

System-wide Strategy on  
**Gender Parity**

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**UN Women's Status Report**  
**&**  
**Updated Implementation Plan**

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## Introduction

Achieving gender parity continues to be an urgent priority not only as a basic human right, but also as it is essential to the United Nations' efficiency, impact and credibility. The United Nations, as the principal international standard-setting institution, bears a special responsibility to lead by example and leave no one behind. The UN has a pivotal role in supporting the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Gender parity is important for taking us to Planet 50:50 by 2030, and the UN and governments' leadership is essential. This year we have celebrated the third anniversary [of the UN Secretary-General's System-Wide Strategy on Gender Parity](#), which has accelerated system-wide efforts to reach parity at the United Nations by 2028.

The Secretary-General's strategy includes six UN Women-specific recommendations, which were incorporated and highlighted in [UN Women's Implementation Plan](#) (December 2017). UN Women has also been committed to other and more general recommendations of the Secretary-General's strategy. Furthermore, UN Women has assisted and offered its expertise to other UN entities, primarily through its coordination of the network of UN Gender Focal Points. Inter-agency collaboration has been necessary for the joint efforts to reach parity across the board.

This Status Report and Updated Implementation Plan elaborates on the progress made and results achieved since 2017, based on the specific requests for UN Women. It also reports on our system-wide work as well as internal progress. Implementation, follow-up and monitoring the progress of the key recommendations are critical to ensure that the momentum on parity is sustained and the strategy is successfully rolled out.

I have said this before, and I will say it again: through determined and joint efforts, change is possible. It is imperative to move forward and reach gender parity. We have created several guidelines and communication products to enhance system-wide progress, including through [the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations system](#). It is important to create a working environment, at all levels, that embraces equality, eradicates bias and is inclusive of all staff, so that we can truly lead by example and leave no one behind. Implementation will also need to focus further on geographic diversity, particularly from underrepresented groups. The twin goals of parity and diversity are and should be mutually reinforcing.

Experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic have also offered opportunities for the United Nations "to build back better". As we enter the Decade of Action on the Sustainable Development Goals, we can transform our organizational culture, with women's rights at the center, and to energize progress on gender equality, for the benefit of all.

UN Women continues to be committed to supporting the UN system to reach gender parity based on this updated plan as well as on its mandate to lead, promote and coordinate efforts to advance the full realization of women's rights and opportunities. We need everyone to be involved, engaged and committed. You can count on our continued support and system-wide collaboration.

**Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**  
**Executive Director of UN Women**

## Specific recommended actions for UN Women: achievements and plans ahead

The Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity includes six UN Women-specific recommendations, which were incorporated in UN Women's Implementation Plan (2017). The progress and achievements as well as future commitments are reported as follows.

### 1. Good practices guidelines for an enabling and inclusive organizational culture

“Good practices guidelines for an enabling and inclusive organizational culture are developed by CEB HR Network, OHRM and UN Women and shared with each entity to incorporate into existing policies, monitoring and implementation.”

Based on the Secretary-General's request and in line with its system-wide mandate, UN Women developed [the \*Enabling Environment Guidelines for the UN system\*](#) and [the \*Supplementary Guidance\*](#) in support of the System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity in 2019. The Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System support efforts to create working environments that embrace equality, eradicate bias and are inclusive of all staff, therefore enhancing gender parity endeavors. As the Secretary-General has indicated, parity is not merely about numbers, but also changing the organizational culture.

The Guidelines provide a comprehensive set of good practices that serve a wide range of implementation needs and cover topics of **workplace flexibility, family-friendly policies and standards of conduct, recruitment, talent management and implementation**. The recommendations and good practices apply to all personnel working for the UN including staff, consultants, contractors, interns, and UN volunteers.

The Guidelines were developed through a consultative approach and in cooperation with the Human Resources Network of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the UN Secretariat's Office of Human Resources. Moreover, Gender Focal Points across the UN system, UN-GLOBE, the Inter-agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other stakeholders were consulted upon.

