

# Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Results of UNEP's capacity assessment survey and  
recommendations



Photo credit: UNEP Flickr

United Nations Environment Programme  
UNEP

December 2022

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Capacity Assessment report was prepared by the Gender and Safeguards Unit (GSU) of the Policy and Programme Division in UNEP.

The GSU conveys its gratitude to the UN Women Training Centre for providing the Gender Equality Capacity Assessment Tool that guided the questionnaire used in the survey.

The GSU also appreciates the UNEP personnel who took time to participate in this survey. The information you provided is highly appreciated and has made the assessment possible. Thank you very much!

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....1
- 1. INTRODUCTION ..... 3
  - 1.1. Background .....3
- 2. RESULTS.....5
  - 2.1 Target Audience .....5
  - 2.2 Previous Experience in Training for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment .....6
  - 2.3 Conceptual Understanding of Gender Equality, Women’s Empowerment and Related International Conventions .....7
  - 2.4 Existing Capacities and Knowledge Sources .....11
  - 2.5 Learning Needs and Preferred Training Styles .....14
- 3. RECOMMENDATIONS.....16

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) Capacity Assessment was to determine the current needs and capacities of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) personnel<sup>1</sup> to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment across their work. The survey evaluated knowledge of the existing [UNEP Policy on Gender Equality and the Environment \(2014-2017\)](#) and the organization’s gender architecture. The assessment was rolled-out from June to August 2021 by UNEP’s Gender and Safeguards Unit (GSU).

The results from this assessment will be used to develop a UNEP GEWE Capacity Development Strategy and Plan and will provide inputs to the revision of the organization’s Policy and Strategy on Gender Equality and Environment both of which will be rolled-out in 2023 (Figure 1). Implementing the Capacity Development Strategy and Plan is a critical component of UNEP’s ‘MTS readiness’ to better prepare UNEP’s personnel to deliver the gender ambitions that are outlined in the MTS 2022 – 2025 and future gender targets.

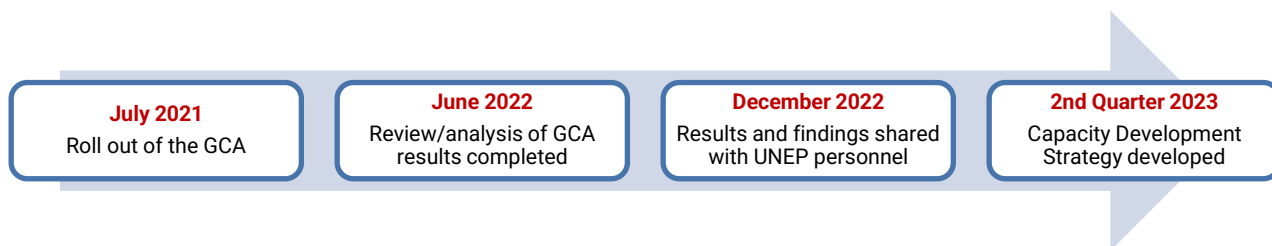


Figure 1: Timeline for the roll-out of the survey and integration of the results into the GEWE Capacity Development Strategy and Plan.

### 1.1. Background

UNEP recognizes that gender equality and the empowerment of women are fundamental enablers to tackle the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity and nature loss and pollution and waste, whilst ensuring progress towards environmental sustainability and the attainment of global goals, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through its Policy on Gender Equality and the Environment (2014-2017),<sup>2</sup> UNEP reaffirms the critical role of women as agents of change in environmental management and commits to mainstreaming gender in its policies and programmes as a way of unlocking women’s

<sup>1</sup> Personnel includes staff, consultants, UN Volunteers, interns, and individual contractors at the UNEP Secretariat, administered Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and UNEP’s affiliated centers such as collaborating centers (e.g., UNEP-WCMC).

<sup>2</sup> UNEP’s Gender Equality and the Environment Policy and Strategy (2014 – 2017) remains valid until the new one for 2022 – 2025 has been approved.

potential as drivers of sustainable development.

**UNEP's mandate to GEWE was reinforced by the United Nations Environment Assembly, and its strong commitment to gender was recognized in key senior management reports, corporate strategic documents,<sup>3</sup> and recent engagement in the workings of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).** In 2019, UNEA 4 adopted a resolution on [Promoting gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of women and girls in environmental governance](#) (UNEA4/Res.17), which outlined the actions and responsibilities of UNEP and Member States in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment through programmes, projects and policies. In March 2022, UNEP brought the nexus between gender and the triple planetary crisis at the forefront of many events within the 66<sup>th</sup> CSW session. The conclusions and recommendations of the Commission explicitly invite Member States to act against the triple planetary crisis.

**The United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN-SWAP) is the foundation of UNEP's operational strategy for gender mainstreaming as outlined by the Policy and Strategy.<sup>4</sup>** The UN-SWAP framework was developed by UN Women in 2012 to promote accountability and harmonize gender mainstreaming actions within the UN system and to enable agencies to develop results-oriented actions to contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment.

**Since the introduction of the UN-SWAP in 2012, UNEP has reported to UN Women its progress towards mainstreaming gender in the organization and its operations.** Participation in the UN-SWAP continues to guide UNEP on how to achieve its gender-related aspirations and goals. One of the recommendations from UN Women based on UNEP's 2021 UN-SWAP report card was for UNEP to assess the capacity of its personnel in GEWE, which is the *raison d'être* behind this report.

---

<sup>3</sup> These include the [SMT 2020 Annual Report](#), the [Executive Director's 2020 Annual Letter](#) and the [Medium-Term Strategy \(MTS\) \(2022-2025\)](#) and Programme of Work and Budget (PoW) (2022-2023) which commit UNEP to improving its performance in achieving transformative gender-responsive results in its programmes and projects with a target of meeting or exceeding 82% of the UN-SWAP 2.0 performance indicators by 2024.

<sup>4</sup> The Policy and Strategy is aligned to the UNSWAP I. The UNSWAP II and the MTS 2022-2025 will inform the development of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Policy and Strategy.

