External Review of the Secretary-General's 2017 System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity

Gender at work   CRTDA

Contents

Abbreviations

ACABQ	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
AFP	Agencies, funds and programmes
AI	Artificial intelligence
ASG	Assistant Secretary-General
BINUH	United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti
BTAD	Business Transformation and Accountability Division of DMSPC
CEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRTDA	Collective for Research and Training on Development
CSO	Civil society organization
DCO	United Nations Development Coordination Office
DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DFS	United Nations Department of Field Support
DG	Director-General
DGACM	Department for General Assembly and Conference Management
DHOM	Deputy Head of Mission
DMSPC	United Nations Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance
DOS	United Nations Department of Operational Support
DPPA	United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
DPO	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General
ECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EE	Enabling Environment
EEG	Enabling Environment Guidelines
EIF	Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations
EMERGE	Programme for Emerging Women Leaders
EOSG	Executive Office of the Secretary-General
ERP	Enterprise resource planning
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FBA	Folke Bernadotte Academy
FEEG	Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines
FGD	Focus group discussion
FMOC	Female Military Officers Course
FSM	Former Staff Member

FWA	Flexible Working Arrangements
G@W	Gender at Work
GFP	Gender Focal Point
GP	Gender Parity
GPS	Gender Parity Strategy
LACG	Latin American and Caribbean Group
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HLCM	High-Level Committee on Management
HOM	Head of Mission
HR	Human Resources
HRIS	Human Resources Information System
HRM	Human Resource Manager
HRN	Human Resources Network
HQ	Headquarters
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
ICT	Information and communications technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IGC	International Gender Champions
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IP	International Professional
ISA	International Seabed Authority
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
JPP	Junior Professionals Programme
LDP	Leadership development programme
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, and other persons
MAST	Mission Advanced Staff Training
MINURSO	United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

MOPAN	Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network
MSC	Miscellaneous (Affinity Groups, Diversity and Culture Managers, Staff Council, etc.)
MSM	Mission Staff Member/Staff associated with UN field missions
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OGM	Occupational Group Managers
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OHR	Office of Human Resources
OHRM	Office of Human Resources Management
OLA	Office of Legal Affairs
OSAA	United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa
OSESG	Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PSJO	Position-specific job openings
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of the United Nations Development System
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
RR	Resident Representatives
SC	Senior Compact
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SL-RC	Senior Leadership Team/Resident Coordinator
SG	Secretary-General (of the United Nations)
SLTP	United Nations Senior Leadership Talent Pool
SLWOP	Special leave without pay
SMART	Senior Mission Administration and Resource Training; specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound
SML	Senior Mission Leaders
SPM	Special Political Missions
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
STAI	Administrative Instruction
SWTP	Senior Women's Talent Pipeline
TOR	Terms of Reference
T/PCC	Troop and police contributing countries
TSMs	Temporary Special Measures
UN	United Nations
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNAIDS	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq

UNAMID	The African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDOF	United Nations Disengagement Observer Force
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFICYP	United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIC	United Nations Information Centre
UNICC	United Nations International Computing Centre
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNISFA	United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei
UNITAMS	United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNJSPF	United Nations Joint Staff Fund
UNMHA	United Nations Mission to support the Hudaydah Agreement
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNMOGIP	United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan
UNOAU	United Nations Office to the African Union
UNOCA	United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa
UNOG	United Nations Office at Geneva
UNON	United Nations Office at Nairobi
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNOV	United Nations Office at Vienna
UNOWA	United Nations Office for West Africa
UNRCCA	United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSCO	United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process

UNSCOL	Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission in Libya
UNSOM	United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
UNSOS	United Nations Support Office in Somalia
UNSSC	United Nations System Staff College
UN-SWAP	United Nations System-wide Action Plan
UNTSO	United Nations Truce Supervision Organization
UNU	United Nations University
UNV	United Nations Volunteer
UNVMC	United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia
UNW	UN Women
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
UPU	Universal Postal Union
USG	Under-Secretary-General
WEOG	Western European and Others Group
WLIGG	Women in Leadership in Global Governance
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive Summary

This is an external review of the implementation of the Secretary-General's 2017 System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity (GPS). The review was commissioned by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) to provide an external perspective, informed by civil society, on the progress of the United Nations' efforts to communicate and implement the Strategy and to meet its objectives and deadlines.

The review finds that the 2017 System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity is the most serious effort to date to accelerate the recruitment, appointment, promotion and retention of women across the United Nations. Headline achievements include the following:

- 58 per cent of entities surveyed for the latest report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement of the Status of Women in the UN system are approaching parity, and 25 per cent have surpassed the target of 50 per cent for women's representation.[1]
- Parity was reached for the first time in the Senior Management Group and among Resident Coordinators in 2019, and among full-time Under-Secretaries-General (USGs) and Assistant Secretaries-General (ASGs) in January 2020, two years ahead of the GPS target.[2]
- Parity was achieved in senior field mission management in 2021, with women leading some of the most challenging missions (Haiti, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

Institutionalization of the GPS is prioritized at the highest levels, with high-level oversight conducted by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG). UN Women is a vital accountability partner, providing guidance on building enabling environments for gender equality and parity, and scrutinizing progress through the biennial report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations System.

Accelerated progress on parity has been enabled through the 2020 administrative instruction on Temporary Special Measures (TSMs) (ST/AI 2020/5),[3] requiring additional efforts to locate women candidates and justifications for hiring men in already male-dominated staff sectors. Corrective measures exist, including revocation of selection authority for underperforming grades, but they have not been widely applied. Improved data monitoring and reporting has supported progress, with a UN Secretariat Gender Parity Dashboard updated regularly since late 2017 and a new UN System-wide Dashboard on Gender Parity launched by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women in October 2021. These efforts aim to institutionalize gender parity as an operational imperative, strengthen the normative framework, communicate heightened expectations, articulate actionable commitments for senior leadership, establish monitoring and oversight mechanisms, and identify corrective actions.

Most headquarters offices of Secretariat entities and agencies, funds and programmes (AFPs) are on track to reach parity by 2028. A significant and highly visible component of this progress has been driven by increased numbers of women appointed to senior positions, the domain in which the Secretary-General exercises direct selection authority – in the Secretariat, he has final say over appointments from the Director-2 (D2) to Under-Secretary-General (USG) levels.[4] The pace of change in lower grades remains sluggish, at 1.1 percentage points between 2019 and 2021.[5]

United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions, starting from a lower base, have seen particularly slow progress in the share of women among the middle and junior ranks of International Professional and Field Service staff positions, and at current rates will miss the 2028 target date set in the Strategy.

Persistent obstacles confronting efforts to elevate women's share of posts in many United Nations entities arise from a combination of:

1. Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.
2. United Nations Secretary-General, "Secretary-General's Remarks to Group of Friends on Gender Parity", statement, 6 March 2020.
3. Administrative Instruction on Temporary Special Measures for the achievement of gender parity, ST/AI/2020/5, 6 August 2020.
4. For the Secretariat, the Senior Review Group supports D2 appointments and presents the Secretary-General with recommendations. See United Nations Secretariat, Administrative Instruction on the Staff Selection System, ST/AI/2010/3, 21 April 2010, and Secretary-General's Bulletin, Delegation of Authority in the administration of the Staff Regulations and Rules and the Financial Regulations and Rules, ST/SGB/2019/2, 17 December 2018.
5. Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, July 2021.

- institutional dynamics, such as downsizing and hiring freezes (in mission contexts), and unaddressed gender, racial and other biases in job descriptions and recruitment procedures;
- cultural dynamics, such as unconscious bias, increasingly organized and vocal;
- resistance from male staff, and some under- or non-compliance stemming from cynicism about reform efforts;
- gendered societal expectations, creating significant tensions in some women's capacities to accommodate mobility and hardship conditions; and
- gender dynamics constraining the pool of available female talent for some skill sets.

These obstacles can result in:

- an inverse relationship between seniority and women's representation (though this is less marked than in the past);
- a concentration of women in administrative and non-substantive roles;
- disparities on the basis of race, nationality, sexual orientation and other intersecting identities; and
- a higher rate of mid-career resignations among female than male staff.[6]

Unaddressed recruitment biases, inadequate career management and retention policies, and, in some contexts, bullying and sexual harassment in workplace cultures undermine the objectives of the GPS.

The unprecedented speed and early wins of the GPS stem from the maximization of the Secretary-General's discretionary powers to make appointments at the highest levels, and the use of this political capital to insist that Member States supply women candidates for the highest appointments. As the personal initiative of the Secretary-General, the GPS was fast-tracked and launched swiftly after the start of his first term. It has accelerated long-standing but under-realized gender parity objectives by updating existing tools, most notably the 1999 administrative instruction endorsing TSMs, mandating the selection of a qualified female candidate for grades that are not at parity. The GPS makes very few demands of United Nations core finances. Its creativity, nimbleness and determination to see long-ago-agreed parity goals realized have supported rapid implementation and significant early achievements.

Methodology

This study is primarily based on the analysis of publicly available information. This proved to be a limitation, because vital business intelligence, such as data on patterns of staff turnover or data from exit interviews, was not available. New data were created through almost 100 in-depth qualitative interviews with six groups of key informants: human resources (HR) staff members (HRN); former staff members (FSM); resident coordinators and senior leaders (SL-RC); staff associated with United Nations field missions (MSM); Gender Focal Points (GFP); and a final category, miscellaneous (MSC), comprising affinity groups, diversity and inclusion managers, staff council representatives, regional directors, and members of United Nations advisory committees and expert bodies.

All interviews were conducted on the grounds of confidentiality; where quotes are used, they are not linked to personal identifying information. A limited online survey of HR officers was conducted to explore entity compliance with the Secretary-General's call for updated implementation plans. In addition, after the data analysis was completed, four focus group discussions (FGDs) were undertaken to validate the findings. The FGDs were conducted with i) a small set of senior women leaders in the United Nations system, ii) a group of academics who are part of the Women in Leadership in Global Governance (WLIGG) research network, and iii) a select set of representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) that are closely following the progress on gender parity within the United Nations system.[7]

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6.   Henrik Rydén, "Are Women Paying a Higher Price for a UN Career?", ImpactPool White Papers, 15 June 2017.
7.   Feedback from these FGDs has been presented separately in Annex 7 and has not been included as part of the main body of the report.

Organization of the report

This report follows the structure and organization of the Strategy itself. Chapter 1 describes the conceptualization and context of the GPS. Chapters 2 to 7 discuss its priority areas: setting targets and monitoring progress; leadership and accountability; recruitment, retention, progression and talent management; senior appointments; mission settings; and creating an enabling environment. Chapters 2–7 open with a colour-coded "traffic light" review of the status of the actions recommended by the Strategy.

Chapter 1: CONTEXT AND CONCEPTUALIZATION

Consultations for the development of the GPS were conducted between January and August 2017, with a wide range of stakeholders from more than 30 entities. The GPS was designed to allow each entity to craft strategies that were specific to their needs and relevant to their own context. Of entities reviewed for the 2021 Report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women, 89 per cent reported having developed an entity-specific implementation plan, and 73 per cent found that the GPS had ensured that gender parity was a priority agenda for their senior leaders.

Chapter 2: SETTING TARGETS AND MONITORING PROGRESS

The GPS set extremely ambitious targets. Some key informants expressed concern that reaching numeric and timeline targets crowds out other components of the GPS. The relationship between numeric gender parity and stronger attention to gender equality in the normative and operational work of the organization is not addressed in detail in the GPS, but is supported by some research and is discussed further at the end of this report.[8]

According to the 2021 Report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women, the representation of women in the Professional and higher categories increased from 44.2 per cent in 2017 to 45.3 per cent in 2019. The largest increase in the representation of women was registered at the most senior levels, at 7.8 percentage points, owing to considerable increases during the period 2017–2018. The category with the lowest representation of women continues to be the Field Service category, at 27.4 per cent.[9]

Progress in reaching targets varies across the United Nations. In 2019 the representation of women at headquarters locations was at parity, at 49.5 per cent. Progress towards gender parity at non-headquarters locations continued to trail headquarters locations at every grade level, with 8.3 percentage points' difference overall. The representation of women at the Director level was low in both headquarters and non-headquarters locations, registering at 38.4 per cent and 37.6 per cent, respectively. The P3 level showed the greatest disparity, with the representation of women at headquarters 12.8 per cent higher compared with non- headquarters locations. Entities with mandates in technical fields had the lowest representation of women, illustrating the persistent occupational segregation and the need to strengthen parity efforts in traditionally male-dominated sectors.[10]

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8. Nahla Valji and Pablo Castillo-Diaz, "The importance of gender parity in the UN's efforts on international peace and security", Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Spring-Summer 2019), pp. 4–19; Jacqui True and Yolanda Rivera, "Towards inclusive peace: Analysing gender-sensitive peace agreements 2000–2016", International Political Science Review, Vol. 40, No. 1 (November 2018), pp. 23–40; Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.
9. Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.
10. Ibid.

There are persistent regional disparities and a lack of representation from the countries the United Nations serves. Phase 2 of the GPS – which would extend the Strategy to General Services staff and National Officers – was scheduled to start in 2018 but has not been initiated.[11] This slows progress in addressing ongoing geographical disparities among women staff. Beyond gender parity, informants pointed to significant racial and linguistic biases and structural barriers to the advancement of women National Officers, such as the tendency to get locked into the type of appointment and grade at which they enter the system, as well as limited mobility opportunities, particularly from the field to headquarters. The transition from the National or General Services category to the International Professional grades is equally difficult and fraught with administrative obstacles.

Data limitations

The GPS recommended adding the full United Nations system to the UN Secretariat Gender Parity Dashboard, which provides staff data for departments and offices, special political missions and peacekeeping operations, and regional commissions in the Secretariat, by the end of 2017. This has not happened, but UNDP and UN Women have jointly funded and developed the first-ever public UN System-wide Dashboard on Gender Parity, with participation from nearly 40 entities as of October 2021. It presents the latest available data on gender balance by entity, grade, age group, duty station and staff category and also shows the Gender Parity Index, which is the number of women or men needed to reach parity. Data are provided by system-wide Gender Focal Points (GFPs) and HR Specialists from participating organizations, and will be updated on a quarterly basis. The UN System-wide Dashboard on Gender Parity is a welcome contribution to monitoring and can greatly facilitate future shadow reporting.

Beyond personnel on formal contracts, the United Nations benefits from the work of contractors, consultants, volunteers, interns and others. These personnel are not monitored by the GPS, but some entities try to keep track of gender balance among them, and these efforts should be expanded to the whole system. Non-staff personnel are a fluid group with a high turnover rate, and are hard to monitor. A 2014 report by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) found that "up to 45 per cent of the total workforce are working under non-staff contracts, many of them for extended periods under a de facto employment relationship, with inadequate oversight and no access to internal justice mechanisms".[12] While we do not have access to an updated report on the status of non-staff personnel, the issue has come up in multiple conversations with HR representatives and others, pointing to a need for system-wide oversight over the use of contractual modalities and its gender implications.

Chapter 3: LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

There is ample evidence that the Secretary-General's prioritization of the Strategy has generated buy-in from senior leadership across the system. Progress is monitored by the EOSG, supported by the Office of Human Resources (OHR) of the United Nations Secretariat and UN Women, while apex HR units, such as the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance (DMSPC) in the Secretariat and similar units across the agencies, funds and programmes are responsible for ensuring application of the TSMs.

UN Women is mandated to monitor the system-wide representation of women and men, and is tasked by the GPS with the development of good practice guidelines for establishing an enabling and inclusive work culture; encouraging civil society shadow reporting; supporting the Department of Field Support (DFS) and the Department of Global Communications[13] to launch a new public information, social and digital media campaign promoting women in peace operations and United Nations Country Team (UNCT) field missions[14]; and

11. United Nations, "System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 6 October 2017, p. 15.
12. Cihan Terzi and Papa Louis Fall, "Use of Non-Staff Personnel and Related Contractual Modalities in the United Nations System Organisations: Country Case Studies – Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and India", JIU/REP/2014/8 (Joint Inspection Unit, 2014).
13. Formerly the Department of Public Information (DPI).
14. United Nations, "System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", p. 42.

developing a system-wide database of women National Officers, together with other United Nations entities. UN Women leads and coordinates the growing network of Gender Focal Points (GFPs) and Focal Points for Women across the United Nations system, who provide support to heads of departments by promoting greater awareness of gender issues and monitoring progress.

Cascading accountability throughout the system

In November 2017, the Secretary-General requested entities to align existing gender strategies with the GPS or to develop an implementation plan with targets and measures harmonized with the core recommendations of the Strategy. Although some agencies, funds and programmes were well advanced in their gender parity efforts, the request set off a flurry of activity throughout the system.

Reporting by HR departments varies from as frequently as every week to quarterly or biannually. Almost 80 per cent of entities surveyed for the 2021 Report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the UN System reported that hiring managers were provided with access to real-time staff data to better understand how hiring decisions impact progress towards gender parity.[15]

Performance appraisals

All heads of entities and field missions in the Secretariat have signed Senior Compacts with the Secretary-General, committing to gender parity and geographical diversity. The Compacts set targets for gender parity (and geographical diversity) and are reviewed periodically by the Management Performance Board, which is chaired by the Secretary-General's Chef de Cabinet. However, these gender equality and parity commitments tend to be broad and need to be tailored more specifically to the entity and mission. Performance against them tends not to be rigorously assessed, according to interviewees.

Soft sticks and few carrots

There appear to be no serious consequences, reputational or otherwise, for senior leaders who do not elevate entity performance on gender parity. The GPS includes recommendations to address non-compliance, culminating in the revocation of selection authority for underperforming grades. Nonetheless, no interviewees knew of examples of revocation of the selection authority of an underperforming manager.

Competing imperatives

In early 2020, OHR issued the Geographical Diversity Strategy,[16] with concrete accountability measures and timelines, some of which are more specific than the GPS recommended actions. Geographic diversity is deeply embedded in the organization's makeup: It is invoked in Article 101 of the United Nations Charter and multiple General Assembly resolutions, and monitored and reported in detail in the Composition of the Secretariat reports. This strong normative grounding confers power to exert pressure and secure resources. Member States have not shown the same conviction in supporting the commitment of the current Secretary-General to gender parity, although it, too, is backed by a history of General Assembly and Commission on the Status of Women commitments, a powerful call for parity in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the remarkably comprehensive and decisive 2017 GPS.

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15.   Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021, p. 19.
16.   United Nations Office of Human Resources, "Geographical Diversity Strategy", January 2020.

Chapter 4: RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, PROGRESSION AND TALENT MANAGEMENT

Despite impressive achievements, persistent gaps remain at different levels, for certain functions or job types, and between headquarters and field locations. Starting in their mid-40s, women are more likely than men to leave the organization, often because they are caught in the "care sandwich" of young children and elderly parents, whereas men are more likely to stay in the system until retirement. Field offices invariably have lower representation of women compared to headquarters, even at entry levels, which could imply a "broken rung" problem — very low or rapidly declining recruitment of women in field contexts.

Temporary Special Measures and accountability for monitoring their implementation

The 2020 Administrative Instruction on TSMs for the Achievement of Gender Parity (an update of STAI/1999/9) establishes that if a woman has applied for a position that she is equally or better qualified for than a man who is also shortlisted, at a staff level at which in which parity has not yet been reached, she should be selected for the position.[17] If the head of office does not select her, they must write to the Secretary-General with an exception request in the template form P401 to provide justification. EOSG and OHR review exemption requests and maintain an ongoing dialogue with entities in cases where patterns of repeated exemption requests are made. However, there is no required action in response to a pattern of repeated failure to appoint women.

The 2017 GPS initially recommended that job openings that fail to yield a minimum 20 per cent female applications should require a written justification from the hiring manager on the positive outreach measures taken to attract women applicants. In the absence of a strong justification, job openings are to be extended or reopened. This is currently monitored by the EOSG as part of the review of the ST/AI/2020/5 process. This recommendation requires specific policy changes, and is still outstanding for DMSPC to take forward.

According to the 2021 Report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the UN System, 74 per cent of entities reported installing special measures for the attainment of gender parity.[18] Most United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies view the administrative instruction on TSMs as pertaining specifically to United Nations Secretariat entities. Many have already opted to use special measures within recruitment processes to accelerate gender parity at specific grades. To strengthen accountability on gender parity, some entities have established compliance boards or oversight committees. This report finds that those chaired by senior leadership have greater traction. In addition to using TSMs, some entities have opted to use targeted outreach to female candidates through talent pools for women from underrepresented or unrepresented countries, women within specialized jobs, or women national staff.