The UN Secretary-General launched the Enabling Environment Guidelines in March 2019. UN Women organized additional launch events in Geneva, Vienna and Mombasa. Since then, UN Women has supported the implementation of the Guidelines, amongst others through leading and coordinating the UN system-wide Gender Focal Point Network, providing capacity development for the whole UN system, and collaborating and raising awareness about the Guidelines with UN Member States. To date, approximately 160 UN entities have been provided with tailored guidance and expertise on the implementation of the Guidelines by UN Women.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Based at UN Women, the Office of the Focal Point for Women in the UN system serves as the chief advocate for monitoring and improving the status of women across the system and assisting the UN SG in achieving the General Assembly-mandated goal of 50:50 gender balance at all levels in the UN system. The most recent resolution that calls on the UN system to enhance gender parity and equality through the support of focal points and the Enabling Environment Guidelines is A/RES/74/128.

In 2020, UN Women has also developed the *Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines* in response to the UN Secretary-General's priority to focus on the field and based on several requests from field-based Gender Focal Points. Furthermore, UN Member States have requested accelerated efforts to achieve gender parity in the field and in peacekeeping missions (A/RES/74/128).

The field guidelines provide examples of good practices and recommendations to promote gender parity as well as an inclusive and diverse organisational culture, with specific focus on **professional and personal life integration, standards of conduct, security and safety, occupational safety, health and well-being, recruitment, talent management, retention as well as leadership, accountability and implementation**. The Guidelines were developed through an inclusive and collaborative approach, including interviews with nearly 200 colleagues from over 50 countries where the UN operates. As with the Enabling Environment Guidelines, an intersectional approach<sup>2</sup> is applied and should guide the implementation of the recommendations.

The recommendations of the Enabling Environment Guidelines and Field-specific Guidelines are both a precursor for achieving parity and a key to sustaining it.

**Future plans:** UN Women will continue to support the implementation of the Enabling Environment Guidelines across the UN system through dedicated **capacity building for the UN system-wide Gender Focal Point Network** and through **tailored guidance** to UN entities, as requested. Moreover, **communication products** will be created to enhance the implementation. UN Women will also continue to **collect good practises and examples** from across the UN system, and will recognize excellent achievements at its Annual Global Gender Focal Point meeting. Moreover, such examples will be showcased in **the Gender Focal Point Extranet**, which was created in 2019. The Extranet will further accelerate sharing information and good practices related to gender parity in the UN system.

**The Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines will be launched.** UN Women will support the implementation efforts, which include **dedicated capacity-building, guidance and awareness raising with the field and peacekeeping missions**, as well as collaboration with UN Resident Coordinators and Gender Focal Points. This work will be specifically important during and after the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the continuation of gender parity progress.

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<sup>2</sup> An intersectional approach is inclusive of different identities and conscious of various power dynamics. Inequality, like discrimination, does not occur along a single axis but is intersectional. People's identities and social positions are uniquely shaped by several factors at the same time, creating unique experiences and perspectives. These identities and power dynamics include but are not limited to sex, gender identity and expression, sex characteristics, ethnicity, race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability and age.

## **2. Work with civil society partners to encourage shadow reporting on the overall strategy**

“To ensure the UN is modelling transparency, UN Women to work with civil society partners to encourage shadow reporting on the overall strategy.”

Shadow reporting by civil society representatives has been identified as one of the significant elements **to increase transparency and accountability** in the Secretary-General’s System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity. In 2018 and 2019, several exchanges with civil society partners were convened to discuss how the shadow reporting could be best implemented. Furthermore, UN Women organized side events in the context of the CSW62 and CSW63 to introduce the concept of shadow reporting and commence a dialogue with UN Member States and civil society representatives.

The project will be launched at the end of 2020. It will provide **a review of the current status of the implementation of the Secretary-General’s System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity, while making recommendations for strengthening implementation as well as suggestions for stronger monitoring.** The risks and opportunities arising from COVID-19 pandemic will also be considered. The shadow report will enhance coordination, coherence, and accountability of the UN system for commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment.