## 2. RESULTS

### 2.1 Target Audience

The target audience for this survey was UNEP personnel, including staff, consultants, UN Volunteers, interns, and individual contractors at the UNEP Secretariat, administered Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and UNEP’s affiliated centers such as collaborating centers. A total of 201 UNEP staff responded.

The respondents were predominantly from the UNEP Secretariat (66%) and female (66%). Most of the participants were Professional Level Staff (P2 – P4) with 44% participation rate followed by Consultants and Contractors (15%); General Service Personnel (14%); Senior Professional Level Staff (P5 – D1) with 14% and UN Volunteers (10%). Interns comprised 2% and others 0.5% (Figures 2 and 3).

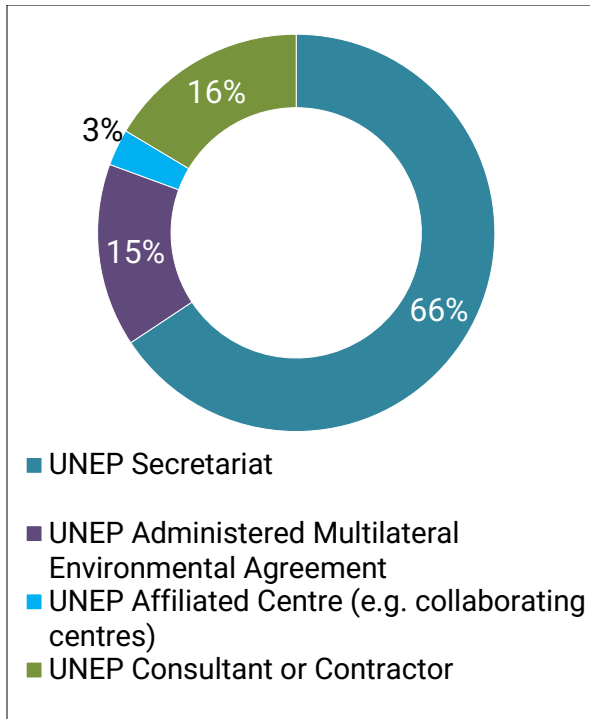


Figure 2: Affiliation to UNEP.

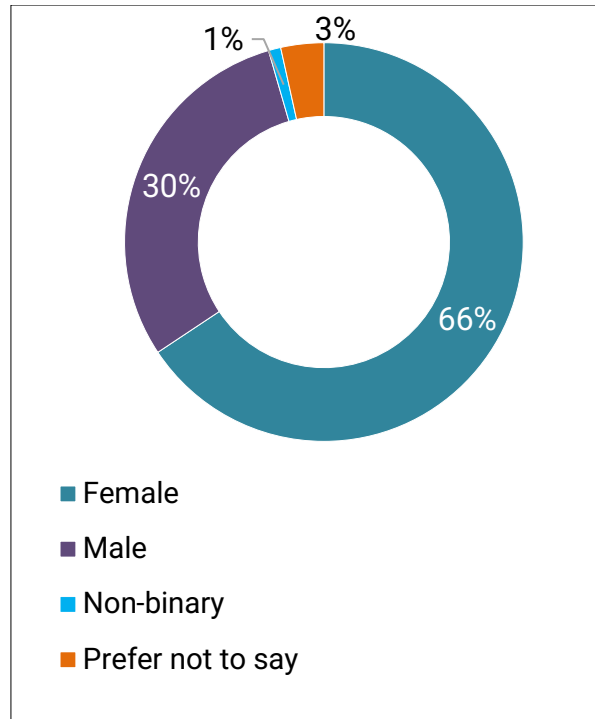


Figure 3: Gender of Participants.

Participation of personnel that have been working for the UNEP Secretariat, its administered MEAs and affiliated centers for less than a year was almost equal to those that have been working between one and four years, between five and ten years and above ten years (Figure

4).

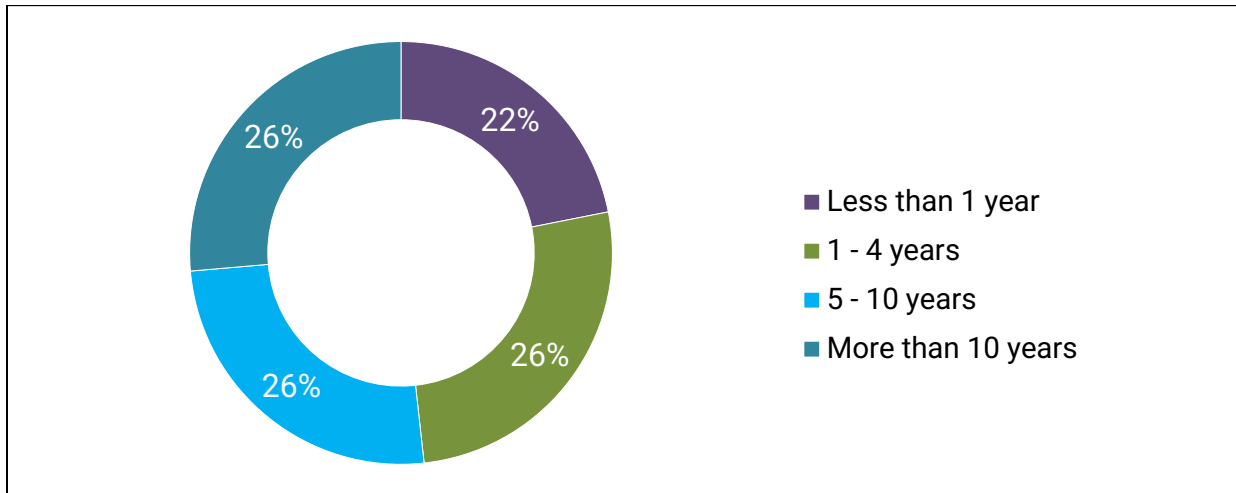


Figure 4: Number of years of affiliation to UNEP.