Leadership development and mentoring programmes

There are many leadership development programmes for employees in different grades, including many that are targeted specifically towards women. There are no rigorous evaluations of whether these leadership development programmes significantly improve women's chances of promotion. Some interviewees point out that what women need is not more training, but more opportunities to shine, with sponsors that help find opportunities for career moves.

A few entities (e.g., UN Women with OHR) have launched professional development programmes for National Officers who are interested in international careers. However, on the whole, support for national staff to pursue international careers tends to be scattered, and advancement of National Officers to International Professional positions is a significant challenge.

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17.   Administrative Instruction on Temporary Special Measures for the Achievement of Gender Parity, ST/AI/2020/5, 6 August 2020.
18.   Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.

Lack of a transformative people development and HR policies that lead to organizational culture change to address structural barriers and male resistance

HR rules are still grounded in historical assumptions that the typical United Nations staff member is a male civil servant with a trailing spouse. The slow pace of change in HR policies has been detrimental for women staff. For example, mobility requirements within the United Nations can be highly challenging for female staff, especially those with children and spouses. Similarly, the United Nations offers no employment support to spouses, which is increasingly common in progressive organizations. The lack of a cohesive people development strategy limits the potential of the initiatives that are being undertaken to advance gender parity.

Unconscious bias

A key recommendation of the GPS is to address unconscious bias – the "taken for granted" beliefs and shared assumptions that form the basis of the organizational culture. For instance, there are unexamined gendered assumptions about the qualities of an expert or a leader. There is a widespread assumption that women are not interested in field mission positions, because of danger, poor conditions or the fact that these are non-family duty stations. These biases distort assessments of the competencies of women and men long before an interview takes place. Training programmes alone are considered ineffective for monitoring and reversing such biases.

Performance management

Some agencies have integrated a gender or diversity component in their performance appraisal systems, both for senior leadership (in Senior Compacts) and for staff at large. These targets focus on gender parity objective, and in some cases include broader components of a gender mainstreaming approach – but they are not perceived to be a significant factor in the performance appraisal process.

People analytics and business intelligence

The United Nations can do more to leverage HR data. Some interviewees alleged that line managers and GFPs often do not make decisions on the basis of available real-time data. They added that, in particular, better business intelligence is needed on reasons for high levels of turnover among mid-level women staff. Similarly, not all entities have exit interviews in place, and those that do are not necessarily identifying women's reasons for separation, even though a comprehensive exit interview template has been made available by UN Women. Very few entities have undertaken an evaluation or assessment of their gender parity efforts.

Chapter 5: SENIOR APPOINTMENTS

The early achievement in parity in the Secretary-General's Senior Management Group, among Resident Coordinators, and in mission settings has been an important sign of the success and feasibility of the GPS and has motivated further progress.

Increasing the number of women in senior applicant pools

The managers of existing methods for building pools of leadership talent (the periodic Global Calls and the Senior Leadership Talent Pool) have made special efforts to increase the numbers of women on these lists. For instance, between 41 and 44 per cent of applicants in the last three Global Call campaigns (2017, 2019, 2021) have been women. Since mid-2017, Global Call nominees have represented over half of those interviewed for senior leadership positions in the field, and female nominees have accounted for the vast majority (61 per cent) of those appointed. Sixteen female Global Call appointees out of a total of 25 have been selected as senior leaders in United Nations field missions.

Furthermore, sector-specific, dedicated women-only efforts such as the Senior Women's Talent Pipeline (SWTP), were launched in 2014 by DFS, which is now called the United Nations Department of Operational Support (DOS). The SWTP is a pool of primarily external candidates for D1 and D2 positions in peace operations in the areas of public information, political affairs, civil affairs and rule of law. It has approximately 260 women in its cohort, of whom 51 have been appointed to Under-Secretary-General-level positions (from their prior P5 position), including 8 in 2020-2021.

Objective assessment methods

Within the Secretariat, assessment methods have not been harmonized. The Resident Coordinator selection process, on the other hand, is among the most rigorous in the United Nations system. Its objectivity and consistency have positively affected gender parity within the Resident Coordinator system. Equally, the Resident Coordinator selection process has resulted in geographic balance. The rigor and unswerving focus on merit and competency in this process shows that impartial assessment methods can weed out a range of biases, and that women and Global South candidates shine under fair recruitment conditions.

Projection tables for senior appointments

It was reported to the review team that in the Secretary-General's first term, he requested projections on anticipated vacancies at the senior level (e.g., from retirements) in order to plan for diversity in the evolution of staff composition. Resident Coordinator selection likewise is governed by a strong emphasis on gender parity and geographic diversity.

Real-time data on gender in applications, screening, long- and shortlisting, interviews, recommendations and selections

Data on the selection of senior managers are monitored at every stage of the process.[19] However, there is no publicly available data to verify this claim, and in systems for selecting political appointees, the usual confidentiality arrangements render data even less accessible for analysis. The JIU conducts periodic audits, but it has not published a gender breakdown of all parts of senior leadership appointment processes.

Written exception requests

There is no public information on exception requests, which are used to justify selecting male over female candidates. Information is needed on how often exceptions are requested or granted, and on common rationales for requesting exceptions. Interviews with the EOSG, members of the Human Resources Network (HRN) and other key informants in field missions revealed that justifying the recruitment of a male candidate is not particularly difficult for a determined hiring manager.

Concerns about complaints from disappointed men who are not selected for promotions may influence exception requests. At least 11 cases brought by men at the United Nations Dispute Tribunal between 2017 and 2021 explicitly cite the GPS as a reason for failures to achieve a promotion. The threat of a drawn-out process can generate a form of anticipatory male preference, or "managing to the squeaky wheel", where future unpleasantness is avoided by complying with the expectations (or sense of entitlement) of some male applicants. It is vital to note, however, that staff tribunal decisions have unswervingly upheld the GPS.

Building and maintaining an internal female senior talent pipeline

Much more action is needed to build internal talent pipelines. Within the Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator systems, talent is scouted both internally and externally. The Resident Coordinator System Leadership Branch has networks in all the agencies, which flag women and candidates from the Global South with active profiles, and accordingly approach agencies to encourage them to nominate those candidates.

Combating depletion of women staff: Plugging the leaky pipeline

While aggregate data on voluntary separation rates are available, data on reasons for gender differences in exit rates are not, nor are they systematically collected within entities. Succession planning is based upon waiting for space at the tops of ladders to open up via retirements, especially since hiring freezes, budget cuts and downsizing prohibit the creation of new posts. The raising of the retirement age has potentially slowed this process of creating space for movement up the ladder.

Low-hanging fruit

The senior appointment success story benefits from several conditions specific to the time period and political circumstances of the Secretary-General's first term in office. As the head of a new administration at the United Nations, in 2017 the Secretary-General had at his disposal a number of open leadership positions to fill as part of the conventional turnover of top leadership in parts of the United Nations, such as in his own Executive Office,

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19.   Based on our conversation with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. The data is confidential and has not been shared with the review team.

and as his prerogative in setting priorities for his tenure in office. In his first year in office (2017), he made 72 senior appointments, then 64 in 2018, 58 in 2019, 37 in 2020 and 22 by mid-2021. The decrease year-on-year may reflect slowing turnover as well as a natural drop-off in special new appointments, and thus can be expected to continue.

In addition to gender parity, geographical diversity must also be addressed. While there is near parity in the 173 senior appointments undertaken between 2018 and 2020, nearly 49 per cent of those were from the Western Europe and Other States region. Women from Eastern Europe were the most underrepresented (at only 2 per cent).[20]

Inconsistent support from Member States

The Group of Friends on Gender Parity, currently chaired by Rwanda and Qatar, is the largest example of this type of Member State collaboration at the United Nations, with 140 members. Nonetheless, not all Member States have been supportive of the parity effort, and some have expressed reservations in General Assembly committees, including the Fifth Committee (committee of the General Assembly with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) — particularly where the parity effort might incur costs or sideline what Member States consider to be the greater priority of achieving geographical balance. The Group of Friends should engage more consistently on matters such as accelerating the progress of affiliated bodies, like the ACABQ or the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), in generating more family-friendly staff measures, including extended parental leave or options for family accommodation in certain duty stations.

Chapter 6: MISSION SETTINGS

Non-family duty stations have tended to produce highly male-dominated staff concentrations — and serious management challenges. These duty stations are in contexts that are often dangerous or politically volatile, and postings are subject to be extended in unpredictable ways.

Uniformed peacekeepers

There are specific efforts to support women in peacekeeping, such as the Elsie Initiative. The Department of Peace Operations (DPO), with support from UN Women, has developed a GPS for uniformed personnel.[21] Women constituted 1 per cent of uniformed peacekeeping personnel in 1993, but in 2020, out of 95,000 peacekeepers, they made up 4.8 per cent of military contingents, 10.9 per cent of formed police units and 34 per cent of government-provided personnel in justice and corrections.[22]

A decade of stagnation

There has been a negligible increase in women civilian staff in field missions. In 2013, it was 27 per cent.[23] In 2017, according to the Gender Parity Strategy, it was 28.3 per cent.[24] In 2021 — in spite of the use of TSMs to increase the number of female candidates, the requirement of written justification for the selection of men in non-parity job categories and ranks, and the creation of a cross-system Emergency Working Group on gender parity in field missions — women accounted for just 31 per cent of International Professional staff in field missions. There has been a 1.7 per cent increase since 2017, from a lower starting point than the rest of the United Nations. At the current rate of change, parity will not be reached until 2041 for International Professional staff until 2041.[25] Junior and mid-level ranks, the crucial feeders to the pipeline for senior management, seem to be suffering from the most significant recruitment stagnation.

20.   Data from New York University Center for International Cooperation, UN Senior Leadership Dashboard (accessed 15 February 2022).
21.   United Nations Department of Peace Operations, "Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy, 2018–2028", 2019.
22.   United Nations Peacekeeping, "Women in peacekeeping".
23.   United Nations Department of Field Support, "Bridging the Civilian Gender Gap in Peace Operations", 2013, p. 15, mimeo, available from Gender at Work (G@W) and the authors of this external review.
24.   United Nations, "System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 6 October 2017, p. 36.
25.   Projections vary depending on data sources. This projection is based on data from mid-2021 on field mission staffing, obtained from the UN Secretariat Gender Parity Dashboard, and detailed in Chapter 6 of this report. The UN Secretariat makes its own projections, but these are not currently publicly available.

Positive image of women in the field

The Secretariat has mobilized communication initiatives to present a positive image of women in the field. These are discussed in Chapter 6.

Structural changes in mission settings: Downsizing and hiring freeze

The GPS was introduced in the midst of a sharp contraction of United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions, amounting to a 45 per cent reduction in civilian staff since 2010. As part of the United Nations' duty of care to staff on continuing contracts, the Horizon HR system, which generates priority candidates for any new recruitments, requires efforts to be made in every recruitment procedure, including in start-up missions, to identify candidates from the pool of staff released through downsizing processes elsewhere. Rosters are heavily male-dominated across most skill categories, and position-specific job openings (PSJOs) tend to favour incumbents (who may have been acting in an ad interim capacity).[26]

Introduced in late 2020 because of funding constraints, the hiring freeze increases the numbers of people occupying positions ad interim or in an acting capacity. This is likely to create pressure to regularize these internals once the freeze is lifted. Informants have indicated that the COVID-19 crisis, on top of this dynamic, will likely concentrate male staff presence (and hence male incumbency) in missions that have sent non-essential civilian staff to work from home or from neighbouring countries.

Ceilings, walls and floors: Factors contributing to gender imbalance in field missions

At the time of this external assessment, it appears that the "glass ceiling" problem has been resolved through the direct intervention of the Secretary-General to override gender biases in the selection of women for Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General mission management roles.

The "glass walls" problem — segregating women away from technical jobs — has not been resolved. Targeted outreach to women with technical skills in engineering, information and communication technologies (ICTs), hydraulics, logistics, aviation and transport is needed to increase the volume of female applicants, along with efforts to address unconscious gender bias in the rostering and recruitment processes. The most significant TSM to accomplish this would be women-only calls for field roster replenishment, as proposed in the GPS.

The "dissolving floor" refers to women's dropout rate in the pipeline for leadership. It is impossible to say if this has been addressed, because there is a lack of business intelligence on the rate of turnover of female staff compared to men. Information from our interviews suggest that women staff from the P2–P5 levels continue to leave at higher rates than men, and that male turnover has decreased in response to global economic contraction in the COVID-19 context, with men perceiving few employment alternatives beyond the United Nations.

Cynicism regarding reform measures and "managing to the squeaky wheel"

The lack of swift monitoring of — or consequences for — recruitment decisions that result in hiring men in already male-dominated units can produce a cynical expectation of impunity for failing to implement the TSMs. In addition, the swift succession of managerial and other reforms in field missions, which have been subject to a high degree of scrutiny and a rapid pace of change, can engender reform fatigue and cynicism. That so many institutional reforms are launched and then expire without producing significant change may produce a "wait it out" culture at the field level.

Working conditions

The GPS has called on the ICSC to develop more finely calibrated classifications of duty stations (to enable, for instance, families to be located in neighbouring safe countries). However, this has so far not resulted in significant shifts in designations of field mission duty stations as "family" or "non-family". Family location and arrangements such as schooling or spousal employment are still seen as private matters to be resolved through personal efforts.

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26. Position-specific job openings fill a new established position; an existing position that is re-classified; or a position that has become or is expected to become vacant for one year or longer. Generic job openings are published to create and maintain viable rosters of qualified candidates for immediate and anticipated job openings, identified through workforce planning, in entities with approval to use roster-based recruitment. From United Nations, Frequently Asked Questions: Staffing in the United Nations Secretariat, 25 March 2014.

Work culture

A significant number of interviewees complained of significant gender bias, bullying and sexual harassment in field missions. Improved reporting systems and responses to sexual harassment in field mission settings were considered vital by interviewees, as a means of making work in these contexts more feasible for women.

Chapter 7: CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System (EEGs), their Supplementary Guidance, and the Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines (FEEGs), prepared by UN Women in concert with other partners, were launched by the Secretary-General for the whole United Nations system.[27] They propose means to support flexible working arrangements and family-friendly policies, and implementing standards of conduct to reduce the abuse of power, including sexual harassment and the abuse of authority.

Nearly 450 Gender Focal Points (GFPs) across the United Nations system act as agents of change to achieve gender parity by 2028. GFPs are mandated to promote gender parity efforts in their respective entities. They play a critical role in operationalizing and promoting gender parity and an enabling work environment. The application of the Enabling Environment Guidelines depends greatly on the energy and commitment of the leadership of the United Nations entities, assisted by the GFPs, performing this function over and above their existing jobs.

Communicating the Enabling Environment Guidelines

Most departments and entities have produced messaging with regard to the adoption of the EEGs. Internally, the messaging is focused 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.

There is uneven awareness of the guidelines across the system. All the topics that the EEGs touch on, such as discrimination, diversity, inclusion, harassment and flexibility, involve difficult power negotiations. To increase the use of the EEGs and associated policies requires United Nations leaders to highlight key messages and demonstrate commitment to adopting the guidelines and policies. For example, the "Making Parity a Reality at the UN" video series features leaders from the field, regional and country offices advocating for the importance of gender parity and encouraging implementation of the FEEGs. Efforts such as these are laudable. Future video advocacy can feature leaders who have modelled commitment and have adopted the enabling environment guidelines and policies, as well as staff talking about the changes in their personal and professional lives as a result of the adoption of these policies.

Strengthening monitoring of the implementation of the EEGs

The EEGs are an important instrument, but in their current form — without greater resource commitments, and perhaps dedicated accompaniment for underperforming entities — they are insufficient to shift organizational culture. The biennial Report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations system and the gender mainstreaming United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN- SWAP) are used to report on issues related to organizational culture,[28] but additional dedicated resources, and personnel within entities, may be needed to incentivize innovation and compliance.

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27. United Nations, "Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System", 2019; UN Women, "Supplementary Guidance on the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System in Support of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2019; UN Women, "Make Parity a Reality: Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System in Support of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2021.

28. Performance Indicator 13 measures Organisational Culture, see UN-SWAP 2.0 Accountability Framework, available at https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/How%20We%20Work/UNSystemCoordination/UN-SWAP/UN-SWAP-2-TN-Accountability-framework-en.pdf.

Addressing privilege: Class, race, nationality and gender

Many respondents, particularly those from the Global South, pointed out that the United Nations system operates within a residual, and unacknowledged, colonial mindset. Respondents felt that not enough is being done within different entities to address issues such as inherent and unconscious bias. They felt that one-off trainings are not adequate to shift deep structural barriers to gender-, race- and class-related inclusion and diversity, and that a default privileging of senior white men is the norm. A system-wide anti-racism campaign was introduced in 2020. Assessments of its impact are not available and may be premature.

Addressing sexual harassment in the workplace

The Secretary-General set up a Task Force to address sexual harassment, and in October 2018 launched the "UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment".[29] There is broad awareness of its provisions. In addition to the Model Policy, crucial tools to bolster investigative capacity, harmonize victim/survivor-centred investigations and improve communication during investigations of sexual harassment complaints include "Advancing a Common Understanding of a Victim-centred Approach to Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the United Nations System",[30] a key document launched in June 2021, and the "Investigator's Manual: Investigation of Sexual Harassment Complaints in the United Nations".[31]

However, many respondents referred to sustained barriers to staff reporting sexual harassment and abuse, in spite of being aware of the reporting avenues. Respondents spoke of continued stigma for those who report sexual harassment, and the particularly acute situation in male-dominated field mission settings. Based on inputs from UN Women, we recognize that it is understood within the United Nations system that a low reporting rate does not indicate low rates of harassment. Despite this, our observation from the interviews is that women still feel unsafe in reporting instances of sexual harassment and/or bullying.

The issue of sexual harassment is only tangentially mentioned in the GPS. Respondents stated that weak statements from senior leadership, including the Secretary-General, in response to revelations of sexual exploitation and misconduct by United Nations employees, do nothing to build employees' trust in the system.

Family-friendly policies

The GPS and the Enabling Environment Guidelines prescribe a set of family-friendly policies, such as a single parental leave policy that treats men and women equally as well as making provision for an additional six months of parental leave for those posted in non-family duty stations. It is recognized that women do not tend to take certain postings, as they do not offer stable employment opportunities for their spouses. Many respondents said that United Nations HR policies are based on an understanding of a "model family" that is heteronormative and makes archaic assumptions about supportive spouses with secondary, disposable careers.

Flexible working arrangements

Flexible working arrangements are now a reality for many staff, especially since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many entities reported activities to support staff to work from home and find work-life balance. Other benefits of remote work include democratized meeting spaces, as more people can attend Zoom meetings than can crowd into a room. This has had a softening effect on the United Nations' notoriously stiff hierarchy.

While flexible hours are appreciated by many, work-from-home arrangements can pose challenges for staff with care responsibilities, such as parents with young children. Some entities reported issuing a value statement that not everyone is expected to work in similar ways and there must be no expectation of email responses at all hours. The full effect of the wholesale shift to online meetings still needs to be assessed. There is a risk that flexible arrangements will be assumed to be a female staff demand, and a risk that those staff who are better able to meet in-person or travel may gain supervisor recognition simply by virtue of being physically present.

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29. See United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination, "UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment", 2018.
30. See: United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination, "Advancing a Common Understanding of a Victim-centred Approach to Sexual Harassment within the Organisations of the United Nations System", May 2021.
31. See United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination, "Investigator's Manual: Investigation of Sexual Harassment Complaints in the United Nations", March 2021.

Chapter 8: RECOMMENDATIONS

The GPS argues that gender parity in staffing is "a crucial first step to orienting the system more strongly to deliver on gender equality and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda as a whole".[32] This is a recognition that parity is necessary, but not sufficient, to support gender equality in the organization's work.

Any reinvigoration of the GPS in the Secretary-General's second term should be explicit about connections between parity and equality. Research on this subject shows that increasing the proportion of women among institutional staff and leaders may not generate changes in workplace culture if the institution's deep culture, objectives and operating systems reflect patriarchal practices and preferences. Gender equality–focused organizational transformation efforts may find themselves 'nested' within larger institutional dynamics that remain unaltered, and create incentives to repeat past patterns, including sexist, elitist and racist exclusions.

This assessment therefore concludes by suggesting that the nature of the connections between parity and equality, and what it takes to meet not only the United Nations' gender justice goals but the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) more broadly, should be addressed more explicitly in the Strategy and in the way it is communicated and defended throughout the organization.