**Future plans:** The selected civil society partners will start working on the shadow reporting project at the end of 2020. The first assessment of the initial findings and recommendations for strengthened implementation of the Strategy are expected to be finalized in the spring of 2021. **The shadow report will be presented by the end of 2021.**

This project is the first step of the full initiative in which the goal is to continue the shadow reporting mechanism, on a regular basis until the 2028 deadline, set by the Secretary-General, pending on the available funds and agreement from civil society partners.

## **3. Dedicated strategy to significantly increase the numbers of women peacekeepers and police in peacekeeping missions**

“DPKO/DFS with support from UN Women and EOSG to develop a dedicated strategy in consultation with Troop Contributing Countries to significantly increase the numbers of women peacekeepers and police in peacekeeping missions.”

**UN Women contributed to the development and implementation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO) Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy for 2018-2028** and works with both the Office of Military Affairs and the Police Division of the Office of the Rule of Law and Security Institutions to implement the strategy recommendations. In particular, UN Women has worked closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO) to provide technical advice, advocate and promote the increase of the number of women in uniform on peacekeeping operations, in line with the requirements of UNSCR 2242, 2436 and the Secretary-General’s Gender Parity Strategy. The Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy (UGPS) was published in 2019.

Furthermore, UN Women in collaboration with the EOSG, DPO, the Government of Canada and Member States, has developed and launched **the Elsie Initiative Fund** – a multi-partner trust-fund designed to provide an innovative financial mechanism to support and incentivize Member States to increase the number of uniformed women they deploy on peacekeeping operations in line with the UGPS.

**Future plans:** Further to support the previously mentioned efforts, UN Women continues to oversee **the Female Military Officers' Course**. To date, this two-week residential training program has been conducted 15 times, with over 500 graduates. The course is designed to help female military officers prepare for service as a staff officer or a military observer on a peacekeeping operation. It is estimated that over 75% of these female officers have gone on to serve on peacekeeping operations. Due to COVID-19 this course has been modified for virtual delivery with a course being completed in September 2020 with subsequent courses scheduled for December 2020 and the first quarter of 2021.

#### **4. New public information, social and digital media campaign promoting women in UN field missions**

“DPI and DFS, with support from UN Women, to launch a new public information, social and digital media campaign promoting women in UN field missions – both peace operations and UNCT. “

The Department of Public Information (DPI) has taken the lead in boosting the recruitment of women in peace operations. As per the Secretary-General's Gender Parity Strategy, this campaign aims to promote a positive image of women civilians working in the field.

UN Women has prepared and supported the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) in its development of **gender parity videos** featuring senior leadership in missions speaking out on the issue and has cross-promoted these videos through its social media channels. The videos give visibility for gender parity efforts and encourage leadership commitments to attain parity.

Moreover, the Office of the Focal Point for Women in the UN System at UN Women **has developed and begun implementation of a gender parity communications strategy**. The strategy aligns with the UN Women corporate communications guidance and with the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity to develop internal and external messaging, including in social media. It uses already well-received communication products related to the implementation of the Enabling Environment Guidelines, such as thematic 'How to' documents and videos of senior UN staff expressing the importance of gender parity. New products are planned specially to support the implementation of the Field-specific Guidelines.

**Future plans:** UN Women will continue to implement the gender parity communications strategy as well as develop communication products and concrete tools that will help the UN system to make progress on gender parity, especially in the field.

## 5. Database of Women National Officers

“UN Women in conjunction with Resident Coordinators’ Office and UNCTs, as well as peace operations where relevant, to develop a database of women national officers and their skills and expertise to create a pool from which the System can do dedicated outreach for international positions.”

The Secretary-General’s Strategy called for **greater collaboration on talent acquisition and to address barriers to recruiting more female national staff into international positions.** Therefore, the Strategy recommended to develop a database of female national officers and their skills and expertise from which the UN system can do dedicated outreach of female national officers for international positions.

In 2020, UN Women and UN Secretariat’s Office of Human Resources have finalized and presented the proposal to the HR Network on the development of the database.