## 2.2 Previous Experience in Training for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

**Existing mandatory trainings or orientations on GEWE, including the ["I Know Gender"](#) course, offered by UN Women, do not prompt sufficient level of engagement from UNEP personnel.** Only **56%** of the respondents have undertaken at least one of these training courses or orientations, while the remaining 44% did not complete any (Figure 5). When it comes to additional trainings or orientations beyond the mandatory ones, the number drops even further (**19%**) (Figure 6).

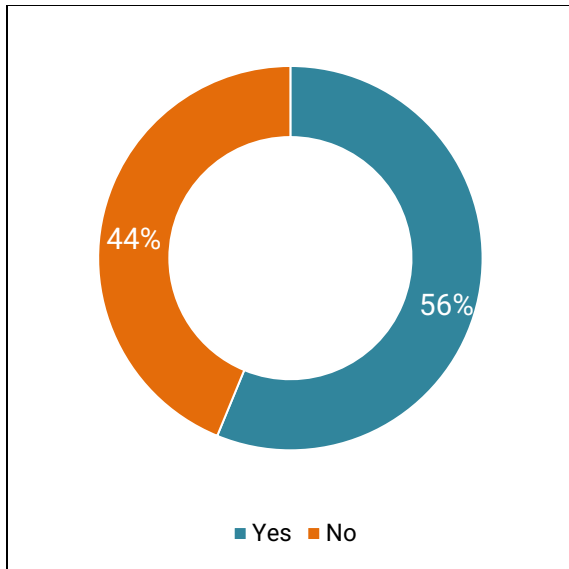


Figure 5: Completion of an introductory training or orientation on GEWE.

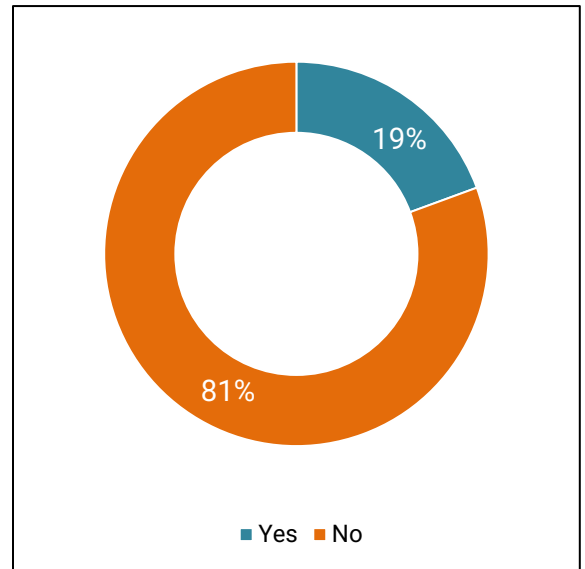


Figure 6: Completion of additional trainings or orientations on GEWE.

### 2.3 Conceptual Understanding of Gender Equality, Women’s Empowerment and Related International Conventions

**49% of the respondents believe that GEWE significantly influences their work, whilst 39% found that the relevance of GEWE in their work is limited. Only 4% indicated that the promotion of GEWE is the primary focus of their work and 8% found the promotion of GEWE not relevant at all or did not know (Figure 7). The survey also shows that 93% of those respondents that found the promotion of GEWE to be of limited relevance had only undergone one introductory (mandatory) GEWE training.**



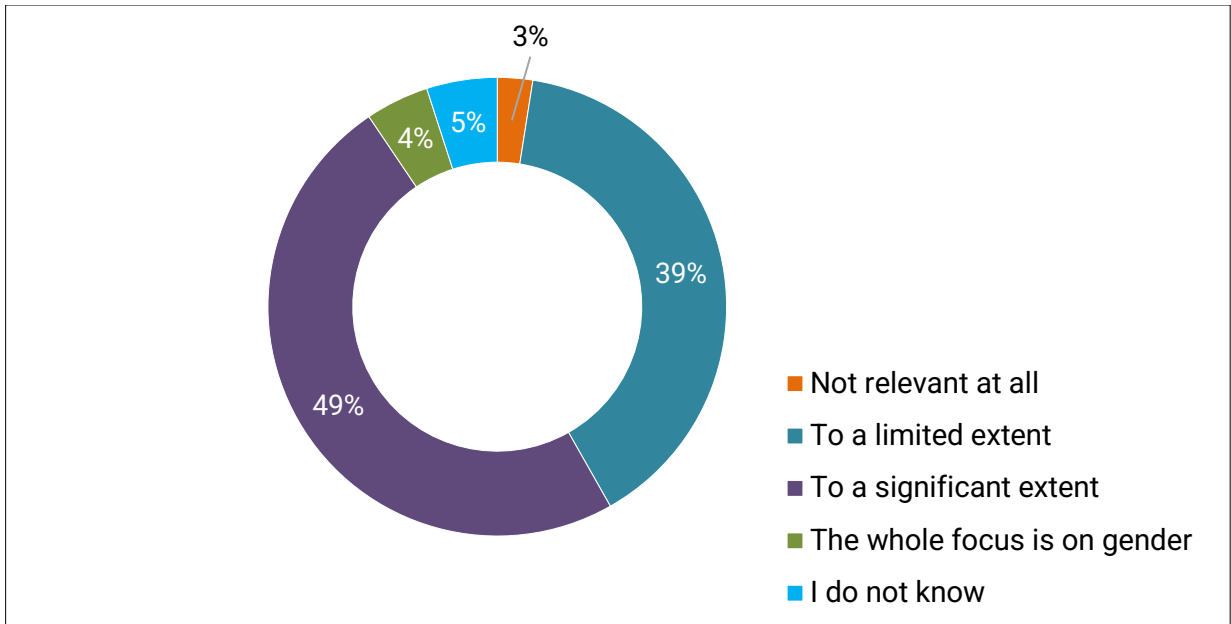


Figure 7: Relevance of GEWE in staff's work.

**89% of the respondents found that the promotion of GEWE is relevant to a significant extent to the mandate of the organization, while 8% felt that it is relevant to a limited extent** (Figure 8). Combined with the previous finding, this shows that despite the high recognition of the centrality of GEWE in achieving UNEP's mandate, most UNEP personnel do not believe that GEWE actually bears a significant influence on their work.