This pertains in particular to the question of senior leaders' commitments to feminist leadership. The GPS makes a call on senior leaders to join the International Gender Champions (IGC) network. However, the IGC has no mechanism for tracking whether its Champions either renew or actually deliver on the two commitments per year that they are supposed to make to gender equality. The Senior Compacts signed by United Nations leaders appointed by the Secretary-General do specify both parity and gender equality goals, tailored to the entity in question – and these could be a much more relevant way of assessing the internalization of parity and equality goals.

Each chapter of this report ends with detailed recommendations pertinent to the chapter topic and targeted to the authorities most directly responsible for implementation. They are summarized here. In addition, Chapter 8 ends by itemizing suggestions for new directions that this study proposes, with an emphasis on communicating links between parity and equality in the United Nations' work, and on building feminist leadership.

Setting targets, accountability and monitoring

1. Launch Phase 2 of the Gender Parity Strategy (GPS) as soon as possible. Phase 2 is overdue and critical to dismantling regional and racial disparities in staffing and career progression that tend to disproportionately affect women. It should be launched.

2. Make gender-disaggregated staffing data consistent, timely and publicly available to increase transparency and encourage civil society shadow reporting.

3. Set up high-level oversight through a task force to continue monitoring GPS implementation and strengthen accountability for reaching parity goals. The task force – comprising senior leadership across entities, chaired by UN Women and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) – should meet every quarter, and their reports should be made public to supplement the gender parity trends available on the website.

4. The Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance (DMSPC) in the Secretariat and human resources (HR) chiefs in agencies, funds and programmes (AFPs) and specialized agencies should systematize the collection and review of data on Temporary Special Measures (TSMs), exception requests and justifications for not hiring women across the system.

5. Establish alert mechanisms for backsliding or under-performing entities and grades.

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32. United Nations, "System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", p. 9.

6. EOSG and all HR managers should enforce obligatory written justification from hiring managers in the case of selection of male candidates for posts in sections and grades where parity has not yet been attained.

7. Entity leaders and HR chiefs should hold managers accountable for the achievement of gender parity and gender equality goals. Staff promotion to senior leadership positions should be contingent on demonstrated support for women staff and gender parity goals within the organization.

Senior leadership

1. The United Nations Secretary-General, who has declared himself a feminist, should encourage other leaders to follow suit, and hold public discussion on the meaning of feminist leadership in multilateral institutions.

2. Consolidate evidence and advocacy material to build a compelling case for the value of parity and the power of feminist leadership for the United Nations' operational effectiveness and normative mandate, and respond to critics by highlighting historical patterns of underrepresentation that the GPS seeks to address.

3. UN Women should strengthen communications, mentoring and networking systems with feminist leaders, both women and men, across the system (e.g., feminist Resident Coordinators), to connect gender parity to feminist practice. Networking United Nations senior leaders with feminist CSOs, for instance via UN Women's Civil Society Advisory Group, is one way to accomplish this.

4. United Nations senior leaders should make public the content of their Senior Compacts that pertain to their gender parity objectives (staffing and management) and their gender equality objectives (substantive focus of their entity's work).[33] If they are members of the International Gender Champions network, they should make public the two gender equality commitments they make annually, and report on delivery.

Recruitment, retention and talent management

1. Create a female talent pipeline with proper representation of women from the Global South, including establishment of entry-level professional programmes for women from the Global South and in senior leadership appointments. Develop rosters of women candidates or talent pools for promotion at the P5, D1 and D2 levels.

2. Facilitate career advancement of national, General Service and Field Service staff to the International Professional level. The United Nations should give its employees options to pursue alternate career tracks without ever having to leave the United Nations system. The approach towards multi-track career progressions within the United Nations should include facilitation of lateral movement across functions and agencies, allowing staff to work part-time or remotely, encouraging secondments and prioritizing alumni or returnees for jobs. The organizational culture should allow for and respect all pathways for promotions, including for those who have opted to stay away from paid employment for some time.

3. Encourage applications from civil society feminists by addressing recruitment and assessment biases against civil society activists. For example, ensure recognition of and equal value for activist experience compared to Government or other public- and private-sector employment.

4. Create structured sponsorship programmes for female staff, to ensure that promising women managers and leaders are alerted to opportunities for promotion and stretch assignments.

5. Dismantle archaic HR rules to facilitate lateral moves and inter-agency mobility for all staff, and eliminate "time-in-post" restrictions when seeking opportunities within the system. Eliminate the prohibition on staff applying for positions more than one grade higher than their current grade. All staff should be permitted to apply for positions for which they are qualified, even if they involve leapfrogging a grade.

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33. According to UN Women, Senior Compacts are available on the iSeek intranet. However, only a few senior managers have made their compacts available publicly. For example, Olga Algayerova, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, made her 2018 Compact available: https://unece.org/DAM/OPEN_UNECE/01_Governance_Framework/2018_Senior_Manager_s_Compact_ECE_paper_copy_signed.pdf. None of the Senior Compacts signed in 2021 or 2022 are available publicly.

Mission settings

1. Resolve tensions between the GPS and the demands of mission downsizing (e.g., the imperatives created through the Horizon system), hiring freeze and established recruitment methods, by updating field mission staff instructions in ST/AI/2010/3 to ensure that these structural dynamics do not override the organizational imperative to achieve gender parity.[34]

2. Demonstrate to staff that the impact of downsizing will be cancelled out by the large number of male retirements anticipated in the next few years.

3. Empower the Emergency Working Group for field missions to consider temporary measures such as an identification and separation of underperforming staff and targeted early retirement packages for select male staff in order to create space for women staff at mid- to higher levels.

4. Energize the entry levels in field missions through an increase in posts available (possibly seeking Member State sponsorship) and curated career development opportunities for United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) and national staff to enter at the P1 or P2 levels.

5. Rigorously review P401 exception request forms to identify sectors and missions repeatedly failing to shortlist or recruit women. Decisively suspend or revoke hiring authority in those cases.

6. Conduct women-only calls to populate rosters, accompanied with campaigns to show that this is not discriminatory, as it merely involves pre-screening potential candidates, not making job offers.

7. Develop internal female talent pools for mid- to higher-level appointments.

Enabling environment and organizational culture

1. Harmonize policies and systems for institutional culture change across the United Nations (where possible) with the Enabling Environment Guidelines, the Supplementary Guidance, and the Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines.[35]

2. Continue to communicate good practices for achieving gender parity through the United Nations Gender Focal Point Network, the HR Network and other networks.

3. Urgently address the persistence of sexual harassment and abuse of authority in the workplace. Consider establishing a position for an Special Representative of the Secretary-General on eliminating sexual harassment of United Nations staff, based in the EOSG.

4. Give greater visibility and support to the role of Gender Focal Points (GFPs) in monitoring the achievement of an enabling environment and broader gender parity. Appoint more GFPs to share the work burden, as per ST/SGB/2008/12.[36] Release those who volunteer as GFPs from a portion of their other responsibilities. Integrate GFPs into their department or section's personnel planning, to enable sustained monitoring of recruitment.

5. Affiliated systems, such as the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), must support gender parity reforms. The Secretary-General and the Group of Friends on Gender Parity should request the ICSC and ACABQ to accelerate their reviews of staff benefits and classification of duty stations to support more family-friendly arrangements.

6. Communicate the value of an enabling environment, internally within the United Nations, by showcasing examples of the positive impact of certain practices in missions and AFPs, or on the lives and careers of staff members. These impact stories can demonstrate

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34.   United Nations Secretariat, Administrative Instruction on the Staff Selection System, ST/AI/2010/3, 21 April 2010.
35.   United Nations, "Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System", 2019; UN Women, "Supplementary Guidance on the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System in Support of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2019; UN Women, "Make Parity a Reality: Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System in Support of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2021.
36.   Secretary-General's bulletin on departmental Focal Points for Women in the Secretariat, ST/SGB/2008/12, 1 August 2008.

the transformative potential of behaviour, social and institutional change resulting from the adoption of progressive workplace policies, and they can motivate resistant leadership, AFPs, missions and others to adopt such policies. Feature United Nations staff from diverse regions, nationalities and genders in this content, and make it available in multiple languages.

Resourcing

1. Resource GPS implementation adequately, from the core budget of the entities or from regular or assessed contributions within the Secretariat. Record budgets allocated to the implementation of the GPS in entities' annual reports and report them to the respective executive bodies.

2. Increase resources to produce targeted social and behaviour change communication products that highlight changes in the lives of staff members as a result of enabling policies. Showcase leaders who have changed practice in varied settings (see above).

3. Dedicate resources to support a narrative that true gender parity cannot be achieved unless an enabling environment — including a true embracing of equality, diversity and inclusion — is a core component. Numbers on their own will not bring about institutional change.

4. UN Women should provide support to underperforming entities, so that they — even the smaller ones with very limited resources — can identify means of overcome obstacles to gender parity progress. This could include i) support for developing tools to hold critical conversations on gender, race and sexual orientation within the United Nations, ii) co-developing learning resources with the United Nations System Staff College and other learning centres, and iii) working with the employee resource groups (such as the United Nations Feminist Network), the HR Network and the GFP Network to disseminate good practices and support dialogue sessions on challenges and opportunities for advancing gender parity within the United Nations.

5. Address the expectation that GFP work can be conducted on a voluntary basis. Establish clear provisions to release GFPs from a portion of their non-gender-related workload annually, to ensure that they can accomplish their tasks as GFPs.

Finally, to sustain and communicate this important institutional reform:

Revitalizing commitment

1. Create a burst of new commitment and conviction. Use the launch of Phase 2 as an occasion for senior leaders to recommit to the GPS and to galvanize energy for the final push to parity by 2028.

2. Articulate parity-equality connections. UN Women has a vital role to play in building support for gender parity by connecting it to the United Nations' gender equality- and justice-related normative and operational commitments. UN Women, along with the EOSG and the Department of Global Communications, should produce communications materials that look beyond numbers and explore the value of parity for the UN's operational effectiveness. The United Nations system should explore showcasing the impact of achieving gender parity to an external audience, which can help motivate resistant Member States to sign on to the parity and culture change agenda.

3. Foster feminist multilateralism. UN Women can support feminist leadership support networks as well as gender mainstreaming by examining what feminist multilateralism means in international relations. This could include both collaborating with other multilateral institutions that are exploring feminist institutional reform (e.g., the European Union, the African Union and the Organization of American States), and building partnerships with countries developing feminist foreign policy.

Promoting feminist leadership

1. The United Nations Secretary-General, who has declared himself a feminist, should encourage other leaders to follow suit, and hold public discussion on the meaning of feminist leadership in multilateral institutions.

2. United Nations senior leaders and entity heads should make public the content of their Senior Compacts that pertains to their gender parity objectives (staffing and management) and their gender equality objectives (substantive normative and operational focus). They should sign up to a public gender parity pledge such as the International Gender Champions (IGC) network,

and include this in their bios and communications. If they are members of the IGC, they should make public the two gender equality commitments they make annually, and report on their achievement. UN Women could collect and review the public gender equality pledges made by United Nations leaders.

3. Consolidate evidence and advocacy material to build a compelling case for the value of parity and the power of feminist leadership for the United Nations' operational effectiveness and normative mandate. Communicate these to both internal and external, non-technical, audiences.

4. Confront the systems and structures that permit abuse of authority, bullying and harassment, and model behaviours through communications campaigns that encourage open conversations and reimagine expectations of leaders and leadership styles, to excise gender, racial, nationality and other biases.

Building and leveraging political will

1. Member States: The Secretary-General and United Nations senior leadership should encourage the Member State Group of Friends on Gender Parity to become more engaged in advancing the GPS, given the support of Member States to resolution A/RES/76/142, adopted by the General Assembly in 2021. The resolution includes strong language on the importance of achieving gender parity and creating enabling working environments (see paragraph 35). At the least, a series of high-profile events should accompany a reinvigoration of the GPS, including the launch of Phase 2 of the GPS. Additional discussions should be held with Member States regarding obstacles to fast-tracking family-friendly reforms in the ICSC, and regarding support for funding measures that would strengthen the GPS via the ACABQ.

2. Civil society: Hold an annual discussion on the progress in meeting gender parity goals at the United Nations at the Commission on the Status of Women and other international civil society convenings. The United Nations can demonstrate leadership around the issue of gender parity and establish a reference or advisory group consisting of academics, women's rights organizations and other non-profits that interact with a core team (from EOSG, UN Women and other entities), to spotlight challenges and good practices towards achieving gender parity within the development, aid and humanitarian sectors.

Confronting and countering resistance

1. Communications: The United Nations Secretariat, with support from UN Women, should communicate support for the GPS and respond to critics with data and historical accounts that show the patterns of underrepresentation that the GPS seeks to address, and the many parity efforts that have been sidelined in the past, and showcase impact stories from the current adoption of gender parity in various settings.

2. Staff unions and internal staff representatives: A senior United Nations management group should have ongoing meetings with staff union members and representatives to discuss GPS progress and address concerns, including the concerns of male staff who feel sidelined.

3. Building supportive constituencies within the United Nations: Continue to engage with affinity groups like the United Nations Feminist Network, the women's Resident Coordinator group, UN Globe, UN Push and others, among which there is tremendous interest. Present information on GPS progress to these groups, and co-create a communication strategy that cascades across the United Nations system.

Chapter 1: Context and Conceptualization

"I think it's finally catching up with reality. Systems and structures in the world are still unequal, towards women in particular. So, there is definitely a gap that has to be addressed".

(HR Manager at HQ, HRN1)

This report presents findings from the external review of the implementation of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity (GPS) across the United Nations system. The review was commissioned in December 2020 by UN Women, to provide an external perspective, informed by civil society, on the progress of the United Nations agencies' collective efforts to communicate and implement the Strategy and to meet its objectives and deadlines.

In its recommended actions, the Strategy directed the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN Women) to work with civil society partners to encourage shadow reporting on the overall strategy, to ensure transparency and accountability. This review has been conceptualized as a critical accompaniment to the implementation of the Strategy, with a view to generating perspectives that might not necessarily be expressed internally, but that could be valuable in identifying obstacles as well as highlighting what has worked – which in turn can inform renewed mobilization for rapid and effective implementation.

Introduction: The most determined effort so far to promote parity at the UN

Women's representation and leadership in the United Nations has been a longstanding concern for the organization. The first report compiling data on women's representation in the Secretariat in 1949 found that women were largely concentrated in lower-level, administrative positions.[37] Since then, there have been reform efforts of varying intensity over the years – often lacking concrete targets and accountability mechanisms. The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action established the goal of 50/50 gender balance in the Professional and higher categories at the Fourth World Conference on Women. Multiple General Assembly resolutions have called for accelerated recruitment of women, setting targets for parity that were not reached by their deadlines. Successive Secretaries-General have taken steps to address gender imbalances in the organization and to improve the collection and dissemination of relevant data.

The current Secretary-General's 2017 gender parity initiative introduced, by far, is the most systematic and coordinated effort to reach gender parity, with the strongest accountability tools to support compliance to date. Figure 1 charts the timeline of these initiatives, indicating those that include targets and deadlines.

Our review finds that the 2017 System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity has produced unprecedented and impressive results:

- 58 per cent of entities surveyed for the latest report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations system are approaching parity, and 25 per cent have surpassed the target of 50 per cent for women's representation.[38]

- In 2019, parity was reached for the first time in the Senior Management group and among Resident Coordinators.[39]

- There has been a marked increase in the appointments of women in senior field mission management, from 23 per cent in 2017 to 49 per cent by mid-2021, with women leading some of the most challenging missions (Haiti, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

The Secretary-General has introduced reforms to institutionalize the GPS, including the updated administrative instruction on Temporary Special Measures (TSMs), and corrective measures, such as the revocation of the selection authority for underperforming grades.

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37.   Report of the Secretary-General on the participation of women in the work of the United Nations, E/CN.6/132, 16 March 1950.
38.   Report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.
39.   United Nations Secretary-General, "Secretary-General's Remarks to Group of Friends on Gender Parity", statement, 6 March 2020.

FIGURE 1: Timeline of gender parity initiatives at the United Nations

Progress has also been supported by efforts to improve data monitoring and reporting, with a new UN System-wide Dashboard on Gender Parity launched by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women in October 2021; to modernize and streamline recruitment, retention and career management policies, particularly for appointments at the senior-most levels; and to provide guidance for inclusive work cultures across the system and in the field.

At the same time, we note that progress has primarily been driven by senior appointments,[40] where the Secretary-General exercises his selection authority, especially in peacekeeping and special political missions, which are at risk of missing the 2028 target set in the Strategy. In many United Nations entities, there are patterns such as an inverse relationship between seniority and women's representation; women's segregation in administrative or non-substantive roles; and disparities on the basis of race, nationality, sexual orientation and other intersecting identities. These disparities are compounded by a higher rate of resignation in female than male staff, typically attributed to increased family

and care responsibilities. We argue that unaddressed recruitment biases, inadequate career management and retention policies, and, in some contexts, toxic workplace cultures also contribute to women's exodus from United Nations careers.

The significance of each of these factors is difficult to assess, due to a lack of comprehensive system-wide data on recruitment (including exception requests) and on the implementation of TSMs, as well as a lack of people analytics and data from staff surveys and exit interviews. Strong data analysis is a key accompaniment to affirmative action measures, and both are critical for a robust accountability system. The current structure has introduced commitments for senior leaders, but performance appraisals are not accompanied by clearly specified rewards or sanctions, undermining the implementation of TSMs and overall progress.

After decades of halting progress and unfulfilled commitments, dedicated efforts have spurred significant changes in the system. Transformation of deep structures or underlying power imbalances, however, remains an ongoing

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40. The Strategy includes appointments at the levels of Assistant Secretary-General (ASG), Under-Secretary-General (USG), Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG), Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Resident Coordinator (RC).

project. The risk of backsliding or stalling is ever present. Sustaining progress and ensuring that more diverse women benefit from the Strategy will be a matter of political will and adequately resourced collective efforts, driven by senior leadership.

Conceptualization

Consultations for the development of the Secretary-General's GPS were conducted between January and August 2017, with a wide range of stakeholders from more than 30 entities.[41] Although some entities, especially the agencies, funds and programmes, perceived the GPS to be an initiative primarily led by and meant for the Secretariat, they were interested in shaping the Strategy:

"We made sure that we had a voice in this, because we're slightly different from the core entities and in the UN. And so, anything like this is really important that we are involved, so that some of our unique ways of being organized are reflected in the strategy". (AFP HR Manager, HRN5)

Members of the GPS working group felt that the Strategy priority areas had been determined in the Secretariat ahead of the consultations, leaving them with few opportunities to influence the scope of the GPS (HR staff, HRN13). Other entity representatives felt that the Strategy was rolled out without sufficient communication and within a very short span of time (from consultation to rollout), showing unusual intensity and determination. A senior HR manager (HRN4) found that "colleagues were asked to do the impossible, develop a gender parity strategy for the entire UN System and do that within an ambitious time frame".

Despite these perceived limitations, HR managers generally found the Strategy useful, and commended its conceptualization, which allowed each entity to craft strategies that were specific to their needs and relevant to their own context. More importantly, 73 per cent of respondents to the biennial survey on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system found that the GPS has ensured that gender parity is a priority for senior leadership:[42]

"We could use it to get the attention of senior leadership in our agency, and we could really almost sort of turn it into a leadership issue, instead of it being an HR issue". (HR Manager in a Secretariat entity, HRN4)

At the time of the launch of the GPS, some entities had already put in place strategies and plans to prioritize gender parity and other aspects of diversity and inclusion. For those who had not, the GPS — and especially the requirement to set and monitor targets — provided an incentive to commit to change. The Secretary-General had asked all entities to develop entity-specific implementation plans in 2017, and an update was requested in 2020. Eighty-nine per cent of entities reviewed for the 2021 report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations system reported having developed an entity-specific implementation plan.[43] For some, the impact of the GPS has been quite striking:

"The (entity) we all knew from before doesn't exist anymore, there has been a total turnaround. … Before, parity was a 'gender' issue. Now everyone is invested. We were very ambitious on goals, but three years on we find that we have done well. We drew non-negotiables from the GPS and worked on a quality management system from an excellence, leadership and strategic frameworks point of view". (HR manager in a Secretariat entity, HRN4)

41. United Nations: United for Gender Parity, "Strategy: Gender Parity Task Force", https://www.un.org/gender/content/strategy.
     Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.
42. Report of the Secretary-General, improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, July 2021.Accessed November 22, 2021.
43. Ibid.