**Future plan and next steps:** The Female National Officer Pool is expected to be launched early 2021. Following the launch, UN Women will coordinate efforts for a communication a campaign including working with the UN system-wide Gender Focal Point Network to support a dedicated outreach to female national officers across the UN system. Based on the experience, the project can be modelled and expanded to include other personnel groups in the coming years (e.g. General Service staff and representation from under-represented countries), as requested. The Female National Officer Pool is timely given the increasing number of retiring staff in the UN system as of 2021, which will offer an opportunity to improve women’s representation and address gender imbalances, especially in the field.

## 6. Communications strategy, including internal and external messaging

“DM, EOSG, UN Women and DPI to develop a communications strategy which will include both internal and external messaging. Internally, this will provide content for discussions on the necessity of gender parity, highlighting the negative effects of gender discrimination and the positive impacts of diversity, as well as providing suggested messaging for senior leaders on specific issues such as flexible work arrangements, family related leave, and the goals of parity generally.”

Interagency collaboration on this recommendation has been conducted in parallel with the above recommendation #4. **UN Women has developed and disseminated several communication tools and products to support entities in their advocacy and advancement on gender parity and creation of enabling working environments.** These include tools for creating gender sensitive communications and facts about the benefits of gender parity. This particular work has been incorporated in the recommendation #4 (new public information, social and digital media campaign promoting women in UN field missions).

Since 2017, UN Women has produced **communications products** to support gender parity efforts in the whole UN system, including:



- Factsheet on '[Why Gender Parity](#)'
- [Benefits of Flexible Working](#)
- [Flexible Working - why it makes sense](#)
- Factsheet on the Representation of Women in the UN system
- Handout on recruitment
- Handout on developing a gender parity strategy
- Top Tips: How to Prepare and Implement Inclusive Exit Surveys
- Handout on Inclusive Vacancy Announcements
- [Mentoring as part of creating an enabling environment](#)

Several communication products have also been developed in the context of COVID-19:

- [How to address online sexual harassment during COVID-19](#)
- [Top tips to foster inclusivity online during COVID-19](#)
- [Ten ways to create an enabling environment during COVID-19](#)

UN Women has also developed **videos** on the importance of reaching gender parity and enhancing diversity in the workforce. The videos feature SRSG/Colombia and UNMAS leaders among others. Please see the videos here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3rc8FEOW8SY-PGKNBUM3KamJLANG3gg->

Furthermore, UN Women has maintained internal and external communications on gender parity issues including regular iSeek articles, UN Women social media content and awareness-raising events. Furthermore, the Office has created **the Gender Focal Point Extranet** (2019), which serves as a central hub for substantive guidance, resources, data, policy examples, and a platform to enhance interagency knowledge sharing and collaboration. Based on feedback received from Gender Focal Points, the Extranet has accelerated progress on efforts to reach gender parity as well as inspired organizational change based on the good examples and showcased actions across the board.

**Future plans:** UN Women will continue to develop and disseminate communication products in support of gender parity and creation of enabling working environments, as well as specific guidance in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, pending the available resources. Tailored communication products will be developed to support the implementation of the Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines in field locations and peacekeeping missions (please see #4).

## Additional UN Women's efforts to support the implementation of the SG's Strategy

### 1. UN system-wide Gender Focal Point Network

Based at UN Women, the Office of the Focal Point for Women in the UN System is mandated to monitor and report on the status of women in the United Nations system. Leading and coordinating the Network of Focal Points for Women and Gender Focal Points across the board is one of the primary functions of the Focal Point for Women in the UN System.

Extensive efforts have been invested into strengthening the system-wide Network since 2017, as they are ideally placed to help implement the SG's Strategy within their organizations. **With the support of UN Women's strategic and technical support as well as entity-specific guidance, 95-96 % of entities have successfully developed entity-specific Gender Parity Implementation Plans. The Network has grown to nearly 400 members, including Gender Focal Points working in the field.** A strong Gender Focal Point Network is a success factor for the advancement of gender parity since Focal Points give visibility for the cause and initiate concrete actions on the ground. The crucial role of the Gender Focal Points in implementing the SG's Strategy and creating enabling working environments across the system has also been recognized by UN Member States, as per A/RES/74/128.