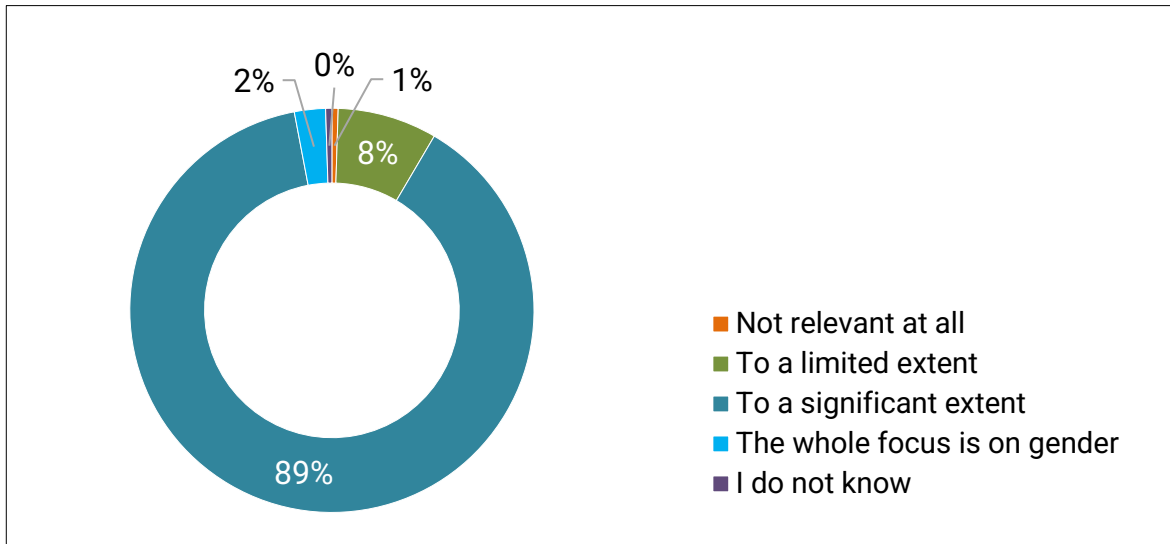


Figure 8: Extent to which the promotion of GEWE is relevant to UNEP's mandate.

**74% of the respondents found that GEWE perspectives are relevant to the thematic focus of their division/branches or units** (Figure 9). On the contrary, less than a quarter (23%) believe that the significance of GEWE is limited; a further 1% found the promotion of GEWE irrelevant, 1% did not know and another 1% only found the promotion of GEWE to be the entire focus of their division or unit.

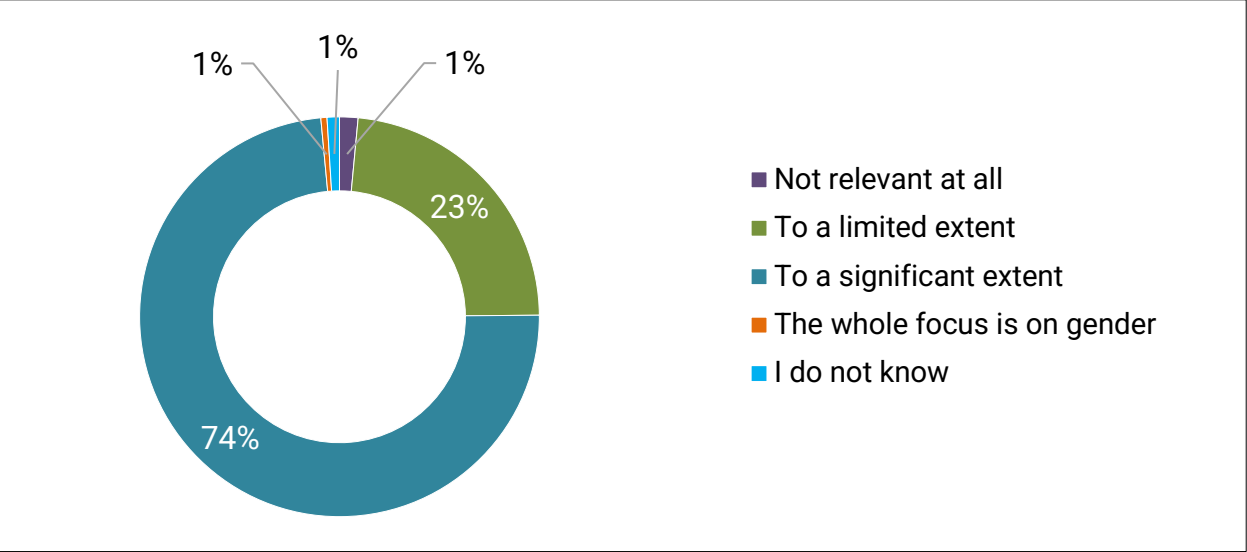


Figure 9: Extent to which principles of GEWE are relevant to the work of a division/unit.

**In terms of individual level of conceptual understanding of the difference between the promotion of gender equality and the enhancement of women’s empowerment, only 25% of the respondents gave a negative rating, while most of the respondents (75%) reported to understand the difference** (Figure 10).