Methodology

An in-depth literature review was conducted based on publicly available gender strategies and action plans, accountability documents, administrative instructions, reports and resolutions, human resources (HR) policies, and documents providing guidance on work culture and an enabling environment. The desk review was complemented with quantitative analysis of data from the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) Personnel Statistics reports for 2017–2019 and the 2021 report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations system, to map system-wide progress, identify patterns of female representation across grades and explore the possible gendered aspects of career progression and separation from the United Nations.

Drawing from the Strategy recommendations and these initial quantitative and qualitative findings, six groups of key informants were identified for interviews: HR staff members (HRNs), former staff members (FSMs), resident coordinators and senior leaders (SL-RC), staff associated with United Nations field missions (MSMs), Gender Focal Points (GFPs), and miscellaneous (MSC). The MSC category comprised affinity groups, diversity and inclusion managers, staff council representatives, regional directors, and members of United Nations advisory committees and expert bodies. Figures 2–4 present a breakdown of the interviewees by these six groups and by gender, staff category and United Nations entity.

The Key Informant Interview Guides were developed with distinct sets of questions for each group of interviewees (see Annex 1). All interviews were conducted on the grounds of confidentiality; where quotes are used, they are not linked to personal identifying information. A limited online survey of HR officers was conducted to explore entity compliance with the Secretary-General's call for updated implementation plans (see Annex 2).

In addition, after the data analysis was completed, four focus group discussions (FGDs) were undertaken to validate our findings. The FGDs were conducted with i) a small set of senior women leaders in the United Nations system, ii) a group of academics who are part of the

Women in Leadership in Global Governance (WLIGG) research network, and iii) a select set of civil society organizations that are closely following the progress on gender parity within the United Nations system. Feedback from these FGDs has been presented separately in Annex 7.

FIGURE 2: Interviewees by type
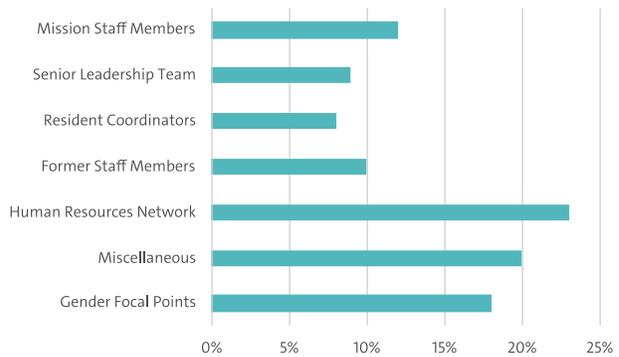
FIGURE 3: Interviewees by gender

N = 97
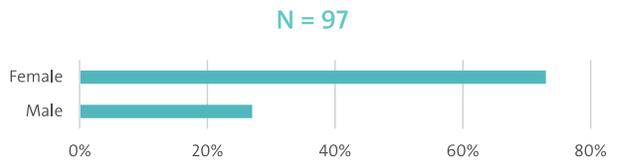
FIGURE 4: Interviewees by staff category

N = 97
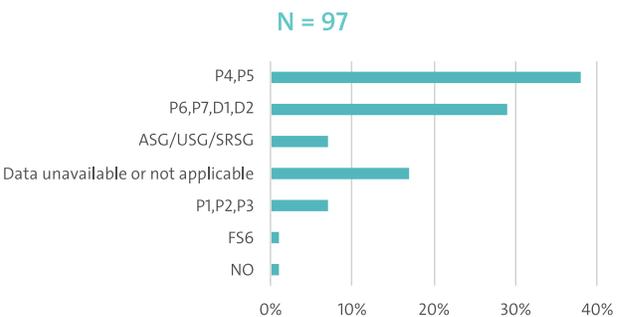
Note: Former staff members have been indicated based on their staff category at the time of leaving.

Staff categories listed:
- P = International Professional;
- D = Director;
- ASG = Assistant Secretary-General;
- USG = Under Secretary-General;
- SRSG = Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Head of mission);
- FS = Field Service;
- NO = National Officer.

Limitations

A comprehensive shadow report is a time-intensive exercise that requires significant resources and access to information. As the Terms of Reference and Call for Proposals indicated, this project was adjusted to the constraints on information access, funding, travel and physical meetings imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore this assignment was not conceived as a shadow report but as an external review that reflects a civil society perspective. We hope that this is the first step towards establishing a shadow reporting mechanism, which should ideally continue on a regular basis until the 2028 deadline set by the Strategy.

A key limitation to the research has been the inaccessibility of critical data and business intelligence, including entity implementation plans, staff engagement surveys and exit interviews, and data on the implementation of TSMs and exception requests. Additionally, we were unable to conduct United Nations–wide stakeholder surveys. Our review is therefore primarily informed by the qualitative analysis of publicly available documents and the key informant interviews described in the Methodology section.

Despite our efforts to reach a broad and diverse group of respondents, our sample of informants reflects patterns observed in the United Nations itself: Since the majority of our informants were women, approximately 38 per cent were based in one of the four Headquarter locations,[44] and the Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG) was overrepresented in our sample. In line with the fact that women tend to resign at a higher rate, there were four times more women than men in our group of former staff members. Women were also overrepresented in our HR Network interviewee group and the group of Gender Focal Points (GFPs), again in line with patterns observed in the United Nations.

Organization and scope of the review

This report follows the structure and organization of the Strategy. Chapter 1 describes the conceptualization and context of the Gender Parity Strategy. Chapters 2–7 discuss the Strategy priority areas: setting targets and monitoring progress; leadership and accountability; recruitment, retention, progression and talent management; senior appointments; creating an enabling environment; and mission settings. Each chapter starts with a review of the status of the recommended actions in the Strategy, which we have colour-coded as follows:

On track

Further action needed/
Further evidence required

Little progress made

The summary of recommendations is followed by a discussion of key findings, informed by insights from the literature review and supplemented with quotes from the key informant interviews. Each chapter includes recommendations for relevant stakeholders.

The report concludes with a discussion of future considerations, including issues that were not adequately covered in the Strategy and issues that were raised, unprompted, by interviewees as examples of good practice, concerns or obstacles to be addressed.

Since the Strategy applies only to International Professional and Ungraded staff categories –Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) and Under-Secretary-General (USG) – the scope of our review was also limited to grades P1 to USG. Although we briefly discuss relevant findings shared with us in interviews, other contractual modalities and types of personnel (for example, National Officers, consultants, interns and volunteers) are beyond the scope of this analysis.

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44.   New York, Geneva, Vienna, Nairobi.

Chapter 2: Setting Targets and Monitoring Progress

"Parity needs to go beyond metrics".

(MSC5)

Progress towards GPS recommended actions

Make available sex-disaggregated data on all personnel, regardless of appointment or contract type.

- There are many data collection and reporting tools and documents — e.g., the annual CEB Personnel Statistics Report, the biennial rport of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations system, gender parity dashboards (including the UN System-wide Dashboard on Gender Parity, the UN Secretariat Gender Parity Dashboard, and entity-level dashboards and databases.

- The new UN System-wide Dashboard on Gender Parity is now the most comprehensive tool and an important contribution to meaningful system-wide monitoring.

- Not all types of contractual modalities are monitored and reported (e.g., consultants, interns and volunteers) across all entities.

Develop a standardized methodology and template for all entities to calculate targets by level

- Targets were developed and are maintained by the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance (DMSPC) and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG). They are shared with entities through the Office of Human Resources (OHR).

- The methodology and entity-specific targets are not publicly available.

Initiate Phase 2 of the Gender Parity Strategy

- Phase 2 has not been initiated.

Develop a database of women National Officers and their skills and expertise

- A talent pool has been developed but is not exclusively for women National Officers

Develop a dedicated strategy to increase the numbers of women peacekeepers and police in peacekeeping missions

- The Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy, 2018–2028, has been developed by the Department of Peace Operations (DPO).

HR Network costs the move to entity-wide analytic platforms for real-time monitoring of demographic changes in the workforce

- No information available.

Add the full United Nations system to the Secretariat website by Q4 2017

- The UN System-wide Dashboard on Gender Parity already includes a link to the Secretariat Dashboard. The review team has been informed that a link to the UN System-wide Dashboard on Gender Parity will soon be added to the Secretariat Gender Parity dashboard.

The status of women in the United Nations system

Key findings from the report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations system for the period 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2019 include the following:[45]

The representation of women in the Professional and higher categories in the United Nations system has increased from 44.2 per cent to 45.3 per cent since the previous reporting period.[46] The largest increase in the representation of women was registered at the most senior levels, at 7.8 percentage points, owing to considerable increases during the period 2017– 2018. The representation of women increased by 2.9 percentage points in the Director category and by 0.9 percentage points in the Professional category. Representation among National Professional Officers increased by 1.1 percentage points. Representation in the Field and General Service categories increased by 0.4 and 0.7 percentage points, respectively. The category with the lowest representation of women continues to be the Field Service category, at 27.4 per cent.

For the first time, the representation of women at headquarters locations nearly reached parity, at 49.5 per cent overall. Yet, overall progress towards gender parity at non-headquarters locations continued to trail headquarters locations at every grade level, with an 8.3 percentage point difference overall. The representation of women at the Director level was low in both headquarters and non-headquarters locations, registering at 38.4 per cent and 37.6 per cent, respectively. The P3 level continued to show the greatest disparity, where the representation of women at headquarters was 12.8 percentage points higher compared with non-headquarters locations.

The representation of women among heads and deputy heads of peace operations reached 48 per cent (from 25 per cent at the beginning of the Secretary-General's term in January 2017). Parity among Resident Coordinators has been sustained since 2018.

TABLE 1: Percentage of women in the professional and higher categories on permanent, continuous and fixed-term appointments, by entity, as of 31 December 2019

Women (%)	No. of entities	Entities (% of women)
≥ 50	9	ICJ (50.0), UNU (50.0), UN Women (82.4), UNSSC (56.5), UNAIDS (53.6), UNESCO (51.9), PAHO (50.7), UNFPA (50.5), UNICEF (50.2)
40-49.9	21	UNHCR (46.8), WHO (46.5), IOM (46.2), ITC (46.1), UNDP (46.1), UNRWA (45.3), WIPO (45.2), IFAD (44.9), UNJSPF (44.8), WFP (44.7), UNITAR (44.1), United Nations Secretariat (43.9), ITC-ILO (43.8), IMO (43.3), ICSC Secretariat (43.5), FAO (42.6), UNFCCC (40.4), ITU (40.0), WMO (40.0), UNWTO (48.9), ILO (48.2)
<40	6	UNIDO (36.2), UNOPS (35.3), IAEA (31.8), ICAO (28.8), UPU (27.4), UNICC (19.1)

Source: Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.

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45.   Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.
46.   From 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2017.

Increases were achieved at the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) secretariat, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The United Nations University (UNU) made significant progress, improving from 37.1 per cent in 2017 to parity at 50 per cent in 2019.

Entities with mandates in technical fields had the lowest representation of women, illustrating the persistent occupational segregation and the need to strengthen parity efforts and challenge gender norms in traditionally male-dominated sectors.[47]

The overall representation of women in this reporting period continued to be negatively correlated with seniority in the Professional and higher categories (Figure 5), except for officials appointed by the Secretary-General at the Under-Secretary-General, Assistant Secretary-General and D2 levels.[48] Interviewees for this report across a range of entities at headquarters and in the field repeatedly cited the P5–D2 grades as the most challenging.

Furthermore, data on separations indicate that a disproportionate share of women resign, whereas men are more likely to stay and retire from the United Nations (Figure 6). Although women accounted for 45.3 per cent of staff in the Professional and ungraded categories, they comprised 49.7 per cent of all resignations.[49]

FIGURE 6: Percentage of women and men, by type of staff separation

Source: Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.

FIGURE 5: Gender balance across International Professional and ungraded staff, 2018–2019

Source: Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021. Data from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2019.

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47. Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.

What is missing?

While the inverse relationship between seniority and women's representation is well established, the data can "elide many groups that have been marginalized for a long time" (staff member associated with United Nations field missions, MSM5), as well as obscuring other persistent imbalances in the system.

"It is worthwhile exploring which women have benefitted from the GPS". (GFP in an AFP, GFP6)

The available data tend to obscure persistent regional disparities and a lack of representation from the countries the United Nations serves (GFP in an AFP, GFP6), which in turn sustains a view that feminism is a Western concern, even in entities where women are overrepresented across the board. This GFP also pointed to persistent hierarchies even among minority groups, with an overrepresentation of a small number of ethnicities, and a preference for those raised or educated in the West.

While Phase 2 aims to extend the GPS to National Officers, starting in 2018, the fact that it has not been initiated contributes to a view that the Strategy is strongly influenced and perhaps focused on the Global North (HRN13), as reflected in an assertion that "the UN needs to make sure that it is not only white women from the West that make it to the top" (staff member associated with United Nations field missions, MSM5). There have been efforts to address this gap: 24 per cent of entities surveyed for the report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations system have reached parity among National Professional Officers, and approximately 40 per cent of the entities with National Professional Officers have plans or targets in place to increase the proportion of women in that group. Phase 2 could provide a framework and a strong incentive for the development of similar initiatives throughout the system.

Beyond parity, female National Officers face significant racial and linguistic biases and structural barriers to their advancement, such as the tendency to get locked into the type of appointment and grade at which they enter the system (current staff member, MSC5), as well as limited mobility opportunities, particularly from the field to head-quarters. The transition from the national (or General Service) category to the International Professional grades is equally hard — if possible at all — and fraught with administrative obstacles (representative of the United Nations Feminist Network, MSC1).

Established intake programmes, such as the Junior Professional Officers, can entrench and exacerbate these disparities, but their role in differential career outcomes for young women from the Global South has not been adequately explored and substantiated with data (current staff member, MSC5). Some entities are monitoring transitions and offering training and mentoring programmes or career opportunities to underrepresented countries, but these efforts are not consistent across the system.

"For a national woman with an accent who has no experience outside of her country, the likelihood of transitioning to an international career is very low and contingent on having a supportive manager who will actively promote her". (GFP in an AFP, GFP6)

"Regarding women and Arab women representation, it's a double discrimination. First is nationality, as being an Arab woman or African, and the second is because you're a woman". (Female leader in an AFP in the field, SL- RC9)

Consistent monitoring of data on non-staff categories, such as consultants, interns and volunteers is equally lacking. Consultants, in particular, are a fluid group with a high turnover rate, and are harder to monitor. A 2014 report by the Joint Inspection Unit found that "up to 45 per cent of the total workforce are working under non-staff contracts, many of them for extended periods under a de facto employment relationship, with inadequate oversight and no access to internal justice mechanisms".[50] The report noted that entities did not have detailed analytical data on non-staff personnel. Despite the inspectors' strong recommendation that gender balance policies be explicitly included in the recruitment

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50. Cihan Terzi and Papa Louis Fall, "Use of Non-Staff Personnel and Related Contractual Modalities in the United Nations System Organisations: Country Case Studies – Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and India", JIU/REP/2014/8 (Joint Inspection Unit, 2014).

of non-staff personnel, very few entities reported collecting data on their non-staff members, and even fewer reported monitoring if and how gender intersects with the precarity of non-staff roles.[51]

In the 1990s, Thérèse Sevigny conceived the term "the ghettoization of women" (MSC11) to describe the segregation of women in the United Nations into administrative, human resources, and training roles — "let me take care

Data limitations

"All these battles need to be fought with statistics".
(Secretariat source, MSC10)

There is an abundance of data within the United Nations, but it is scattered across entities and levels, causing what an informant termed "dashboard fatigue" (SL-RC12), namely an overload of information in multiple formats and sources, exacerbated by rigid targets and a focus on moving the numbers. Often, requests from staff members for granular data exploring some of the disparities outlined above are rejected, despite the fact that the United Nations expends considerable resources on data collection and monitoring (member of a United Nations expert body, MSC11). There may be power in numbers, but there is also gatekeeping in the system that disempowers marginalized groups. This abundant but disjointed information often becomes irrelevant background noise, rather than a powerful analytical tool to support implementation, complement affirmative action and address grievances by showcasing historical trends in the low or skewed representation of women in the system. Some of the monitoring tools that are public or were shared with the team are outlined below.

The Management Performance Dashboard is an internal tool available to heads of departments and offices in the Secretariat to review their situation by gender, region and grade (SL-RC3). An HR Network Working Group periodically reviews mechanisms across the rest of the system and helps harmonize the monitoring process.

of you" (MSC11) positions.[52] This disparity has persisted since at least the 1950s,[53] particularly in masculinized entities and in the field. A staff member with experience in mission staffing astutely observed that "gender parity and diversity should be about both more women in management, and more men in support roles" (MSM9). However, information on the breakdown of occupational roles is not public, and it is unclear how consistently it is monitored across the system.

There is currently no internal system-wide data repository (member of the drafting committee, SL-RC14).

The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) publishes personnel statistics reports with data disaggregated by gender, grade, type of contract, location, age and length of service, among other factors. These are published annually, but present data only up to 31 December of the previous year, resulting in a one-year lag. The CEB website was recently updated with personnel statistics graphs,[54] but these may not be readily available to those unfamiliar with the broader United Nations system.

The Gender Parity Dashboard developed by the Secretariat is a useful tool for the departments and offices, special political missions and peacekeeping operations, funds and programmes and regional commissions in the Secretariat, whose gender parity data are not captured in detail in other public tools or reports, such as the CEB Statistics Report or the new system-wide dashboard developed by UNDP and UN Women. It is automated from the United Nations recruitment website (InSpira), which ensures the harmonized collection and update of data in real time across the Secretariat. The Strategy, however, had recommended adding the full United Nations system to the dashboard by the end of 2017, recognizing that the webpage dedicated to the parity project should provide comprehensive data to facilitate meaningful monitoring.

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51. Ibid.
52. The first female Under-Secretary-General for Information.
53. Report of the Secretary-General on the Participation of Women in the Work of the United Nations, E/CN.6/132, 16 March 1950.
54. UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, https://unsceb.org.

UNDP and UN Women have jointly funded and developed the first ever public **UN System-wide Dashboard on Gender Parity**,[55] with participation from nearly 40 entities across the system. It presents the latest available data on gender balance by entity, grade, age group, duty station and staff category, and shows the Gender Parity Index, which is the number of women or men needed to reach parity. Data are provided by Gender Focal Points and HR Specialists from participating organizations and will be updated on a quarterly basis.

The availability and quality of entity-level data vary across the system and are largely contingent on resources, with downstream effects on the quality of analysis. Larger and better resourced entities have developed platforms that provide real-time integration with their enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, linking their data collection to staff surveys and other sources of information, whereas smaller entities with budget constraints find access to quality data a persistent challenge.

Data restrictions can also complicate analysis. Internally, access to dashboards is often reserved for individuals in specific roles and positions, which may be incompatible with the "gender is everyone's business" approach many entities have professed. Missing data were a key complicating factor in our own research as well. For example, we have not had any information on costing of platforms for real-time monitoring,[56] as recommended by the GPS, and only a small number of entities shared snapshots of their internal monitoring tools.

Setting targets

More importantly, we have not had access to the standardized methodology for developing targets, beyond the information included in the Strategy, nor to the targets themselves. Nevertheless, according to informants, entities themselves did not have an opportunity to make inputs at the target development stage. Targets were set by the United Nations Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance (DMSPC) in the Secretariat and shared with the system through the Office of Human Resources (OHR) (GFP in a mission setting, GFP4). This top-down approach has been criticized as rigid and unrealistic, particularly for smaller, technically specialized, male-dominated entities, especially in the context of current recruitment and retention dynamics. "Targets should be set on the basis of where each entity is", affirmed a senior leader in an AFP (SL-RC13). "Otherwise, we are just setting them up for failure, and that can be quite demoralizing. Instead, they need to be shown that it *can* be done".

Beyond the methodology, informants were divided on whether implementation of the GPS has focused on reaching targets and moving the numbers, and whether this approach is conducive to achieving women's meaningful representation in the system. A female staff member with decades in the system emphasized that "There *is* power in numbers. You don't change minds by being the lone voice" (member of a United Nations expert body, MSC11). And as a former staff member noted, "No one can fault the Secretary-General on the numbers" (FSM1), especially after the significant strides over the first two years of implementation. However, many more interviewees stressed that parity needs to go beyond metrics (current staff member, MSC5), to promote true inclusion and create an attractive environment that welcomes diversity (Senior Secretariat leader, SL-RC3).

"There are many intelligent people in the UN who can conceptualize [data] differently". (MSM5)

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55. UN Women, "System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/gender-parity-in-the-united-nations/system-wide-strategy.
56. By real-time monitoring, we mean that the data is linked to the Enterprise Resource Planning or Human Resources information systems that are available. It is not clear what kind of dashboards exist at entity levels for real-time monitoring.