To build the knowledge base and capacities of Gender Focal Points, the Office has organized regular capacity building sessions and workshops since 2017, **including Annual Global Meetings focusing on enhancing gender parity and creation of enabling working environments.** During 2017-2020, the Office conducted approximately **15-20 capacity building sessions on gender parity** related issues per year. Moreover, the Office has **provided guidance and expertise on parity to approximately 160 UN entities per year since 2017.** This has enabled Gender Focal Points to advance gender parity through a variety of gender related policies from flexible working arrangements to standards of conduct.

Furthermore, to better understand and be able to respond to the experiences of women personnel in the UN as well as gender parity progress during the COVID-19 crisis, the Office **conducted a survey among the UN System-wide Gender Focal Point Network in 2020.** According to the survey results, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenge to balance work and life for women personnel. The situation was described as a "double burden" or a "triple role of women" (working, home schooling and caring). The increased burden of care and household chores and the fact that these fell on women was also seen to reinforce gender norms and stereotypes. The great majority, 71%, of respondents indicated that COVID-19 crisis has affected progress towards gender parity and an enabling environment in their entity/mission. For instance, it was reported that that working virtually has slowed down initiatives, suspended and postponed some, and that online working environments have become less enabling especially for mothers and parents. UN Women will follow up and conduct a similar survey in 2021, taking into consideration the risks and opportunities arising from the global pandemic.

Moreover, the Focal Point for Women has represented the Gender Focal Points in **High-Level CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the UN System** since 2018 and contributed to creating the UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment, outreach efforts as well as workplans of the Task Force. The Office of the Focal Point for Women will also continue to be actively involved in the Secretary-General's Emergency Working Group on enhancing gender parity in the field.

## 2. Monitoring and Reporting

Every two years, UN Women produces *the Secretary-General's Report on the Improvement in the Status of Women* to analyze women's representation in the UN system, career life cycle, and organizational culture including flexible working arrangements and family-friendly policies. The report provides essential guidance and data for the entire UN system on the situation regarding gender parity and enabling environment, illustrates good practices, highlights the remaining challenges and puts forward concrete recommendations.

The [latest report](#) was published in 2019 and was reflected in the 3rd Committee resolution (A/RES/74/128). For the upcoming report, to be published in 2021, the Office has commenced the data collection and survey development. **The implications of COVID-19** will be addressed in the upcoming report and reflected in the recommendations therein.

Furthermore, UN Women intends **to develop a UN system-wide dashboard on gender parity**. The Dashboard would provide up-to-date information on the progress made on gender parity in UN entities and enhance accountability and transparency, as recommended in the SG's Strategy. It will also support and strengthen UN Women's mandate to monitor gender parity and biennially report through the Secretary-General's Report on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the UN System, by offering updated data.

UN Women will also continue to monitor the representation of women and men working for UN Women. Currently, 74% of UN Women's personnel are women and 26 % men (incl. staff, consultants, contractors, UN Volunteers, interns, experts on mission as well as fellows). While the relative share of women and men has remained stable since 2017, in absolute terms there has been an increase in the number of men proportional to UN Women's growth. This is further supported by organization's increased efforts to improve diversity in recruitment and specifically through outreach activities. Internally, hiring managers are also strongly encouraged to ensure that there is diversity in the pool of applicants of the recruitment processes, particularly for senior-level positions. These corporate considerations are also reviewed by the compliance review bodies.

### 3. Enhancement of UN Parental Leave Policies

UN Women continues to advocate for improvements in parental leave both internally and at the UN system level. In 2020, UN Women augmented maternity leave to 24 weeks and granted an additional eight weeks of pre-delivery leave for gestational parents in D and E duty stations, extending leave to 32 weeks in these hardship locations. Recognizing the importance of parent-child bonding and sharing the care burden regardless of how staff decide to become parents, paternity and adoption/surrogacy leave were equally extended to 16 weeks. Staff can return on a part-time basis or take an additional period of leave without pay for childcare purposes with the security of knowing that they maintain a lien to their position.