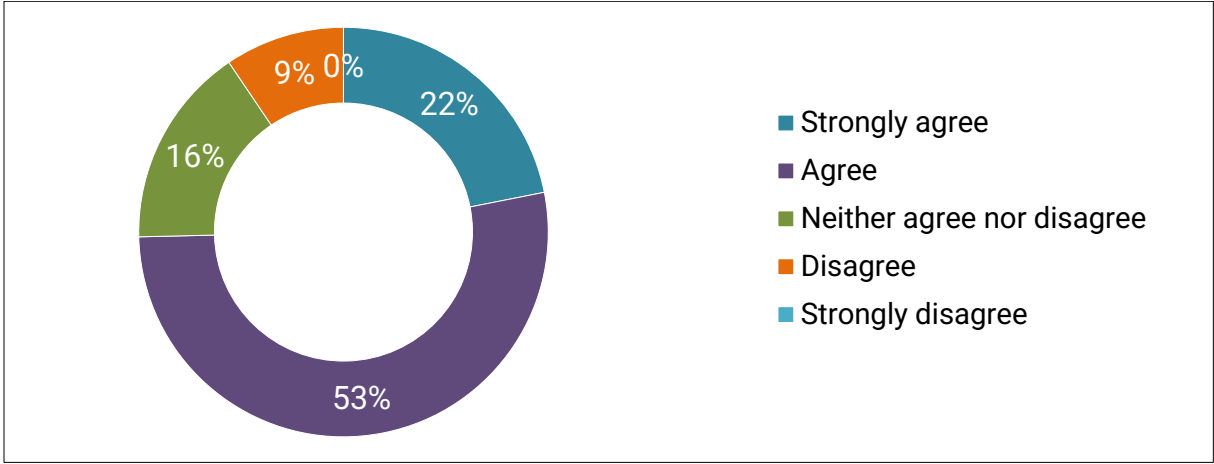
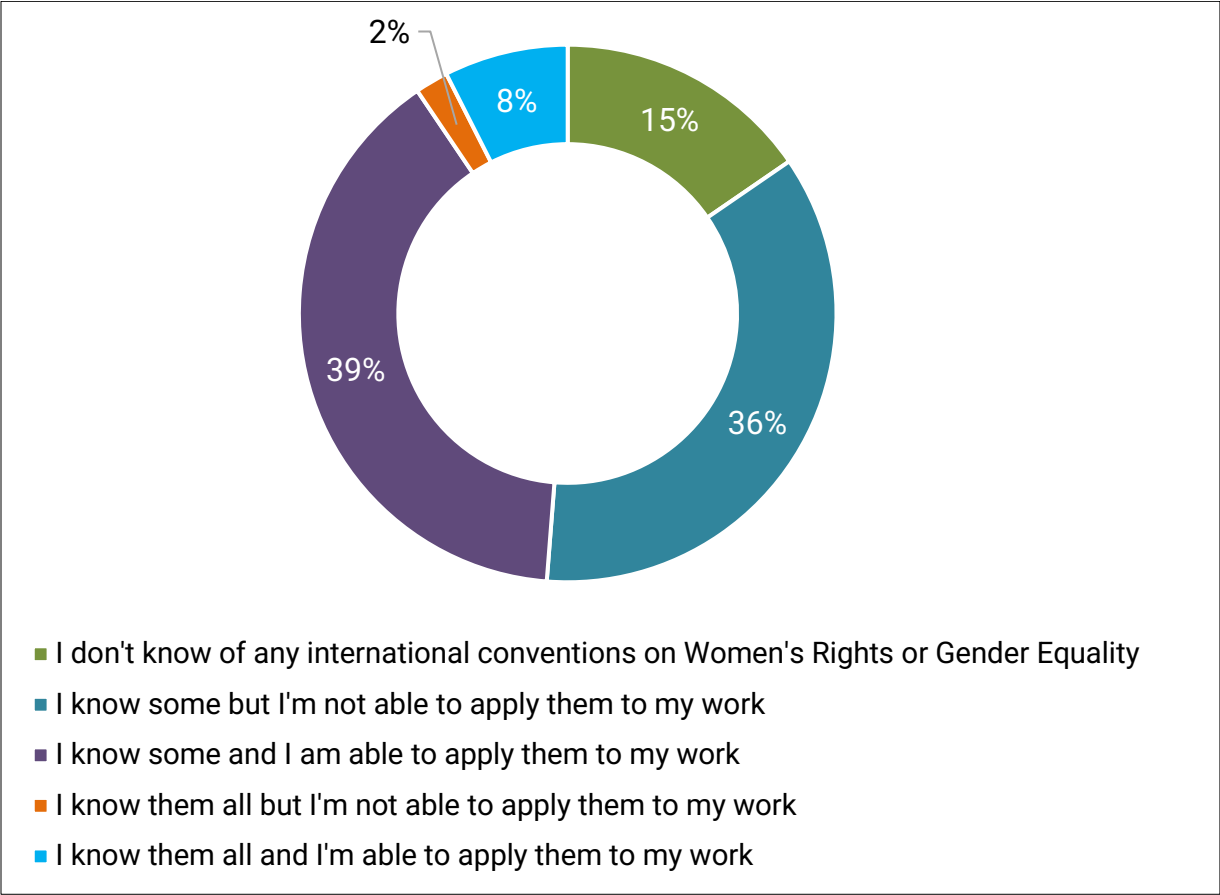


Figure 10: Understanding of the difference between the promotion of gender equality and the enhancement of women’s empowerment.

**In terms of familiarity with international conventions on Women’s Rights or Gender Equality, only 8% of the respondents reported to know them all and able to apply them to their work (Figure 11). The biggest numbers of respondents indicated having only partial knowledge, with some being able to apply them to their work (39%) and others being unable to do so (36%). 15% of the respondents, finally, indicated complete lack of awareness.**

**As an additional insight, 69% of the respondents reported linking their knowledge of international conventions and ability to apply them to their work to the undertaking of at least one training or orientation on GEWE mainstreaming.** This shows that existing trainings or orientations have somewhat enhanced these capacities, albeit for a limited number of UNEP personnel (8% and 39%, respectively).

**These findings emphasize the need to leverage training opportunities to further build a conceptual understanding of GEWE and the spectrum of related international commitments** in a manner that can enable colleagues across the organization to concretely apply these to their day-to-day work.



*Figure 11: Extent of familiarity with international conventions that promote GEWE.*

## 2.4 Existing Capacities and Knowledge Sources

Most of the respondents rated their knowledge and proficiency in mainstreaming GEWE across various processes, such as gender analysis for strategic planning, gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation etc., as average (Figure 12). Almost 50% of the respondents reported to have poor or very poor gender mainstreaming skills, while about a quarter described their gender mainstreaming knowledge and proficiency as either good or very good across various processes.