Recommendations

UNDP and UN Women

1. The UN System-wide Dashboard on Gender Parity is a welcome contribution to monitoring and can greatly facilitate future shadow reporting. To further strengthen analysis, we recommend that UNDP and UN Women:

    a. Consider enriching the data with some of the salient characteristics outlined in this section — e.g., United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs), use of non-binary categorization, race, nationality, education, income brackets, if feasible.

    b. Consider enabling additional queries of the data, for example looking at the percentage of women of a specific age group at a specific grade.

    c. Extend monitoring to non-staff members, such as contractors, interns and volunteers.

    d. Explore partnerships with private corporations or academic institutions who undertake projects on a pro bono basis and might offer data clinics. This could partially address the issue of limited resources.

UN Women

1. Work with civil society organizations (CSOs) to increase data transparency by providing periodic updates to the system-wide gender parity dashboard, perhaps sharing key findings or trends whenever the data are updated. Greater visibility of the dashboard is likely to have two benefits: Firstly, CSOs are key stakeholders for the United Nations system, and sharing periodic information with them will create an external accountability mechanism for meeting GPS targets by different entities. Secondly, shared information can be a powerful tool to create a narrative around the United Nations' commitment to gender equality goals.

2. Organize a session with the CSO–non-governmental organization (NGO) committee to highlight gender parity achievements, the enabling environment and field-specific guidelines, and the UN System-wide Dashboard on Gender Parity. Use the conversation to create a push for greater public accountability for gender parity ideas.

Executive Office of the Secretary-General and Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance

1. Dedicate resources to consolidating data and improving internal monitoring with more nuanced analysis. Monitoring the implementation of the GPS should include exception requests, the implementation of TSMs, Senior Compacts and implementation plans. This information should be available to both internal stakeholders — such as UN Women — and the public.

2. Create a task force composed of members of the Secretary-General's Senior Management Committee to review the Secretariat's gender parity dashboard.

3. Use the data available to build and strengthen the gender parity case. The numbers are there, but the story has not yet been told compellingly.

4. Showcase the power of female leadership and use historical trends to address allegations of purported discrimination coming from aggrieved male staff members.

5. Highlight patterns related to intersecting identifiers (gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation, etc.), income brackets, age differentials, career advancements and substantive roles.

6. Accelerate Phase 2 of the GPS: Many informants identified Phase 2 as a missed opportunity to extend parity to the highly qualified staff members in the national staff category.

Human resources departments and data holders

1. Increase data transparency. See Chapter 4 (Recruitment and retention) for more specific recommendations on people analytics.

2. Reevaluate data access restrictions and encourage scrutiny by all, in line with the "gender is everyone's business" approach.

Chapter 3: Leadership and Accountability

"The most important factor for successful implementation of the GPS is leadership. If leaders do not care, nothing happens".

(MSM1)

Progress towards GPS recommended actions

Senior Managers' Compacts include specific, time-bound and entity-specific targets
Senior Compacts include gender parity commitments, but they are neither linked to targets nor time-bound.

Non-Secretariat executive heads sign similar Compacts
Non-Secretariat executive heads have not signed Compacts with commitments on gender parity.

Monitor compliance and hold senior managers accountable for meeting targets
While monitoring mechanisms are in place, weak accountability has been cited as the most important obstacle to progress, with implications for the credibility of the parity project.

Revocation of selection authority for under-represented grades
There is no public information on this, but interviewees shared that the selection authority of underperforming entities has never been revoked.

Deputy Heads will be held responsible for supporting Heads of Departments to meet the annual targets
Cascading accountability is not consistently applied throughout the system.

All staff with supervisory or hiring responsibility to personally sign off on the statistical status on gender parity
No evidence of this was found in our analysis.

Workplans to include SMART goals and performance appraisal to include assessment of staff member's performance
SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timebound) goals and other performance appraisal measures are in place in some entities. Their effectiveness has been questioned in key informant interviews.

HR Managers to provide the most up to date information on gender balance for the relevant level to a hiring manager prior to recruitment
Depending on capacity, some entities ensure that HR provides updated data, others rely on dashboards.

EOSG to work with system to ensure that resources for programming on gender equality are made more readily available
Lack of resources has been repeatedly cited as a key impediment to progress, affecting outreach, recruitment, monitoring and workforce planning.

Managers at all levels who meet their targets profiled and acknowledged in internal communications
There is no evidence of such communications: The Office of the Focal Point for Women in the United Nations System at UN Women highlights examples of good practice, but these are not directly tied to performance.

All senior managers to follow the Secretary-General's example and join the International Gender Champions
Of the 207 senior leaders in the United Nations (Assistant Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General), only 30 (14.85 per cent) have signed the International Gender Champions Parity Pledge.

The role of senior leadership

"There have been significant positive steps highlighting the power of leadership and the importance of having messages of diversity and inclusion coming from the top". (Former staff member, FSM9)

Successful efforts at sustained organizational change always require senior champions. At the same time, transformation can only be an outcome of political will and adequately resourced collective efforts – grounded in the assignment of specific roles and responsibilities at different levels; timely, objective and accurate reporting; clearly defined incentives and consequences for non-compliance; and due recognition of achievement.

This section outlines the efforts and maps the measures put in place to harness the power of leadership and strengthen accountability across the system. It also discusses concerns raised in the key informant interviews on the adequacy and effectiveness of these measures.

"It all comes down to leadership, and that can go both ways: a good leader can drive improvements, but an indifferent one can harm the process". (An AFP manager, SL-RC12)

There is now ample evidence that the Secretary-General's strong commitment and leadership has instigated swift reforms that had been lagging in the system for decades: In 2018, for the first time in United Nations history, parity was achieved in the Senior Management Group and among Resident Coordinators. In 2020, parity was attained in the United Nations Secretariat among all full-time Assistant Secretaries-General and Under Secretaries-General. The share of women increased from 25 per cent at the beginning of the Secretary-General's term in January 2017 to 48 per cent in March 2021.[57]

These notable achievements were in part driven by focused recruitment at the senior-most levels, for which the Secretary-General has reserved his selection prerogative in the new delegation of authority framework for the Secretariat.[58] They have also been the outcome of a broader effort to institutionalize gender parity as an operational imperative,[59] by strengthening the normative framework, communicating heightened expectations, articulating actionable commitments for senior leadership, establishing monitoring and oversight mechanisms, and identifying corrective actions.

At the institutional level, it is noticeable that the GPS has been nimbly designed to circumvent protracted deliberations in the General Assembly and potential Member State objections (Secretariat source, HRN13). It also makes very few demands of United Nations core finances. The Secretary-General and his team have been adeptly identifying existing policies that can be invoked or updated to facilitate gender-balanced recruitment (senior leader, SL-RC10). In 2019, the Secretary-General sent a memo reminding senior leaders in the Secretariat that the 1999 administrative instruction on TSMs for the achievement of gender parity was still in effect.[60] In line with the recommendation of the GPS, the document was updated and promulgated in 2020,[61] mandating the selection of a qualified female candidate for grades that are not at parity.

The role of monitoring the implementation of GPS recommendations has been assigned to the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM).[62] DMSPC is responsible for the policy side, and the United Nations Department of Operational Support (DOS) provides operational support (a drafting committee member, SL-RC14).

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57.   Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.
58.   United Nations Secretariat, Administrative Instruction on the Staff Selection System, ST/AI/2010/3, 21 April 2010, and Secretary-General's Bulletin on the Delegation of Authority in the Administration of the Staff Regulations and Rules and the Financial Regulations and Rules, ST/SGB/2019/2, 17 December 2018.
59.   Internal memo of 27 November 2017.
60.   Administration Instruction on Special Measures for the Achievement of Gender Equality, ST/AI/1999/9, 21 September 1999.
61.   Administrative Instruction on Temporary Special Measures for the Achievement of Gender Parity, ST/AI/2020/5, 6 August 2020.
62.   Internal memo of 27 November 2017.

UN Women is mandated to monitor the system-wide representation of women and men by the United Nations General Assembly. The 2017 Strategy assigned specific tasks to UN Women,[63] including the development of good practice guidelines for an enabling and inclusive work culture,[64] working with civil society partners to encourage shadow reporting, contributing to the development of a dedicated strategy for increasing the number of women peacekeepers and a new media campaign to promote women in United Nations field missions, and developing a system-wide female National Officer Pool. UN Women has also significantly expanded the network of Gender Focal Points (GFPs) and Focal Points for Women, who provide critical support to heads of departments by promoting greater awareness of gender issues and monitoring progress toward the achievement of gender targets, among other duties.[65] (See Chapter 7 on the enabling environment for an analysis of Gender Focal Points.)

Gender parity is reviewed quarterly by the Management Committee,[66] and has also been addressed by the Executive Committee.[67] UN Women has been mandated by Member States to produce the biennial report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system.

To signal commitment to gender equality and parity, the Secretary-General has requested all heads of entities and offices to follow his lead and join the International Gender Champions,[68] an initiative by Member States and the United Nations through which senior leaders commit to individual and institutional change.[69] Of the 207 senior leaders in the United Nations (Assistant Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General), as of August 2021 only 30 (14.85 per cent) had signed onto the International Gender Champions Parity Pledge.[70]

Cascading accountability throughout the system

"The Secretary-General has done a phenomenal job bringing in senior women. We need to look at lessons learned at that level and cascade them throughout the system". (Senior leader in an AFP, SL-RC13)

In November 2017, shortly after the launch of the GPS, the Secretary-General requested entities to align existing gender strategies with it or to develop implementation plans with specific targets and measures to reflect the core recommendations of the Strategy.[71] Although some entities were well advanced in their gender parity efforts, the request set off a flurry of activity throughout

the system. Highly specialized entities, in particular, found that they were given the impetus to develop formalized policy documents with measurable targets that would go beyond the programmatic gender equality strategies they typically had in place (HR managers in technical entities, HRN6 and HRN8).

"The GPS is a very targeted approach". (HR manager in the Secretariat, HRN10)

Coming from the Office of the Secretary-General himself, the request galvanized commitment by senior leaders

63. UN Women, "System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity: UN Women's Status Report and Updated Implementation Plan" (accessed 21 June 2022).
64. United Nations, "Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System", 2019; UN Women, "Supplementary Guidance on the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System in Support of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2019; and UN Women, "Make Parity a Reality: Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System in Support of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2021.
65. For more information see UN Women, "Gender Focal Points and Focal Points for Women: Focal point for women in the UN system".
66. Internal memo of 27 November 2017.
67. Report of the Secretary-General on the Overview of Human Resources Management Reform for the Period 2019—2020 and an Outlook Beyond, A/75/540, 23 October 2020.
68. This recommended action was reinforced by Executive Committee decision.
69. Internal memo of 27 November 2017.
70. Five of the 207 posts are currently not encumbered. Data from the latest Protocol and Liaison list, available at United Nations, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, "Senior Officials of the United Nations".
71. Internal memo of 27 November 2017.

across the system. Informants found leadership support pivotal to achieving progress, especially given the hierarchical structure of United Nations entities. Even historically male-dominated entities have made investments in gender parity, developing manuals and studying the living conditions and working arrangements of their female staff in the field.[72]

"Leadership at the top correlates with entity performance". (UN Globe representative, MSC4)

"Our Executive Director said nothing less than 50 per cent would be good enough". (GFP in an AFP, GFP3)

Most entities have put in place implementation plans with targets, monitoring and reporting schedules, and specific roles and responsibilities. In line with the recommendations of the GPS, typically a senior leader at the deputy level is responsible for receiving data and analysis from HR managers.[73]

Among others, HR departments are the drivers of the GPS, with key roles in recruitment, talent development and management, and staff engagement. They are typically responsible for monitoring and reporting gender parity data, and are therefore at the heart of accountability systems for the GPS. Reporting varies from as frequently as "every Monday at 8:30 am" (HR Manager, HRN4) to quarterly or biannually. Almost 80 per cent of

entities surveyed for the report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations System reported that hiring managers were provided with access to real-time staff data to better understand how hiring decisions impact progress towards gender parity.[74] In some entities this requirement preceded the GPS (GFP in a mission, GFP4).

Some entities have established high-level steering committees or boards that bring together senior managers to provide oversight and recommendations to executive leadership.[75] Managers responsible for Diversity and Inclusion or Change and Organizational Culture may often be involved in an advisory or monitoring capacity.

Political and peacekeeping missions are discussed in detail in Chapter 6, but it is worth noting here that they are directly accountable to the Secretary-General and required to submit annual implementation reports to the EOSG. Performance is reported to the Secretary-General via cables to the headquarters desks, which then move them up the chain to department Under-Secretaries-General. The Business Transformation and Accountability Division (BTAD) of DMSPC is monitoring delegation of authority by heads of entities. In 2020, BTAD was expected to develop a personal accountability framework for geographical diversity.[76] However, it is unclear whether this framework would also address the complementary goal of gender parity.

Performance appraisals

"No USG wants to look bad in front of the Secretary-General", we have heard repeatedly in our interviews (SL-RC10, SL-RC12, GFP3). To incentivize performance and strengthen accountability, the Secretary-General has introduced gender parity commitments in the Compacts of Senior Managers in the Secretariat. These set targets for gender parity and geographical diversity, and are

reviewed periodically and at the end of each year, using the DMSPC Management Dashboard (SL-RC3).

The Management Performance Board (MPB), chaired by the Secretary-General's Chef de Cabinet, met in November 2019 to review the performance of senior managers for 2018 against the gender and geographical diversity indicators in their compacts and to advise the Secretary-General

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72. UN Women, "Reflect, Realize, Respond: Rising to new challenges – Accelerating gender parity in times of crisis and beyond", Global Annual Meeting of Gender Focal Points and Focal Points for Women, 5–7 October 2020.
73. Assistant Secretaries-General, Deputy Executive Directors or Deputy Directors-General.
74. Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.
75. Including the UNICEF Gender Equality Steering Committee, the UNDP Gender Implementation Oversight Board and the UNOPS Gender Advisory Panel.
76. United Nations Office of Human Resources, "Geographical Diversity Strategy", January 2020.

on these matters. In 2019, the MPB also reviewed performance against the equitable geographical distribution target, which is aimed at increasing recruitment from countries that are un- and underrepresented in geographical posts, thus improving diversity. In 2020 and 2021, the MPB reviewed the performance of senior managers in the previous year against these three indicators.[77] Non-Secretariat Executive Heads, on the other hand, especially those in specialized agencies who are independently elected by their governing bodies, do not report to the Secretary- General — who therefore has no authority to introduce GPS-related requirements to their compacts or to request that they sign similar compacts. As a senior leader put it, "the Secretary-General can be persuasive but not directive" with heads of entities (SL-RC10). Instead, collaboration and coordination are sought in the CEB, through the High-Level Management and Programming Committees.

Still, 84 per cent of the entities surveyed for the report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations system have implemented various leadership and accountability measures in line with the GPS. Gender parity goals in performance indicators for senior managers, staff with supervisory responsibilities and HR personnel are among the most prevalent such measures.[78] At UNDP, every Assistant Secretary-General and bureau director has a compact with the Administrator with targets on gender equality and parity, which are reviewed in appraisals on an annual basis. The United Nations Office in Vienna (UNOV) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) recently developed guidance on gender-related goals in work plans, which initially only applied to managers. This year they will have two mandatory goals: one on gender parity and one on creating an inclusive work environment for everyone. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has a new indicator on gender parity for supervisors and senior managers, and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) has added very specific and detailed goals into their performance management, with numbers for regional directors reviewed in quarterly meetings. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) requires every staff member to have a gender equality learning objective. In mission settings, section chiefs are held accountable through their e-PAS (Performance Appraisal System).

At the senior-most level, performance is evaluated in the Management Performance Board once a year, where every Under-Secretary-General's performance is shown and colour-coded based on progress made or lack thereof (senior leader, SL-RC10 and a Secretariat manager, MSM11).

Leadership and accountability: From building blocks to stumbling blocks

Even with these extensive mechanisms and measures in place, the rate of progress remains sluggish, at only 1.1 percentage points between 2019 and 2021 according to the report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations system. A sense of disenchantment persists in parts of the system, as progress is primarily driven by successes at the senior-most levels, subject to the Secretary-General's selection authority. Beyond the Secretariat, the entities that are performing better tend to rely on other accountability frameworks, such as the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP),[79] or external certifications like EDGE, rather than on the GPS and its recommended actions. Strengthening current accountability mechanisms with clearly defined performance expectations, timely monitoring requirements, alerts for backsliding, performance incentives, enforceable sanctions for non-compliance, and due recognition for achievement can spur progress and reinvigorate faith in the gender parity project.

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77.   Ibid.
78.   Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.
79.   For more information on the UN System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, see UN Women, "Promoting UN accountability (UN-SWAP and UNCT-SWAP)", https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability.

Short sticks and no carrots

"Without sanctions, it will never happen". (AFP manager, SL-RC12)

All heads of entities and field missions in the Secretariat have signed Senior Compacts with the Secretary-General committing to gender parity and geographical diversity. Ostensibly, targets and responsibilities for achieving them are defined in implementation plans, which are not public. Senior Compacts and other performance appraisal instruments are a good starting point, but can only ever be as good as the follow-up conversations around them (senior AFP leader, SL-RC13). It appears that these conversations are not currently happening in the Secretariat to establish remedial responses.

Furthermore, while no entity leader wants to look bad in front of the Secretary-General, it is highly likely that those who do fail on GPS targets face no serious consequences, reputational or otherwise. In fact, compliance appears to rely largely on custom and the voluntary commitment of individual managers.

"It appears that no-one above me was monitoring if and how I was performing against the GPS. But now I know that — having achieved 40 per cent in such difficult circumstances — I can do even better next time". (Chief of Staff in a mission, MSM8)

The GPS includes recommendations to address non-compliance, culminating in the revocation of an entity's selection authority for underperforming grades. However, as a senior leader acknowledged, commitments in Senior Compacts notwithstanding, in a political organization like the United Nations, it is highly unlikely that department heads with decision-making authority will face punishment or sanction on the grounds of failing to hire more women (SL-RC10). In fact, the selection authority of an underperforming manager has never been revoked (GFP2, HRN11, GFP16, MSM11).

Drastic measures aside, compliance with actionable requirements — like providing written justification for not hiring a shortlisted woman (using the P401 form, discussed in detail in Chapter 4 on recruitment, retention and talent management) — are not applied systematically, undermining the application and strength of TSMs. Monitoring of these exception requests started only recently in the Secretariat, and preliminary analysis indicates that a low number have been received relative to the number of men hired. However, it is not possible to determine whether more ought to have been submitted.

In the field, the delegation of authority is not policed, and this has allowed for the unequal application of policies and laws within and across entities (staff member associated with United Nations field missions, MSM1). Special Representatives of the Secretary-General who are not committed to parity set the tone for the hiring managers in their mission, who "know how to recommend women, but always hire men, claiming there are no eligible women" (staff member associated with United Nations field missions, GFP2). In the current framework of delegated authority, the head of an entity making staff decisions is unlikely to be overruled, and the EOSG has rarely pushed back (a member of the GPS drafting committee, MSM14). According to the 2013 study "Bridging the Civilian Gender Gap in Peace Operations", "there is a broad perception that while Hiring Managers should be autonomous, their autonomy should be counterbalanced by proactive monitoring".[80]

"With the GPS stopping short of mandating responsibilities, no one takes ownership of it, nor is there an accountability framework specifying the costs of non-compliance. Too much is left to the discretion of hiring managers and entities, compromising meaningful progress". (GFP in an AFP, GFP6)

This lack of clear consequences for underperformance (and of incentives for compliance) is compounded by the absence of systems to alert oversight departments to underperforming entities or grades outside of the normal reporting cycle. Timely interventions are likely to be more effective than ex post facto corrective action. Immediate

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80. United Nations Department of Field Support, "Bridging the Civilian Gender Gap in Peace Operations: Final report", 2013, p. 37.

reporting is used only when gender parity targets go into reverse; in that case, managers must report immediately to the head of the agency or fund, the Human Resources Department, the Office of the Focal Point for Women and the Office of the Secretary-General, setting out targeted processes for preventing any further regression.

A number of informants were not aware of any such alert systems in their entity or department. This lack of awareness — combined with ad hoc approaches to access to gender parity data within entities, a lack of visibility from headquarters to the field and vice-versa, and obstructions to the flow of information among the various parts of the accountability landscape — points to a compartmentalization of roles and responsibilities. Confusion over roles and responsibilities often arose in the early days of the GPS, and not all entities managed to resolve tensions between stakeholders successfully, causing some individuals or parts of the system to become very protective of their roles and to perceive suggestions for change as attacks or accusations of underperforming (anonymous source), an outcome fundamentally antithetical to the parity project and the creation of an enabling environment for gender parity in the United Nations.

