and allies.

Finally, contributors suggested a range of **quality assurance mechanisms** for gender trainers, such as:

- A **multidisciplinary team** from different regions, possibly led by UN Women and other credible institutions, that takes an inclusive, human rights-based approach to quality assurance.
- An **international curriculum** drawing on international standards, possibly involving "grades" of professionalization similar to the formal education system and a "roster of approved trainers".
- A **flexible**, **participatory checklist of** diverse components work experience, feedback from participants and employers, awareness of feminist issues globally and locally, record of feminist activism, etc. to be reviewed time a new training is undertaken
- A screening process to determine whether trainers are committed to feminist change, e.g. a peer review of trainers' CVs, academic background, skills, experience and record of feminist activism.
- A learning partnership and mutual accountability approach where trainers support each other and hold each other accountable, as suggested by the UN Women Training Centre.
- A **trial period** during which the trainer is monitored to evaluate their methods, approaches, impact on trainees' behaviour, etc.

IV. Annexes

Participant Engagement

The success of UN Women Training Center's Virtual Dialogues depends on participants' engagement, commitment and exchange during the forum discussions and Webinars. The contributions received forms the backbone of this Report. 21 contributions were received during the **forum discussion** from 11 Community of Practice members (9 women and 2 men), representing 11 countries shown in the map below.

Forum Discussion	N° of posts
First week	10
Second week	4
Third week	7
Total:	21



The Webinar attracted 250 participants, with an engagement ratio of 82%.³ Over 20 participants asked thought-provoking questions that spurred forth the debates.

Questions which could not be discussed during the Webinar due to time constraints were posted on the CoP forum.



Webinar Panellists' Biographies

Lina Abou Habib, Executive Director of the Women Learning Partnership



Lina Abou Habib is the Executive Director of the US-based Women Learning Partnership, and the Executive Director of the Collective for Research and Training on Development - Action based in Lebanon. She is a Middle East and North Africa (MENA) advisor for the Global Fund for Women. Lina has vast experience in developing capacities for gender mainstreaming and has written several articles on training for gender equality, with a focus on the MENA region. She has collaborated with several regional and international organisations in mainstreaming gender in development policies and practices, including UN Women, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT). She was also the Secretary and the President of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) from 2008 to 2012.

Soline Blanchard, lecturer and researcher at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland



Soline Blanchard is a lecturer and researcher at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. She previously worked at the University of Toulouse, France, and undertook postdoctoral researcher at the School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences, France. Soline's research focuses on gender in/equality in the workplace, a subject on which she written numerous articles. She has also conducted research and published widely on the professionalization of gender trainers and consultants. She has taken part in several prominent events held in relation to the European Union's QUING Quality in Gender+ Equality Policies project.

Hector Martín Frías Barrón, Sub Director Gender Training, National Women's Institute (INMUJERES), Mexico

³ Calculated considering the number of participants that stayed logged into the Webinar session for over 30 minutes.



Hector Martín Frías Barrón has over 15 years of experience in gender training and capacity development and has worked as a sub-Director for Gender Training and Education at Mexico's National Institute for Women since 2003. He previously worked as a parliamentary advisor to Mexico's Equity and Gender Commission, and to the External Relations Commission. Hector is also a spokesperson for laws and policies on paternity leave, as well as an active promoter for responsible fatherhood and new masculinities, working with others to run the reflection space "Man, of course"

Clemencia Muñoz, Chief, UN Women Training Centre



Clemencia Muñoz has been the Head of UN Women Training Centre and UN Country Representative in the Dominican Republic since November 2011. She has over 20 years of experience in international development and gender, having worked for UNIFEM and UNDP both in the field and at headquarters. She has served as Head of the Office for Mexico and Central America for the Kellogg Foundation, and worked with the National Planning Ministry of Colombia. Clemencia holds a Master's degree in International Relations from Johns Hopkins University and has studied Social Public Policies at the Universidad Iberoamericana de México and Organizational Development at

MIT. She is currently a member of the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations, COMEXI, and previously served as a member of the Editorial Board of *Foreign Affairs en Español* magazine.

No.	Name	Country	Organisation	No. of posts
1	Almut Rochowanski (F)	USA/Austria	NGO - Peacebuilding UK	6
2	Fasiha Farrukh (F)	Pakistan	N/A	3
3	Alain Philippe Binyet Bi Mbog (M)	Cameroon	OMEP (World Organisation for Early Childhood Education)	3
4	Lucy Ferguson (F)	UK	Consultant, UN Women Training Centre	2
5	Taroub El Bedour (F)	Jordan/Switzerland	Consultant	1
6	Roxana Molinelli (F)	Argentina	Ministerio de Trabajo, Empleo y Seguridad Social - Dirección de Equidad de Género e Igualdad de Oportunidades en el Trabajo	1
7	Sara Beatriz Berumen (F)	Mexico	Traineer	1
8	Sepideh Labani Motlagh (F)	Spain	Free Lance Consultant	1
9	Thokozani Chiwandira Chimasula (F)	Malawi	Centre for Alternatives for Victimised Women and Children	1
10	Rossana Cifuentes Estrada (F)	Guatemala	PASMO PSI	1
11	Khamsavath Chanthavysouk (M)	Dominican Republic	UN Women	1

Contributors in the Forum Discussion