UN Women will also continue to advocate for standardized parental leave of 6 months across the UN system. In this context, UN Women, together with UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA released a joint statement **“One UN for family leave and childcare”** in June 2019.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, together with **the International Gender Champions (IGC) network**, UN Women hosted a high-level virtual dialogue on parental leave policies in the UN system in 2020.

### 4. The COVID-19 response

The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded that globally women do three times as much unpaid care work as men and the level of domestic violence increases when households are placed under increased strain. With a greater emphasis on the duty of care, UN Women has engaged with the Rome Institute and offered online counseling services to support colleagues to manage stress related to COVID-19, with ongoing work to identify and support needs.

UN Women has also [produced up-to-date information and analysis on how and why gender matters in COVID-19 response](#) as well as published a report on [‘From insights to action: Gender equality in the wake of COVID-19’](#) to bring into focus the paucity of gender data and prioritization of data on the gendered effects of the crisis. The latter report draws on [the UN Secretary-General’s policy brief on the impact of COVID-19 on women](#), UN Women’s [“Spotlight on gender, COVID-19 and the SDGs”](#), UN Women [thematic policy briefs focused on COVID-19](#), as well as emerging data from UN Women’s rapid gender assessments.

This work will continue in 2021, taking into account the opportunities as well as challenges experienced by women.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/5/statement-joint-one-un-for-family-leave-and-childcare>

## Annex / Summary of the status of the recommendations

	UNW-specific Recommendations of SG's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity	Status	Notes
1	"Good practices guidelines for an enabling and inclusive organizational culture are developed by CEB HR Network, OHRM and UN Women and shared with each entity to incorporate into existing policies, monitoring and implementation."	Completed and implementation ongoing	The Enabling Environment Guidelines were launched by the Secretary-General in 2019. In 2020, the Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines were developed. UN Women continues to strengthen implementation of the Guidelines through leading and coordinating the UN system-wide Gender Focal Point Network.
2	"To ensure the UN is modelling transparency, UN Women to work with civil society partners to encourage shadow reporting on the overall strategy."	In Progress	A Call for Proposal for civil society organizations (CSOs) was published in 2020. Initial shadow report is expected to be published by the end of 2021.
3	"DPKO/DFS with support from UN Women and EOSG to develop a dedicated strategy in consultation with Troop Contributing Countries to significantly increase the numbers of women peacekeepers and police in peacekeeping missions."	Completed and implementation ongoing	UN Women contributed to finalizing <i>the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy</i> (2018) and continues to support the increased representation of women in peacekeeping through ongoing efforts.
4	"DPI and DFS, with support from UN Women, to launch a new public information, social and digital media campaign promoting women in UN field missions – both peace operations and UNCT."	Completed and implementation ongoing	Rec#4 has been included in rec #6. UN Women has developed a gender parity communications strategy on internal and external messaging, social media and communications products.
5	"UN Women in conjunction with Resident Coordinators' Office and UNCTs, as well as peace operations where relevant, to develop a database of women national officers and their skills and expertise to create a pool from which the System can do dedicated outreach for international positions."	Completed and implementation ongoing	The Female National Officer Pool has been developed (2020). This aligns with the aim of the SG's Working Group on Emergency Measures to achieve gender parity in peace operations and in the field.
6	"DM, EOSG, UN Women and DPI to develop a communications strategy which will include both internal and external messaging. Internally, this will provide content for discussions on the necessity of gender parity, highlighting the negative effects of gender discrimination and the positive impacts of diversity, as well as providing suggested messaging for senior leaders on specific issues such as flexible work arrangements, family related leave, and the goals of parity generally."	Completed / implementation efforts ongoing	UN Women has supported gender parity communications system-wide. Communication products include factsheets on how to create an enabling working environment during and after COVID-19 crisis. UNW has also created a series of video messages. In addition, Extranet was created (2019) for the system-wide Network of Gender Focal Points as a central hub for substantive guidance on gender parity.