The missed opportunity to capitalize on the momentum of the early days at levels below those under the direct authority of the Secretary-General has been a blow to the credibility of the gender parity effort. A Secretariat source detailed how the enthusiasm surrounding the launch of the GPS and the rush to develop plans and policies were gradually replaced by a sense of disenchantment with the "manifest failure of the EOSG to consistently follow up on reporting on progress" (GFP11). Of course, a reform of such proportions and ambition, seeking to upend decades of unequal practice, inevitably progresses in fits and starts, adjusting to realities on the ground. What appears to have spread disenchantment, however, has been the absence of clarity in communications from the highest levels of oversight about such delays and revised expectations. As engaged staff members witnessed a waning of commitment, they, too, gradually lost the energy to commit to formal accountability frameworks (GFP11). Although the Secretary-General requested updated implementation plans in December 2020, the same source finds that it will be very hard to achieve similar levels of mobilization as time goes by and change remains painstakingly slow.

Resources and political will

In early 2020, the Office of Human Resources of the United Nations Secretariat issued the Geographical Diversity Strategy,[81] which lays down concrete accountability measures and timelines that are strikingly clearer and more specific than the GPS recommended actions. For example, senior managers will receive quarterly tailored messages reminding them of the Secretary-General's commitment to geographical diversity and will have the opportunity to meet at least once a year with the Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance to discuss progress and receive assistance with developing entity-level strategies. The Office of Human Resources has an equally active role, organizing focus groups and providing tailored guidance and assistance.

A key difference between the two complementary goals of gender parity and geographical diversity is that while the GPS is underpinned by the personal commitment of the Secretary- General, geographic diversity is deeply embedded in the organizational culture, monitored and reported in detail in the Composition of the Secretariat reports, and fiercely debated by Member States. This strong normative grounding confers the power to exert pressure and secure resources, and gender parity advocates have considerably less of both.

"We could be more efficient and effective with better resources. If the issue of parity is a priority; it should be resourced as such". (AFP manager, SL-RC12)

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81.   United Nations Office of Human Resources, "Geographical Diversity Strategy", January 2020.

"There is absolutely no funding or training to push it forward. These are complex issues that require dedicated resources. They clearly don't have the capacity to sustain this process". (Secretariat source, GFP11)

"Whenever the Secretary-General puts out a new strategy — as important as it is — it needs to go hand-in-hand with increasing the capacity to implement to drive the agenda". (Anonymous source, HRN1)

"Not much is being done beyond capacity-building. This limited ability to influence decision-making frustrates people. Member States complain about resources spent on diversity and inclusion issues". (GFP in a Secretariat entity, GFP5)

"Geographical diversity is a big issue lately. The idea is that it must be tackled first; many, like HR departments, think it is too overwhelming to take on gender parity along with diversity and inclusion, especially with limited resources". (GFP in a Secretariat entity, GFP5)

Recommendations

The Secretary-General

1. Gender parity has to remain at the forefront of any major management reform efforts. Bold, unswerving leadership from the Secretary-General in his second and last term can revitalize the gender parity project. He can afford to expend political capital and push for progress in the affiliated committees or address Member State interference or intransigence.

Executive Office of the Secretary-General

"The EOSG has an important role as a standard-setter and a gatekeeper". (Senior AFP leader, SL-RC13)

1. Advocate and help to mobilize adequate resources to support implementation of the GPS.

2. Establish clear roles and accountability frameworks for stakeholders.

3. Continue to systematize the collection and review of TSMs, exception requests and justifications for not hiring women across the system and provide feedback to entities and departments.

4. Establish alert mechanisms for backsliding and underperforming, and continue to raise sustained underperformance in Senior Management meetings.

5. Increase the frequency of monitoring and reporting, with the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders.

"There should be an annual meeting with the Secretary-General himself to monitor progress and set new targets. Non-performing managers should be brought in and shown that they have a stake in the ground — it shouldn't be a once-a-year exercise but a mainstreamed approach". (Senior AFP leader, SL- RC13)

"I think we probably need to have a more frequent internal review process". (Senior leader, SL-RC10)

6. Consider providing dedicated capacity for the review of, analysis of and response to implementation plans on a more frequent basis.

7. Add gender parity targets to the annual work plans of all United Nations Country Teams and Resident Coordinators, and monitor and track trends towards them.[82]

8. Develop an appropriate reward and sanctions system. Sanctions may include "career and remuneration-related consequences including warnings on Personnel files, withdrawal of annual steps, suspension, dismissal, budgetary reductions, withdrawal of human resources powers to recruit etc.".[83]

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82. Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.
83. United Nations Department of Field Support, "Bridging the Civilian Gender Gap in Peace Operations", 2013.

9. Increase transparency, encourage regular civil society oversight through sessions at the Commission of the Status of Women, engage the Civil Society Advisory Groups of entities and any civil society representatives entities may have on their Boards.

Senior leadership

1. Convey to staff that qualified women are being promoted through fair recruitment processes and for sound business reasons, not simply because they are women.[84]

2. Include leaders' Gender Champion roles in their biographies as an incentive for other leaders to join.

3. Actively include GFPs and Focal Points for Women in workforce planning, selection processes and outreach efforts to reach gender parity targets.[85]

UN Women

1. Drawing from the UN Women's coordination mandate, continue to have consequential conversations across the system and provide accompaniment, guidance and assistance to struggling entities, if is appropriately resourced and empowered to do so.

2. Strengthen UN Women's current role of harvesting data and information to highlight patterns and trends in recruitment, income brackets, occupations, race, nationality and other identifiers for men and women in the system.

3. Continue strengthening and leveraging the role of GFPs.

4. Revise the terms of reference for the GFPs and Focal Points for Women across the United Nations, to provide adequate levels of seniority and responsibility, access to staff selection and representation statistics, and an appropriate allocation of dedicated time, information, financial resources and relevant training and advocacy

opportunities necessary to carry out their essential functions.[86]

Human resources departments and managers

1. *"There needs to be a complementary distinction between the HR side and the substantive work of gender parity. All HR roles need to be changed to accommodate gender parity. EDs and HR Managers should be jointly held responsible". (Senior AFP leader, SL-RC13)*

Member States

1. Member States could be more actively engaged in understanding and addressing the business imperative to improve gender balance, which is grounded in the organization's need to function in a leaner, more efficient fashion. Gender parity is widely understood as a moral or legislative imperative rather than in the broader context of the business case for gender diversity. Through greater engagement, Member States can be business partners in achieving gender diversity.[87]

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84. I. Cohn and D. Koster, "The Case for Gender Diversity in UN Peacekeeping: Why and how to increase female leadership and protect the female talent pipeline", 2011, mimeo, available from G@W and the authors of this report.
85. Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.
86. Ibid.
87. United Nations Department of Field Support, "Bridging the Civilian Gender Gap in Peace Operations: Final Report", 2013.

Chapter 4: Recruitment, Retention, Progression and Talent Management

"The diversity and complexity of our mandates must be reflected by a geographically balanced, gender-balanced, international workforce. The easiest route to achieving both gender parity and equitable geographical diversity is to recruit and promote women from a wider geographical base, including from unrepresented and under-represented coun-tries".

(United Nations Secretary-General, International Women's Day, 2021[88])

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88. United Nations, "Secretary-General highlights actions to promote, empower women at the United Nations, in virtual dialogue with the Group of Friends of Gender Parity", press release, 8 March 2021.

Progress towards GPS recommended actions

Temporary Special Measures

- The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) has revised and updated ST/AI/1999/9 to reflect changes in contract modalities and selection rules as recommended by the GPS.

- Special measures along three tiers of the recruitment process are inconsistently applied. Candidate lists are often not gender-balanced, especially for traditionally male-dominated job categories. No information on how many lists are gender-sensitive. Some entities have been reviewing their job posting advertisements for restrictive requirements, non-inclusive language, etc. But overall, structural restrictions — like time-in-post and a preference for people who have completed a fixed number of rotations — have not been suspended.

- TSMs apply to both recruitment and downsizing. Adherence hard to monitor in situations of downsizing, where nature of contracts (fixed term, length, years in service) and geographical considerations often override gender considerations.

Talent management

- There is significant scope to improve talent management practices within the United Nations.

- No information on whether the Human Resources Network has undertaken an inventory of all senior talent pipelines, rosters and databases and proposed a common platform for system-wide sharing of data on senior female talent (P5 and above).

- While there are some programmes for acquisition of young talent (e.g., Young Professionals Programme, Junior Professionals Programme, United Nations Volunteers), there is little evidence to suggest a concerted effort to retain and manage young female talent.

Unconscious bias

- United Nations agencies are making efforts to remove bias in the recruitment process, job advertisements, etc. However, more can be done at every step of the recruiting cycle, including adjusting outreach techniques, removing unnecessary identifiers in vacancy announcements, and using technology to develop shortlists.

- Most entities have started some sort of unconscious bias training for hiring managers, but not all managers have been covered by it.

Mentoring and networking opportunities for women staff

- "Together" is a United Nations–wide mentoring programme (for all staff levels and locations) started by the Office of Human Resources (OHR) in DMSPC.

- While many entities have started mentoring programmes, the number of women covered is small. There is no notion of a formal sponsorship programme within the United Nations.

Staff engagement surveys and exit interviews

- Exit interviews are not systematically conducted. Data from exit interviews are not used for inputs to the design of HR policies or practices.

- Staff surveys are undertaken by all entities. Most entities have also started tracking gender differences in employee experiences.

Where are the gender parity gaps?

Gender parity gaps persist within specific grades, in particular job types and for women from the Global South. Across the United Nations, there is a persistent inverse relationship between number of women and seniority of grade. Although some entities have achieved gender parity overall, gender imbalances persist, particularly across the P5–D2 grades (see Chapter 2: Setting targets and monitoring progress). As the 2021 report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system notes, "The overall representation of women during the reporting period continued to be negatively correlated with seniority in the Professional and higher categories. The only exception registered is with respect to officials appointed by the Secretary-General at the Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General levels".[89]

Across the United Nations, most women do not feel that they have access to equal opportunities for advancement compared to men. For instance, one interviewee noted,

"I consistently come second place in recruitment processes. To men. My nationality is not trumped by my gender. Men from the North consistently crowd out my chances – there are just so many more of them". (Secretariat staff, MSM 14)

A perceived lack of equal opportunities for advancement combined with care work responsibilities contribute to women leaving their jobs just short of more senior appointment levels; a phenomenon seen amongst professional women around the world.[90] Data from the CEB Personnel Statistics appear to support this pattern (see Figure 7).

FIGURE 7: Age distribution of staff, by gender, 2019
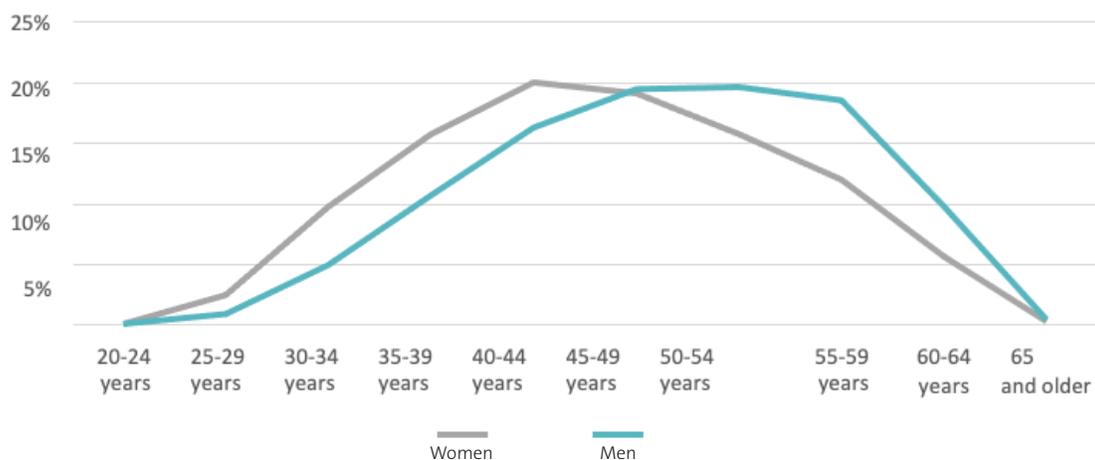
89. Based on findings from interviews, published external evaluations and updates to the GPS implementation plans, where available.
90. There is extensive research on the care burden that women experience that pushes them out of the labour market, including Shelly J. Correll, Stephen Benard and In Paik, "Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty?", American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 112, No. 5 (March 2007), pp. 1297–1339; and Sean Fahle and Kathleen McGarry, "Women Working Longer: Labor Market Implications of Providing Family Care", in Women Working Longer: Increased Employment at Older Ages, Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, eds. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2017), pp. 157–184.

Women are more likely to leave between 40 and 49 years of age because they are caught in the "care sandwich" of young children and elderly parents, whereas men are more likely to stay on in the system until retirement. For instance, one interviewee noted,

"The organization needs to understand the sandwich that women find themselves in with childcare and eldercare responsibilities". (Former staff member, FSM1)

This disparity is potentially reinforced by the predominant "primary earner" family model in the United Nations system, which tends to favour men. However, the care responsibility narrative is only part of the story. Our interviews with former staff members of the United Nations reveal that women are more likely to question their professional choices in their 40s, weigh them against their care responsibilities and move on to jobs that provide opportunities to balance these two goals (FSM4, FSM6, FSM9). These interviews also revealed that women left because of disillusionment with the United Nations itself (FSM6), a sense of not being able to bring about the changes they had expected to make (FSM2). In some cases, they left because of serious sexual and other harassment (FSM3).

These perspectives are evident in comments such as these:

"The UN excels at attracting enthusiastic, idealistic young people who believe in the values and mandate of the organization, and turning them into dead wood over the years". (Secretariat source, GFP11).

"I left because I couldn't see where I could go next. I knew the politics and connections wouldn't help me progress to the positions I aspired to". (Former staff member, FSM2)

"In the UN, the higher up you go, the less creativity and opportunity for true leadership you get". (Former staff member, FSM6)

The challenge of attaining gender parity is most evident in agencies and departments whose portfolios are traditionally considered male-dominated. These include specialized agencies such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Universal Postal Unit (UPU) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO); departments and agencies with a focus on safety and security or information and communication technology, such as the United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC), the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), the United Nations Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT); and departments and field missions involved in peacekeeping operations.

As Haack et al. (2020) note, "All of these entities deal with issues generally considered 'softer' gender-specific portfolios while men dominate leadership roles in portfolios considered more 'masculine'".[91] There are multiple reasons for these gaps, starting from a pool of applicants that reflects the comparatively low representation of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and some other occupational categories (military and police). But as Haack et al. (2020) note, "this alone does not explain the relatively poor performance of these entities, however, after decades of UN policy directives to improve the representation of women system-wide".[92] We observe from our interviews that the persistent gender gaps in certain functions and regions also stems from an affinity bias that keeps women out of certain roles. For example, an interviewee noted:

"Especially in certain functions, there are strong bonds among the men who have been there for 10—15 years, promoting each other, rotating with each other, and there have even been upfront comments like 'we don't want women in our region'". (A gender focal point in an AFP, GFP3)

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91. Kirsten Haack, Margaret P. Karns and Jean-Pierre Murray, "The United Nations at Seventy-Five: Where are the women in the United Nations now?", Ethics & International Affairs, Vol. 34, No. 3 (2020), pp. 361—371.
92. Ibid.

Persistent gaps at P5 level and above

Even in agencies and departments that have achieved overall gender parity or close to parity for IP staff — such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA); the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR); the International Labour Organization (ILO);

the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO); UNAIDS; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); UNDP and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), it has been difficult to move the needle at P5 levels and above.[93] Figure 8 identifies entities that have less than 47 per cent of women staff at levels P5 and above.

FIGURE 8: Percentage of women at P5, D1 and D2 levels, at entities with less than 47% women staff at these three levels
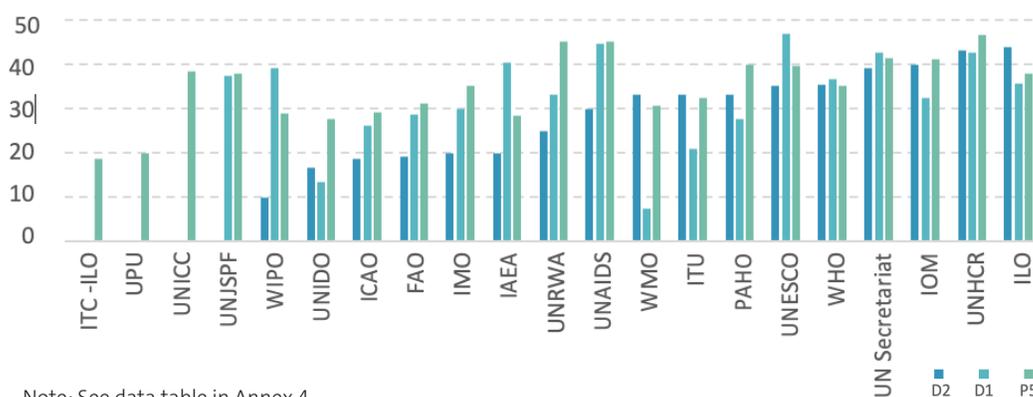
Note: See data table in Annex 4.
Source: United Nations System-wide Dashboard on Gender Parity (accessed 21 April 2022).

TABLE 2: Secretariat entities, missions and departments with less than 40% women staff

	Less than 40% at P5 level	**Less than 40% overall**
UN departments	ODA, UNDRR, UNOG, UNKRT, DPO, OICT, UNLB, DSS, IIM-Syria, OIOS	DPO, UNLB, OICT, DSS
Missions and offices of Special Advisers and Coordinators	BINUH, UNSOM, MONUSCO, UNIFIL, UNSCO, MINUSMA, UNMOGIP, UNSOS, MINUSCA, UNAMI, UNDOF, UNSMIL, UNAMID, OSESG Syria, UNTSO, UNMIK, UNMISS	BINUH, UNSOM, MONUSCO, UNIFIL, UNSCO, MINUSMA, UNMOGIP, UNSOS, MINUSCA, UNAMI, UNDOF, UNSMIL, UNAMID, OSESG Syria, UNTSO, UNMIK, UNMISS, RSCE, UNAMA, UNITAD, UNISFA, MINURSO
UN Regional Commissions and liaison offices	ESCWA, ECLAC, ECA, ECE, UNOAU, UNOWA, OSAA	UNOCA, ECA

Source: UN Secretariat Gender Parity Dashboard (accessed 28 August 2021).

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93. Based on our interviews, the UN Secretariat Gender Parity Dashboard and the UN System-wide Gender Parity Dashboard (developed by UNDP and UN Women).

Differences between headquarters and the field

There is also a difference in the gender composition of staff between field and headquarters. Field offices invariably have lower representation of women compared to headquarters. According to the UN Secretariat Gender Parity Dashboard, the percentage of women in field entities was only 32 per cent, compared to 49 per cent in non-field entities.[94] Surprisingly, the percentage of women at P2 and P3 levels within field entities (based on the UN Secretariat Gender Parity Dashboard) is 30 per cent and 34 per cent, respectively, as opposed to 59 per cent and 52 per cent in non-field settings.[95]

This could imply that there is a "broken rung" — very low or rapidly declining recruitment of women — at the entry level for International Professional staff in field contexts. This is of particular concern in United Nations missions, an issue discussed further in Chapter 6 (Mission settings). This is of particular relevance to how recruitments and career progressions take place for field staff, General Services staff and National Services staff. As noted in Chapter 2 (Setting targets and monitoring progress), the transition from National to International and from General to Professional staff categories is difficult. Additionally, it is difficult for those in Field Service or General Service to move to International positions within the United Nations.

The 2019 report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations system noted that of the surveyed entities with field locations, only 30 per cent specifically addressed field settings in their gender parity implementation plans as of December 2017. However, based on UN Women's monitoring, there seems to have been a significant improvement since then. UN Women reports that as of December 2019, 75.8 per cent of the surveyed entities specifically addressed field settings in their gender parity implementation plans. Outreach and recruitment, as well as working and living conditions, were the most common field-specific efforts mentioned in the implementation plans to increase the representation of women.

While the common narrative is that women tend to avoid field jobs and therefore do not apply to open positions, our interviews indicate that women continue to feel discriminated against during the recruitment processes; structural biases (such as inclusion of non-essential qualifications in vacancy notifications) keep them from being considered as qualified candidates. Furthermore, past evaluations and evidence from our interviewees suggest that the United Nations does not sufficiently fulfil the "duty of care" needs of women. The lack of duty of care, combined with a sometimes hypersexualized work culture, creates hostile working conditions for women, forcing many to leave or not even consider a field position. This is further detailed in our chapters on mission settings and enabling environment (Chapters 6 and 7).