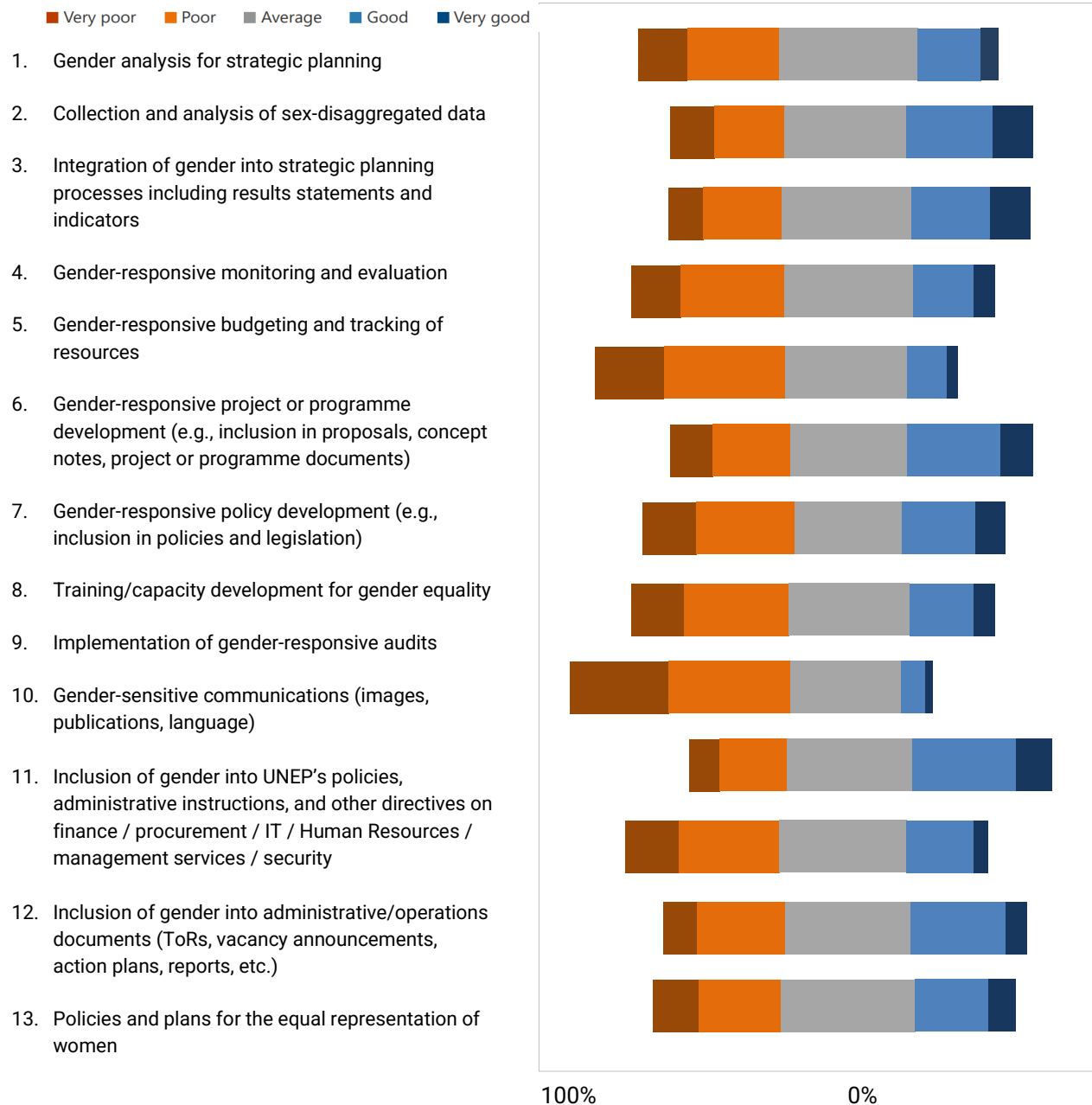


Figure 12: Level of knowledge and proficiency in gender mainstreaming.

**Implementation of gender-responsive audits; gender-responsive budgeting and tracking of resources; and inclusion of gender into UNEP's policies, administrative instructions and other directives on finance, procurement, IT, etc., are the processes that respondents reported to be least skilled in.**

Most of the proficiency, conversely, was rated for gender-sensitive communications (images, publications, language); collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data; integration of gender into strategic planning processes including results statements and indicators; gender-responsive project or programme development (e.g., inclusion of gender in proposals, programmes or projects); and inclusion of gender into administrative/operations documents.

**In terms of source of knowledge and information on GEWE, only 45% of the respondents indicated to make use of the network of the Gender Focal Points located in UNEP Divisions, MEAs and Regional Offices** (Figure 13). This may be because, with few exceptions, the majority of these focal points, who operate these tasks on a voluntary basis and additionally to their day-to-day work, may not necessarily possess the level of knowledge and expertise required to provide adequate guidance on GEWE matters. UNEP's Intranet (WeCollaborate) and UNEP's publications were rated as useful sources by 38% and 33% of the respondents, respectively. Only 22% of the respondents, instead, regarded the UNEP Gender and Safeguards Unit as the main source of information on GEWE.