Underrepresentation of women from the Global South

Past studies have indicated that women's experiences in the workplace are often shaped by other aspects of their identity — race, sexual orientation and nationality, among others. In the United States of America, for example, Black women and women with disabilities face more barriers to advancement, get less support from managers, and receive less sponsorship than other groups of women.[96] Most of the women we interviewed from the Global South felt that they had even fewer opportunities for advancement compared to their counterparts from the Global North.

Although there is already gender parity within the United Nations at the entry level, many of these positions continue to be taken up by women from countries within the Western European and Others Group (WEOG). As one senior HR manager noted:

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94. Data from UN Secretariat Gender Parity Dashboard (accessed December 2021).
95. Ibid.
96. See McKinsey & Company and LeanIn, Women in the Workplace 2019.

"A clear pathway into the organization for a field-based organization such as ours is for me a huge gap. We have this for [employees] from donor countries and nothing for the rest". (HR manager, HRN3)

While the focus on achieving gender parity as a whole should continue to be the top priority for agencies, it is advisable to create focused talent management initiatives and entry-level opportunities for women from underrepresented regions and countries.

Temporary Special Measures

While the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) has repeatedly stressed the importance of Temporary Special Measures (TSMs) as a necessary strategy to overcome the effects of historical discrimination and to attain substantive equality for women,[97] the acceptance of TSMs as a strategy to address gender parity gaps within the United Nations has not been universal. In 2019, the Secretary-General sent a memorandum to all members of the Senior Management Group to confirm the ongoing relevance of and renewed accountability for the implementation of the administrative instruction on Temporary Special Measures for the achievement of gender parity ST/AI/1999/9 (superseded in 2020 by the updated ST/AI/2020/5). These administrative instructions place the primary responsibility for implementation of the special measures in recruitment with the heads of entities.

The 2020 administrative instruction on Temporary Special Measures for the achievement of gender parity establishes that if a woman has applied for a position for which she is equally or better qualified than a man who is also shortlisted, at a staff level in which parity has not yet been reached, she should be selected for the position.[98] If the head of office does not select her, they must write to the Secretary-General with an exception request using the template form P401 to provide justifications. EOSG and OHR review exemption requests and maintain an ongoing dialogue with entities in cases where patterns of repeated exemption requests are made. However, there is

no required action when a pattern emerges of repeated failure to appoint women. The 2017 GPS initially recommended that job openings that fail to yield a minimum 20 per cent female applicants would require written justification from the hiring manager on the positive outreach measures taken to attract women applicants. In the absence of a strong justification, job openings are to be extended or reopened. This is currently monitored by the EOSG as part of the review of the ST/AI/2020/5 process. This recommendation requires specific policy changes and is still outstanding for DMSPC to take forward.

As per the 2021 report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations system (A/76/115), 74 per cent of surveyed entities reported installing special measures for the attainment of gender parity.[99] However, while measures are in place, consistent implementation continues to be a challenge. While the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies view the administrative instruction as pertaining specifically to United Nations Secretariat entities, they have opted to use special measures within recruitment processes to attain gender parity across different levels. UNICEF, for instance, has instituted a TSM at the P5 level (valid until the end of 2021), to respond to persistent challenges at that level.[100] A UNICEF representative asserted that they are already seeing some progress in the most unbalanced functional areas for that grade.[101] Other agencies, such as UNDP, prefer to use focused outreach to qualified women for roles or

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97. Administrative Instruction on Temporary Special Measures for the Achievement of Gender Parity, ST/AI/2020/5, 6 August 2020.
98. Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.
99. The number of women at the P5 level had decreased from 44 per cent in 2018 to 42 per cent in 2021, according to UNICEF, Global Annual Results Report 2019: Gender equality, June 2020.
100. As of February 2022, UNICEF has achieved gender parity at the P5 level (source: UN System-wide Dashboard on Gender Parity).
101. The Secretary-General's Gender Parity Strategy (2017) also mentions that UNDP has instituted women-only candidate pools for bureaus that have fallen below 45 per cent representation.

levels where women are underrepresented, rather than using TSMs.[102] Other special measures that have been used by entities include the regularization of temporary assignment on higher-level posts, used by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), or focusing on the person's potential rather than years of experience while considering a candidate for a job (UNOPS).[103] All 16 entities that we spoke to or surveyed asserted that they have gender balance on recruitment panels, and most (more than two thirds) claimed to maintain gender balance at every stage of the selection process.

Many interviewees expressed their dissatisfaction with the prescriptive approach of the GPS and the emphasis on the use of TSMs. Instead, they called for the provision of a flexible menu of options to increase the number of women, which entities could adapt to their contexts (HRN13). HR managers also indicated that the implementation of special measures in recruitment is challenging in the context of hiring freezes on external recruitment, especially in specialized agencies where women are already relatively scarce in technical talent pools. The special measures and the overall gender parity strategy were initially strongly opposed by some staff unions and representatives, who complained that TSMs go against meritocratic processes as well as against Article 101 of the United Nations Charter.[104] On the other hand, our interviews reveal that there are pockets of support for the GPS among staff representatives in the funds and programmes:

"UN needs data analysis and some form of affirmative action, focusing not only on the numbers of women, but also on where these women are, how their income bracket compares to that of men, etc. TSMs have come up in almost every discussion. They are critical – unless targets are set after identifying gaps, parity will remain a wish". (Staff representative in an AFP, MSC5)

"Some staff representatives even mentioned that they would be willing to take on a greater role to popularize and create a greater buy-in for the GPS". (MSC5)

Monitoring mechanisms for the implementation of TSMs

The revised administrative instruction on TSMs notes that a written explanation needs to be submitted to the EOSG whenever an entity recommends a male candidate, if there are one or more women candidates who match the requirements for the post. A small number of departments within the United Nations Secretariat are tracking the written exceptions (form P401) consistently,[105] but overall, exception requests are not rigorously tracked by AFPs or in the EOSG, according to interviews. Exception requests sent to the EOSG are seen more as a means of keeping the office informed or, at best, as an ex post facto approval process (SL-RC14). While on paper, the TSMs continue to be applicable in field missions and in entities that are downsizing, in reality, it is easy to bypass their requirements. In many cases, the mandate for geographical representation, as explicitly promulgated in Article 101 of the United Nations Charter, and the seniority and contract security of applicants for promotions or reassignments, override gender parity considerations (see Chapter 6 on mission settings).[106]

Interviewees noted that producing a written justification to support hiring a male candidate is not difficult, and it takes a very committed HR director or head of entity

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102. UNOPS is currently piloting a project whereby vacancy announcements mention a reduced number of years of experience required, compared to other jobs at the same level.
103. Anne Marie Goetz and Paige Arthur, "The UN's Gender Parity Goals: The Backlash Begins", PassBlue, 23 January 2019.
104. Based on our interviews with staff, including HR and GFPs.
105. According to Article 101 of the Charter, "due regard shall be paid" to recruiting the staff "on as wide a geographical basis as possible". In its resolution 153 (II) in 1947, the General Assembly stated that policies and administrative methods of the Secretariat should reflect and "profit to the highest degree" from cultures and technical competence of all Member nations. See General Assembly, Fifth Committee, "Geographic distribution of UN staff, transparency of hiring practices among issues in budget committee human resources management debate", press release, GA/AB/3702, 2 November 2005.
106. This refers to the P5, D1 and D2 levels.

to actually challenge such exceptions. In cases where such recruitment decisions are challenged, interviewees suggested that it can set up the hired woman for failure, since she is considered to be an outsider imposed on the hiring manager by HR or the head of the agency. For instance, one interviewee noted,

"The accountability system for applying TSMs has holes. It does not cover the managers who blatantly refuse to hire women. Nothing happens. People hire their buddies. Some people simply refuse to hire women, and even the head of mission can't fix this. Completing the P401 is insufficient. They still refuse". (Staff associated with UN field missions, MSM5)

Furthermore, we find no system-wide mechanism that triggers an alert when entities persistently fail to recruit women, even at senior levels.[107]

Oversight committees or compliance boards

Some entities have established compliance boards or oversight committees that review and approve recruitments, especially for senior levels. These committees are mandated to seek justifications from a hiring manager who puts forward a male candidate when a qualified female candidate is available. Although these committees might monitor exception requests, the primary mandate for these committees or boards is to monitor the entity's progress against its stated goals on gender parity.

Many entities within the United Nations (UNDP, UNHCR, ITU, OCHA) already have such councils or committees. For example, the Senior Management Group on Inclusion, Diversity and Gender Equity at UNHCR, chaired by the Deputy High Commissioner, is responsible for promoting the implementation of the GPS recommendations. Similarly, UNDP has a Gender Parity Steering and Implementation Group comprising all Assistant Secretaries-General, which oversaw the development of the strategy and now reviews its implementation regularly. OCHA's oversight mechanism is performed by the People Strategy and Management Committee, which also includes staff representatives.

While these committees within various United Nations entities are currently performing an invaluable role in monitoring progress on the GPS, research has shown that such committees can also play a significant role in ensuring that communication on gender parity strategies and policies filters down to all levels and across all functions.[108] It has not been possible for us to assess the extent to which the presence of these committees is known to all staff, or if there is an active effort to ensure that committee members are publicly reinforcing the value and centrality of gender parity to meet the entity's future goals. Furthermore, we have not come across any committee that undertakes a periodic review of GPS implementation within the Secretariat, including the missions and agencies.

Targeted outreach

Many entities have been using outreach programmes to reach women, particularly at the senior leadership levels – including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), OCHA, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNOPS and UNHCR. These measures include targeted communication to women to fill the gaps in access to information. While most entities use rosters for recruitment, none of the entities we surveyed have reviewed them for potential built-in male bias.

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107. James J. Gillespie, Deborah Dunsire and Carolyn Buck Luce, "Attaining Gender Parity: Diversity 5.0 and 10 best practices for global health care organizations", Health Care Manager, vol. 37, No. 3 (July–Sept. 2018), pp. 195–204.
108. Report of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme Standing Committee on Human resources, including staff welfare, EC/68/SC/CRP.26, 31 August 2017.

Some entities have been using innovative mechanisms to increase their outreach to potential women hires. These include:

- Talent pools: UNHCR established 23 functional talent pools in critical areas such as information management, communications and coordination. By the end of June 2017, its talent pools comprised 595 individuals, of whom 256 were women. The 2016 Entry-level Humanitarian Programme established a cohort of 100 individuals, 60 per cent women, with a majority from underrepresented regions such as Africa and the Middle East. A total of 41 individuals, of whom 25 were converted from national staff categories, were appointed to positions in field operations.[109] In 2021, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) launched a recruitment drive to create talent pools for female professionals (P4, P5, D1).[110]

- Outreach to women from under- or unrepresented countries or within specialized jobs: Similarly, some agencies, such as UNOPS and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), are present at large career fairs and partner with Member States to reach women from underrepresented regions with specific skills (such as engineering).

- Partnerships with international websites and online platforms: Entities including OCHA and FAO have entered into partnership agreements with organizations such as ReliefWeb, ImpactPool and LinkedIn to place vacancy announcements on their websites so that they gain a wider reach. In particular, OCHA is working closely with LinkedIn and other providers to ensure that their algorithms are able to target women from particular regions or with specific skills, so that gender gaps in these areas can be addressed.

- Using artificial intelligence (AI) for longlists: UNHCR has piloted the use of AI to remove bias at the time of creating longlists. It would be useful to analyse the results of this pilot, and to replicate it across the United Nations if it is proven to be effective. IOM and UNWTO also use external assessment tools to remove potential biases from the selection process.

Mobility policies

The concept of mobility in the United Nations common system includes movement within and across United Nations entities, occupations and geographic locations. While mobility requirements within the United Nations are desirable for building staff capacity, especially their understanding of different contexts, it can be highly challenging for female staff, especially those with children, to comply with these requirements in order to further their careers. Previous surveys of United Nations staff have indicated that women, especially single parents, found the mobility policies discriminatory.[111] The same study noted that staff were likely to move to hardship duty stations (C, D, E, non-family duty station or peacekeeping mission) on condition that the organization assured them of a placement following that assignment, implying that staff need to be assured of a reasonable level of job security for them to consider moving to a hardship duty station. As one interviewee noted,

"Militaries, national foreign service establishments, they all have detailed expectations on post rotation. You don't know where you are going next but you know you and your family will be taken care of. This is the crux of the UN's problem. In Government there is an understanding that you will be taken care of, stay in the system and this larger umbrella will cover you". (Former staff member, FSM1)

United Nations entities need to take a more proactive role in managing staff career growth, so that staff can

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109. UNHCR Talent Pools: https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/talent-pools.html.
110. United Nations Staff Union at Vienna, "Mobility in the United Nations Secretariat: A survey of staff", June 2010; UNFPA Leadership Pool Initiative.
111. Secretary-General's bulletin on the introduction of a new staff selection and managed mobility system, ST/SGB/2016/2/Rev.1, 26 December 2017.

have reasonable confidence that, if they moved, their next placements would be assured. This is particularly important for women, for whom family relocation with a working spouse and/or children may be extremely difficult.

The implementation of the previously developed Mobility Framework was halted in order to conduct a comprehensive review and analysis of its benefits and challenges.[112] In November 2020, the Secretary-General presented a new approach to mobility for the General Assembly's consideration.[113] It proposes to make use of the Secretary-General's authority to move staff laterally across the organization, pursuant to regulation 1.2 (c) of the United Nations Staff Regulations. While this new proposal covers both lateral and geographical moves for a period of one year of service or longer, it does not include vacant positions within the United Nations Secretariat, which are required by the General Assembly to be advertised and open to both external and internal candidates. We understand that this new proposal awaits approval in the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) of the General Assembly, which has raised questions about the cost outlay and other elements.[114]

Conventionally, entities have largely identified job rotation across geographies as the primary mobility requirement for career progression. However, that is changing, albeit extremely slowly, within the United Nations system. Some agencies (such as UNDP) have already incorporated a broader definition of mobility — one that includes functional and inter-agency mobility — in their policies. Entities should also consider the gendered impact of their mobility policy on staff. For instance, IOM reviews every selection that is placed before its annual Rotation Appointments Board in relation to its gender parity goals. Previous studies have found that staff (within the Secretariat) are unaware of mobility policies.[115] We cannot say whether this is still the case, but it is advisable for career guidance sessions facilitated by HR departments to include information about mobility requirements.

One of the other key challenges that arises out of the mobility requirements imposed by the United Nations is the difficulty faced by spouses in finding employment in new locations, especially in field office locations. There are multiple reasons for this: absence of networks, local industry accreditations, language skills, and so on. While the United Nations does offer a relocation grant to defray the costs of moving to a new country, no support is offered to the relocating spouse. Currently, such support is quite commonly offered by large multinational companies. Relocation assistance typically offered by private sector companies includes job search assistance, language lessons, spousal associations or networks, counselling support and even direct professional assistance to families in building knowledge about the new country, its culture and how to navigate life within it.

Talent management: Paved pathways or bumpy roads

Most United Nations entities lack a comprehensive talent management strategy that covers women and men across all grades. The 2021 report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations system noted that inadequate career development for mid-level staff was the topmost impediment for the United Nations in achieving gender parity at the P4 level and higher.[116] Interviewees stated that women staff are often not aware of their career options, or are unable to secure jobs that meet their aspirations or match their current life situation. We find that the insecurity of tenure, combined with a lack of a clear career track, is detrimental to the management of female talent, especially at mid-career levels. Many interviewees noted that

112. Report of the Secretary-General on a New Approach to Staff Mobility: Building an agile Organization by providing opportunities for on-the-job learning and skills development, A/75/540/Add.1, 19 November 2020.
113. General Assembly, Fifth Committee, "Recruit More from Underrepresented Countries, End Job Mobility Hurdles for General Service Staff, Speakers Say as Fifth Committee Resumes Seventy-Fifth Session", press release, GA/AB/4363, 1 March 2021.
114. UNDP Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures: Mobility (effective 1 January 2021).
115. Even Fontaine Ortiz and Guangting Tang, "Staff Mobility in The United Nations", JIU/REP/2006/7, and United Nations Staff Union at Vienna, "Mobility in the United Nations Secretariat: A survey of staff", June 2010.
116. Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.

getting the next job within the United Nations depends entirely on their personal network and is not supported by any HR planning process. For instance, one interviewee noted,

"Identifying talent should be a bottom-up process. The executive committee needs a view of every staff, by level, who has potential to grow, who is a problem, who needs a different assignment. That system and process is currently not in place. The UN relies a lot on patronage and who knows who. It is also hard to identify what constitutes good performance. Many managers are reluctant to take on real performance evaluations for fear of having a case brought against them". (Senior HR Manager in an AFP, HRN7)

"A longer-term strategy focused on capacity-building and incorporating context-specific career progression elements could be more effective than the current focus on increasing the number of women in senior positions". (MSC1)

The United Nations will continue to lose talented women to other development sector organizations and the private sector unless it puts in place a well-developed talent management strategy. Each United Nations entity needs to develop multiple career tracks for staff, based on the understanding that women have different needs at different points of their lives, and that the same career path may not be suitable for all. As a 2013 Department of Field Support study of gender representation within United Nations peace operations notes: "The marketplace for high calibre, linguistically flexible, geographically mobile women is quite fierce and will only become more so in the future, thus requiring the UN to be more strategic, more creative, and more competitive, in its attempts to attract and retain these talented women".[117]

Besides the Senior Women Talent Pipeline (SWTP), we did not find other initiatives within the Secretariat that are geared towards creating talent pipelines at other grades. As detailed in Chapter 6 on mission settings, the progress

of women at the P2–P3 levels within field missions has been exceptionally slow and frequently reversed. The same holds true for the specialized agencies and other bodies that do not have well-structured and inclusive talent management plans geared towards advancing gender parity.

Furthermore, there is no systematic analysis of the skill gaps that exist within United Nations agencies to make the organization fit for the future. A comparison with the private sector reveals that companies are developing their people strategies based on changing demographics (such as the needs of millennials and Generation Z, and the number of women expected to graduate) and changing skill requirements (such as automation and digitization). Changing demographics will influence the gender composition of the workforce. However, we do not see how such external changes are being accounted for in relation to gender parity within the United Nations system. While there are ongoing conversations on management reforms and the future of work within the United Nations system, we do not find a well-articulated linkage between the gender parity strategy and these broader initiatives.

Some of the ongoing initiatives within the United Nations system to manage and nurture talent include:

Leadership development programmes

Investments in leadership development programmes (LDPs) for mid-level and senior executives reflect a prevailing view that effective leadership is a key factor in organizational success. One estimate cites a $45 billion annual expenditure in the United States alone for leadership development.[118] The United Nations also has a slew of leadership development programmes for employees at different grades, including some targeted specifically towards women:[119]

- The Leadership, Women and the United Nations programme is run by the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC), targeting women at the P4–P5 levels.[120]

117. United Nations Department of Field Support, "Bridging the Civilian Gender Gap in Peace Operations: Final report", 2013.
118. David D. Day, "Leadership development", in The Sage Handbook of Leadership, Alan Bryman, David Collinson, Keither Grint, Brant Jackson and Mary Uhl-Bien, eds. (London: SAGE Publications, 2011).
119. United Nations HR Portal, "Leadership and Management Development (LMD)", https://hr.un.org/page/leadership-and-management-development.
120. UNSSC, "Leadership, Women and the UN".

- The Programme for Emerging Women Leaders (EMERGE), jointly developed by 11 United Nations entities, aims to tap into the leadership potential of female staff members within the United Nations system.[121]

- The Leadership Training Programmes is organized by the Senior Women Talent Pipeline in partnership with the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA).[122]

- The UNAIDS leadership programme, launched in 2014, has had 158 women participants, 70 per cent from regional and country offices. Participants speak highly of its relevance and usefulness.[123]

Induction programmes

A key strategy for increasing the number of women, especially in senior leadership positions, has been a focus on external recruitment. Given that the United Nations is an extremely complex system with a plethora of rules and regulations, it is likely to be quite challenging for an external hire to hit the ground running. For example, one participant in the senior women leadership programme run by the FBA noted,

"If you come from outside the UN, you tend to see the organization through rose- tinted glasses. You need to hear about the reality to get prepared".[124]

Mandatory induction courses are needed for external hires, especially women, to help them understand the United Nations system, its values, and the importance of the GPS. External hires also need to be connected to a peer network, so that they have access to a space where they can safely ask questions.