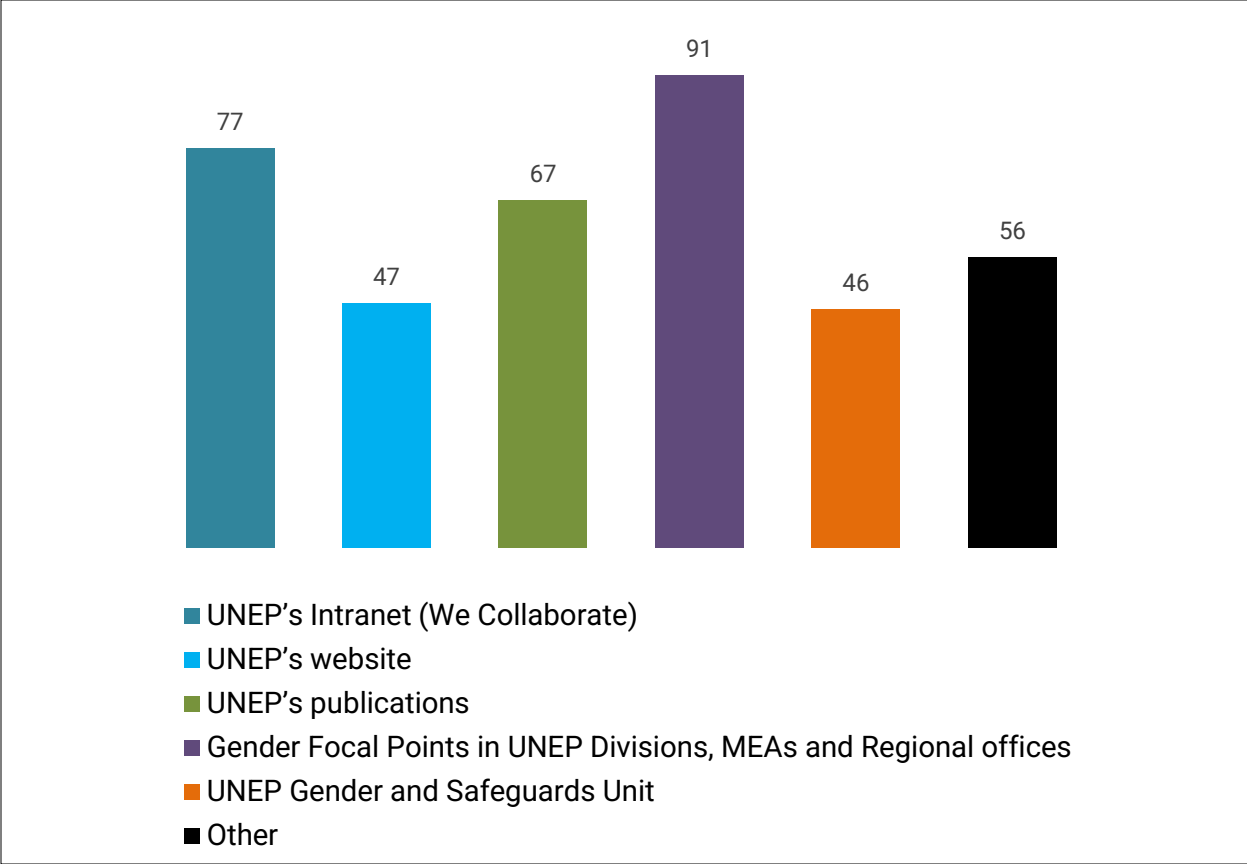


Figure 13: Source of information to enhance knowledge of gender equality issues (NB: respondents could select more than one option for this question; results expressed in number of respondents).

**These findings indicate that, due to capacity constraints, the use of the network of Gender Focal Points and other knowledge sources on GEWE are strongly underleveraged across the organization.**

## 2.5 Learning Needs and Preferred Training Styles

On substantive learning needs and desired skills, respondents welcomed a focus on the development/implementation of gender responsive policies and strategies (73%) and the development/implementation of gender responsive projects (e.g., analysis, mainstreaming, action plans, budgeting) (70%) (Figure 14). These are followed by the need to acquire capacities to implement UNEP gender policies and strategies (66%) and tools for mainstreaming GEWE in UNEP policies and programmes (e.g., Medium Term Strategy/Programme of Work) (65%). The least chosen focus area was an 'Introduction to tools for mainstreaming GEWE in UNEP's administrative policies and actions' (e.g., Finance, Human Resources) (46%). This may be because majority of the respondents work in policies and programmes and not in finance or human resources.

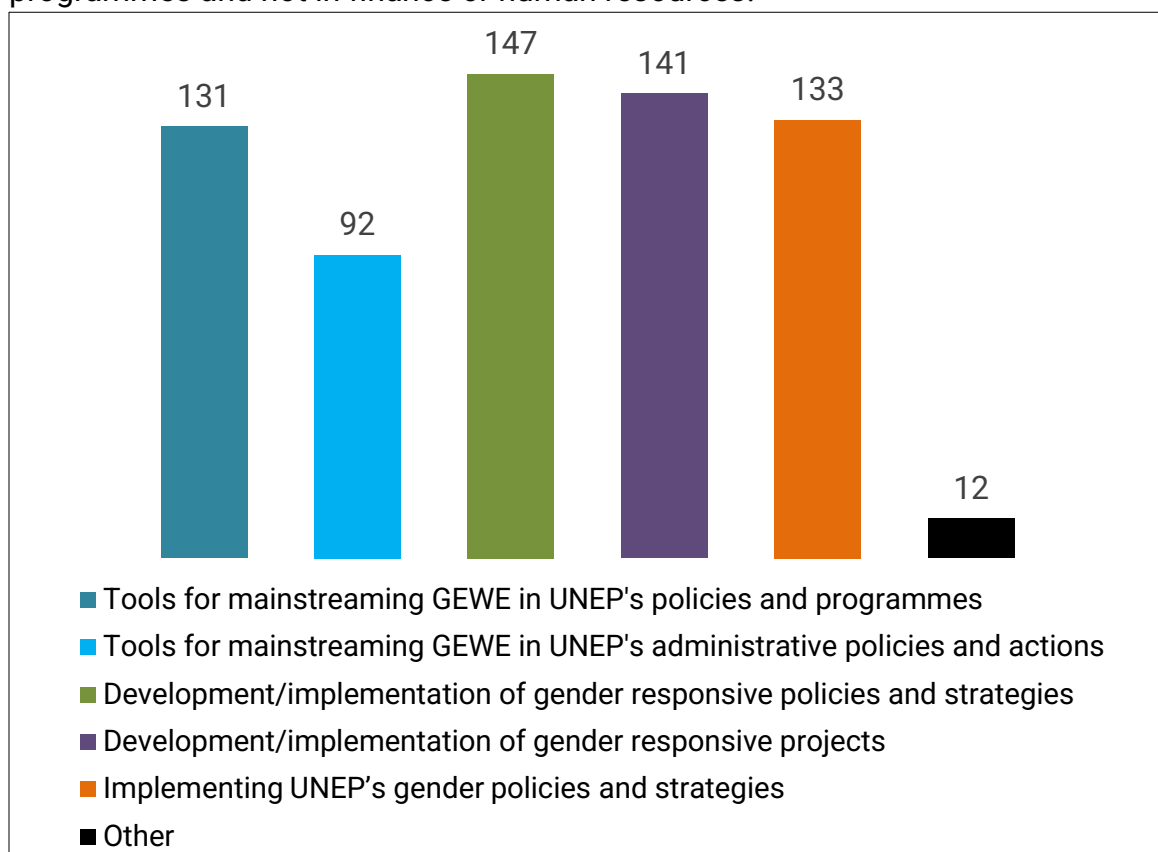


Figure 14: Substantive learning needs and desired skills needed to improve GEWE capacities. (NB: respondents could select more than one option for this question; results expressed in number of respondents).

In terms of preferred learning methods, the respondents indicated, in order of preference: Face-to-face training and courses, face-to-face workshops and self-paced online courses. The least preferred learning methods are conferences, detailed assignments and coaching (Figure 15).

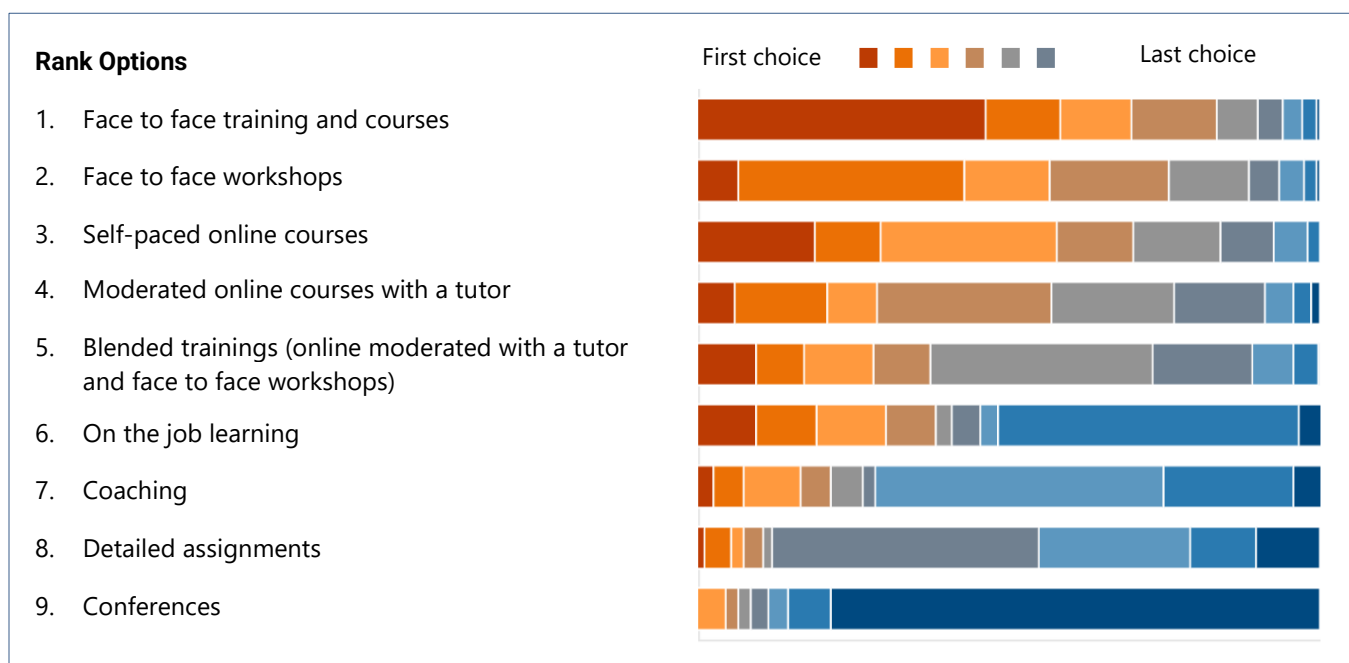


Figure 15: Preferred learning methods (most preferred - least preferred). Red: first choice; blue last choice.

Overall, the survey reveals that:

- A. **Only 56% of the respondents have taken at least one introductory training or orientation on GEWE**, including the “I Know Gender” course, which is compulsory for all UN personnel.
- B. **Only 8% of the respondents have reported to be fully knowledgeable about GEWE concepts and related international conventions and being able to apply these to their work.**
- C. **Almost 50% of the respondents have rated their knowledge and proficiency in gender mainstreaming as average, with the lowest ratings reported for implementation of gender-responsive audits**, followed by gender-responsive budgeting and tracking of resources and gender integration into UNEP policies and administrative instructions and other directives on finance, procurement and IT.
- D. **The network of Gender Focal Points in Divisions, MEAs and Regional Offices is the preferred source of information on GEWE issues (45%)** but access to it and use other information sources (e.g., WeCollaborate, UNEP publications etc.) remain underleveraged due to capacity constraints.
- E. **There is a strong desire to learn how to better develop and implement gender**



**responsive policies and strategies (73%) across the substantive work of UNEP**, followed by the development/implementation of gender responsive projects (analysis, mainstreaming, action plans, budgeting) (70%), and implementation of UNEP-specific gender policies and strategies (66%).

- F. **Face-to-face training and courses remain the preferred learning method**, followed by face-to-face workshops and self-paced online courses.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. Change the culture around GEWE issues.** We must do more to prompt colleagues to understand value, get trained on and apply GEWE in their day-to-day work. It's not only a matter of substance, but a matter of culture.
- B. Innovate.** Existing training and orientation resources are not fully adequate to help colleagues understand, apply and promote GEWE across their work. We must be more innovative and sharper in our approach.
- C. Act with focus.** The survey identifies key corporate areas for intervention. We must focus our efforts on these as a matter of priority as we revisit our training and orientation resources, build stronger capacities and competencies of the Gender Focal Points network and leverage additional knowledge resources and platforms.
- D. Monitor our wins.** Investing in training and capacity building alone is not enough. We must improve how monitor our gains through investing in knowledge management, dissemination and measuring uptake across the organization.
- E. Design and implement a comprehensive capacity development strategy and plan for all UNEP personnel, which can address the findings and conclusions of this survey.**