Leadership development for national staff

National staff can be a rich pool for recruitment for International Professional (IP) staff. UN Women and the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) have developed a talent pool initiative for them.[125] Other entities, including UNDP, OCHA and UNAIDS, have started professional development programmes for National Officers who are interested in international careers, including stretch or detail assignments (UNAIDS, UNDP), amending experience requirements for IP positions. For example, UNAIDS amended its recruitment policy in 2020 to consider relevant service as a National Professional Officer to count as equivalent to international experience for International Professional positions.[126]

UNICEF introduced two new capacity-building programmes for national staff in 2020,[127] covering around 300−400 staff members annually. This is a small number given the number of countries in which the agency operates, with a total of over 5,000 National Officers.[128]

We find that beyond these scattered initiatives, there has not been any concerted effort to develop the capacity of national staff and guide them in accessing international positions. There is also no systematic capture of data on the number of National Officers promoted to the IP grades. Without earmarking adequate resources to develop capacities and providing National Officers with a clear path for career progression within the United Nations system, the organization will continue to fail to leverage the potential and rich experience of National Officers.

Mentoring programmes

Mentoring initiatives are an important strategy for advancing gender diversity within organizations. One study finds that the probability of reporting sexual

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121. United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), Centre for Learning and Multilingualism, "EMERGE: Programme for emerging women leaders", jointly developed by ILO, ITU, OCHA, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNAIDS, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOG, UNSSC, WHO and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).
122. ImpactPool, "More female leaders in the UN is the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) header after last week's Women Leadership Training in Stockholm".
123. UNAIDS, "Evaluation of UNAIDS Secretariat Gender Action Plan", 27 August 2021.
124. ImpactPool, "More female leaders in the UN".
125. Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.
126. Ibid.
127. Impact and Reach Programmes to develop critical skills for national staff.
128. National Officers constitute 34 per cent of UNICEF's total staff strength of 15,278 (as of January 2020). See UNICEF, "UNICEF's Journey of Organizational Transformation", January 2020.

harassment increases when women have mentors.[129] Others indicate that mentorship can play a critical role in advancing women's careers by providing role models, career advice, sponsorship, advice for successfully balancing work and family responsibilities, and even strategies for overcoming gendered barriers.

The United Nations lacks a systematic approach to mentoring, resulting in very few entities having developed well-structured and large-scale mentoring programmes for their female staff, even for their most senior staff. Various United Nations agencies have started formal mentoring programmes, including IOM, OCHA, WHO, ITU, UNDP, UNICEF and the Secretariat. One of the earliest mentoring programmes for women staff within the United Nations system was created by UNAIDS in 2013. A more recent initiative has been Together,[130] a United Nations system-wide mentoring programme that covers staff at all levels (from General Services to senior leaders) and includes Secretariat staff (with fixed, permanent and continuing contracts), along with staff from some other United Nations entities.[131] We could not find data on how many mentees have actually benefited from the programme. Some missions and entities — including ITU, WFP, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), UNWTO and WHO — have also created informal mentoring programmes that are not backed by HR or provided any resources from the entity or mission. One interviewee noted,

"We had no resources. So, the internal mentoring programme was very light touch — a coffee mentorship programme — seniors meet juniors. Breaking down these barriers was of great value in a hierarchical organization. But it was not a formal HR-backed mentoring programme.

It was something to let people take control of the conversations they wanted to have on career development and push them along a bit". (Secretariat staff supporting field missions, MSM 11)

Mentorship programmes are resource-intensive and are, therefore, rarely scaled up at the organization-wide level. For example, UNICEF had developed a programme for women from the Eastern and Southern Africa Region. Forty women participated, of whom eight were promoted to the next level. But it was not possible to scale up or replicate the programme in other regions because of resource constraints. Furthermore, there has been very little evidence-gathering within the United Nations system to support the efficacy of mentoring programmes.

It is difficult to sustain informal mentoring initiatives, possibly because very few senior women come forward on their own to mentor junior staff. Research has found that when women executives do advocate for diversity and promote other women, they receive lower competency and performance ratings.[132] It is possible that senior women, therefore, hesitate to explicitly advocate for the career progression of junior women within the United Nations. On the other hand, research suggests that senior men who promote women may not be similarly penalized and may even be rewarded for supporting gender parity. In order to mitigate this bias, men and women in positions of power should mentor and act as sponsors for women.[133]

Research also indicates that structural biases and constructs (e.g., women's beliefs regarding mentoring systems) result in women employees building less effective networks than men, with less influential and powerful contacts.[134] Mentoring programmes and other

129. Helen H. Yu and David Lee, "Women and Public Organisation: An examination of mentorship and its effect on reporting workplace discrimination", Review of Public Personnel Administration, Vol. 41, No. 2 (2021), pp. 274–293.
130. United Nations HR Portal, "Together", https://hr.un.org/together-2021.
131. International Trade Centre (ITC), International Seabed Authority (ISA), UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UN Women, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UNHCR, UNESCO, UNAIDS, WFP, WHO, FAO, ICAO, ILO, IAEA, UNIDO, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), IOM, International Monetary Fund (IMF), ITU, World Bank, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), UNV, WMO, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). See United Nations HR Portal, "Together".
132. Centre for Creative Leadership, "Women pay a price for promoting other women", 28 February 2018, and David R. Hekman, Stefanie K. Johnson, Maw-der Foo and Wei Yang, "Does Diversity-valuing Behaviour Result in Diminished Performance Ratings for Non-white and Female Leaders?", Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 60, No. 2 (2017), pp. 771–797.
133. Centre for Creative Leadership, "Women need a network of champions".
134. Monica L. Forret and Thomas W. Dougherty, "Networking Behaviours and Career Outcomes: Differences for men and women?", Journal of Organisational Behaviour, 25, No. 3 (May 2004), pp. 419–437.

networking initiatives should therefore ensure that women have opportunities to network with powerful leaders who can help them advance within the United Nations system – not just with other women or other managers at junior levels who are well intentioned but have little influence. While there are multiple mentoring initiatives, we do not find female-focused sponsorship programmes in the United Nations.

We have heard from interviewees that communication tools available under COVID-19 significantly increased the exchanges between junior and senior women staff within the United Nations, providing unheard-of access and new mentoring relationships. These new tools provide opportunities to massively scale up mentoring programmes geared towards women's career progression within the United Nations. We suggest that women staff within country offices and National Officers be matched with senior managers at headquarters and regional offices. Mentors should commit to multiple conversations across the year and at least one face-to-face conversation. The aim should be to structure a set of experiences for the mentee that leads to a deep knowledge of all aspects of the United Nations system and helps her navigate the intricacies of a career path within the United Nations.

Mentoring guides and manuals

Drawing on their experiences with the Mentoring Programme for Women, UNAIDS has developed a guide for mentoring.[135] Similarly, UNICEF's learning and development team has prepared "New Mentoring Guidelines", a UNICEF-specific package of tools that anyone can use in their functional areas, location, level, etc., to develop a mentoring programme specifically for whomever they want. UN Women has also developed mentoring guidelines, one set targeted towards an external audience and another developed to support the enabling environment guidelines.[136] OHR (DMSPC) has developed a Mentors' Handbook and a Mentee Handbook to support the Together programme.[137] We do not have any evidence

of it being used as guidance on mentoring by other agencies or entities within the United Nations system.

Entry-level programmes for professionals

The Junior Professional Officers (JPO) programme provides young people with a great opportunity to gain experience with the United Nations, and acts as a gateway to a professional career in the system. Many of the senior staff we spoke to had themselves been JPOs. These programmes help young staff create a network of peers who can help them navigate the United Nations system. However, such opportunities are on the whole unavailable to young people from the Global South. FAO, for example, makes a special effort to attract female applicants and applicants from non- and underrepresented countries to apply to its Young Professionals Programme (JPP).[138]

Internships

United Nations internships promise young professionals an opportunity to gather experience and get their foot in the door. However, most internships within the United Nations are unpaid, and young professionals from low-income countries often cannot afford to take them. This further exacerbates the geographical disparities that exist within the United Nations, by creating a divide between entry-level jobseekers from WEOG who can afford the luxury of unpaid experience, and those who cannot. Some entities, like UN Women, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP and IOM, have started offering paid internships to cover living expenses; the stipend amount varies across duty stations.[139] Although we cannot clearly ascertain the gendered impact of unpaid internships, the United Nations should consider making paid internships the norm and ensuring gender parity within these positions.

United Nations Volunteers

An ImpactPool survey shows that women who served as United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) before their first United Nations staff position are close to 70 per cent more likely to stay in the United Nations system compared to colleagues not having any previous UNV experience.[140]

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135. UNAIDS, "Mentoring: A guide for UNAIDS staff members", internal document, mimeo, available from G@W and the authors of this report.
136. UN Women and Women's Empowerment Principles, "Mentoring in the Workplace: Guidance note – Principle 4", 2020.
137. Office of Human Resources (DMSPC), Together: A UN Mentoring Programme, "Mentor Handbook", https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/Mentor-Handbook-05_0.pdf , and "Mentee Handbook", https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/Mentee-Handbook-06_0_0.pdf.
138. FAO, "Young Professionals Programme".
139. IOM calls it a monthly subsistence allowance.
140. Henrik Rydén, "Why UNV is the key to gender parity at the UN", ImpactPool.

The ImpactPool study claims that women UNVs benefit by having experience of the United Nations, especially of having worked in hardship duty stations, and that they are able to ask someone clarificatory questions about their job application before applying. This is in line with previous studies that demonstrate that men and women have different expectations from international assignments, but once women have international experience, they are likely to seek more such assignments, even later in their careers.

The UNV programme has achieved gender parity among serving UNVs, and can be a rich pool for sourcing qualified women candidates at the entry level. The programme has been effective in overcoming barriers to entry for women in particular geographies (such as in Afghanistan) and functions.[141] All entities across the United Nations should consider using the UNVs as a talent pool for recruiting. Similarly, it would be important to assess the effectiveness of UNDP's African Young Women Leaders Fellowship Programme in creating a talent pool for professional staff from Africa.

Consultancies and non-staff contracts

Consultants and other non-staff personnel are an important part of the workforce of United Nations system organizations and serve as a vital entry point for professionals into the United Nations system. A 2012 JIU report indicates that the vast majority of individual consultants are men, except at UNICEF. In particular, agencies such IAEA, WMO, FAO, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), WFP and UNODC, which consistently face female talent pipeline constraints, also have a higher number of men working as consultants. While some agencies, such as UNOPS, have already started looking at gender parity within non-staff contracts, it is strongly advised that all entities start gathering and reporting on gender balance among non-staff contracts.

People development policies and organizational culture change

We find that the lack of a cohesive people development strategy limits the potential of the initiatives undertaken to advance gender parity. While diversity and inclusion initiatives are fully integrated within the people development strategies of some entities (such as UNHCR, UNDP, UNOPS and UNICEF), other entities are making perfunctory changes to their recruitment practices instead of adopting a holistic organizational change agenda to support the GPS.

As one senior HR manager noted, it is crucial to employ diverse strategies in order to change the organizational culture into one where all staff value and take responsibility for gender parity goals:

"It is a true people-centric approach, which means that we have looked at everything, starting from how we look at our non-staff contract modality. How do we speak to our workforce? What kind of dimensions of our culture should we be pushing? We have linked it to a whole new competency framework, and we have linked it to a leadership mindset and all of these things". (HR manager in an AFP, HRN 4)

Lack of committed resources

Lack of dedicated resources and investment in the GPS compromise efforts to scale up or invest significantly in outreach, learning and development initiatives for promising female talent. As a result, outreach and talent management initiatives for women are often undertaken in a piecemeal manner. Unless the initiatives are scaled up to target all grades within entities, they will not lead to the desired transformative changes.

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141. For example, UNV data from before the August 2022 evacuations in Afghanistan reveal that 90 national and international UNVs served with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 68 per cent of them women. This was made possible through a partnership between UNV and UNAMA on a National Female United Nations Youth Volunteer Project, launched in January 2019 and funded by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA).

Even HR managers who are responsible for implementation of the initiatives to address gender parity within most entities have to contend with limited resources, which impedes their ability to scale up initiatives and deliver the targets. Many of them feel that they have to constantly balance competing recruitment priorities, even within the diversity and inclusion agenda, which can be quite overwhelming. For example, some of our interviewees noted,

"Whenever the Secretary-General puts out a new strategy — as important as it is — it needs to go hand-in-hand with increasing the capacity to implement — to drive the agenda". (Anonymous source, Secretariat)

"We could be more efficient and effective with better resources. If the issue of parity is a priority, it should be resourced as such". (HR Manager in an AFP)

"HR departments think it is too overwhelming to take on gender parity along with diversity and inclusion, especially with limited resources". (GFP in the Secretariat)

This constant battle for resources can spread disenchantment. Initiatives are often perceived as checkbox measures at best, or as a cover for the toxic work environment and structural inequalities that continue to plague the United Nations.

Unconscious bias

Another key recommendation of the GPS is to address unconscious bias, which arises from the "taken for granted" beliefs and shared assumptions that form the basis of the organizational culture. For instance, there is a common belief that the GPS is discriminatory towards white men, and a widespread assumption that women are not interested in field mission positions either because of danger, poor conditions or the fact that they are non-family duty stations. Like in most other organizations, there is also a perception that some jobs can only be performed by men. For instance, as the former Executive Director of WFP once noted in a public reflection on the challenges facing women in the United Nations:

"When I arrived at WFP, 17 per cent of the international staff were women. When I asked my colleagues why, especially when similar organizations like UNHCR and UNICEF had percentages in the 30s, I was told it is because WFP does 'guy things'. 'Like what?', I asked. 'We handle trucks and trains and ships and airplanes. Women don't do this kind of work.' There were six women aside from me at staff levels P5 and above. Ten years later, our numbers were at 39 per cent. Women experts in trucks and trains and ships and airplanes were among them. Even the current FIFA Secretary-General, Fatma Samoura, was a member of our logistics team. In total, we had 60 women, plus me, at levels P5 and above".[142]

There are several ongoing training programmes on unconscious bias across the United Nations system. Some of these training programmes also look at issues such as racism, instead of focusing on gender alone. Some entities have also started analysing the impact of unconscious bias beyond hiring decisions:

"On unconscious biases, we have looked at it both from the perspective of hiring, but also from the perspective of leading and managing teams — both are equally important". (HR manager in an AFP, HRN 4)

In addition to unconscious bias trainings, gender modules are included in the Senior Mission Leaders (SML) course, Mission Advanced Staff Training (MAST), and Senior Mission Administration and Resource Training (SMART).[143]

While unconscious bias trainings are useful for raising awareness around individual bias and the reason it exists, recent studies have shown that on their own, they does little to change behaviours or reduce discrimination or workplace racism.[144] Attempts to address unconscious bias within the United Nations would benefit from data-driven evidence to demonstrate implicit bias in recruitment and appointment decisions and within performance appraisals, alongside concrete steps for improvement.

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142. Catherine Bertini, "Leading Change in United Nations Organisations", 10 July 2019.
143. Lesley Connolly and Sarah Taylor, "Incorporating Gender into UN Senior Leadership Training", International Peace Institute, 2 April 2019.
144. Doyin Atewologun, Tinu Cornish and Fatima Tresh, "Unconscious Bias Training: An assessment of the evidence for effectiveness", Equality and Human Rights Commission Research Report 113, March 2018.

Performance management

A few agencies have started integrating a gender or diversity component in their performance appraisal systems, both for managers and for staff at large – including the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM), the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the International Trade Centre (ITC), UNDP, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), UNESCO, WHO, WMO, UNAIDS, ITU, UNRWA and OCHA.[145] The targets focus on gender parity objectives and, in some cases, the agency's substantive gender equality goals. For example, every Bureau Director within UNDP has a gender parity–related goal in their annual performance objectives. In some agencies, staff members are required to have gender equality learning objectives. However, we find that gender equality targets in performance systems are yet to be used as a discriminator for performance within an organization, and there are no penalties for noncompliance.

"We simply articulated mandatory performance goals for our leaders, with specific targets that they needed to reach in each of the regions and in each of the offices, in each of the HQ groups. Once we had done that, we saw some progress with that, but maybe not quite enough. We then turned it into a dashboard by which results were sent to the Executive Director, every Monday morning at eight o'clock. And so, there's full-focus on the targets. The ED

would come back and say, 'Okay I need to understand why the numbers have slipped X per cent in this region or so.' So, this was a relatively straightforward, practical means to hold people's attention, but also assign responsibility and accountability". (HR manager, HRN4)

We know from our work with other organizations that advancing gender parity goals requires disruption of power relations and hidden biases embedded in most organizational cultures. Setting performance goals for gender parity sets clear expectations among staff and delivers consistent messaging that gender parity is important. Over time, consistent use of a gender-inclusive performance management system will nudge staff to change their own behaviour to support a more diverse and inclusive work culture within the United Nations. Performance management should be used to both point out gaps in achieving gender parity goals and acknowledge and recognize initiatives that are working well.

Furthermore, there is no public recognition of gender equality or gender parity initiatives within and across entities, apart from the recognition initiative championed by the Office of the Focal Point for Women in the United Nations System at UN Women. None of the nine respondents to our survey had instituted any mechanism to recognize individual or departmental achievements on gender parity or gender equality.

Employee resource and affinity groups

Social networks are vital for attaining information, power, influence and support within and across organizations. Developing affinity groups or resource groups for women is consistent with the literature that notes that women form fewer professional networking relationships. Conventionally, men are guided by utilitarian

or instrumental motives when they network, whereas women's reasons for networking are more social.[146] Consequently, women are disadvantaged in their ability to form alliances and gain critical information about the organization.[147]

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145. Note, this is not a comprehensive list. It is based on information gathered from three sources: Keiko Kamioka and Eileen A. Cronin, "Review of The United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women", JIU/REP/2019/3; interviews; and the results of a mini-HR survey conducted by the Gender at Work/Collective for Research and Training on Development (CRTDA) team.
146. Cheryl Travers, Samantha Stevens and Carole Pemberton, "Women's Networking across Boundaries: Recognising different cultural Agendas", Women in Management Review, Vol. 12, No. 2 (1 March 1997).
147. Herminia Ibarra, "Personal Networks of Women and Minorities in Management: A conceptual framework", Academy of Management Review, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1993), pp. 56–87.

Affinity groups or employee resource groups build community within an organization by providing a safe and open forum where people with a common identity or experience can find support. Affinity groups have sprung up in different agencies and across entities, such as UN Globe (LGBTIQ+ group), UN Push (UNICEF), Women for Change (UNHCR), Women's Committee (FAO), and the United Nations Feminist Network. Other entities, including ITU, WFP, UNRWA, OCHA and WHO, also have employee resource or affinity groups.[148] Some entities, such as FAO, invite prominent women leaders to inspire their female workforces. Entity heads should ensure that such affinity groups have access to senior leadership, resources to support community building, and opportunities to influence feminist leadership and advocate for diversity and inclusion within the entity or department.

Leadership commitment

Senior leadership has an important responsibility to set norms, values and ethical standards as they pertain to achieving substantive gender equality within entities. There is evidence to suggest that in those organizations where the Executive Director or head of agency has taken a personal interest in hiring decisions, gender parity has gained traction. By setting expectations and norms, entity heads determine the extent to which gender parity is a desirable feature within their entity.

We also argue that the demographic characteristics of entity leadership are a strong predictor of agency performance on the Gender Parity Strategy. This needs further investigation, but we find that women HR directors, women Executive Directors (Director-Generals, Under-Secretaries-General) and Resident Coordinators have been strong advocates for the Strategy. As one of our interviewees noted,

> *"Having a woman ED has shifted the culture in our entity. The female ED has recruited other strong women — you can feel a wind of change". (HR director in an entity, HRN8)*

While the GPS has indeed been successful in changing the demography up top, there has been less attention paid to changing the dominant styles of leadership, which still tend to be patriarchal. In our interviews, senior leaders in the United Nations system spoke of the urgent need to foster a feminist leadership practice across all United Nations agencies.

Indeed, many relegate gender parity to an "HR issue" that is only loosely coupled with the core strategy and operations of their organizations. However, we can expect that senior leaders who educate themselves about what it takes to derive performance benefits from diversity will be more likely to frame visions, and advocate for the value of diversity, in compelling ways.

Silence, inaction and tepid action — for example, delegating the HR director and diversity and inclusion advisor to lead the gender equality agenda in situations that call for senior leaders' vocal and public support, such as in response to instances of sexual harassment, bullying or insubordination faced by senior women leaders — can signal a lack of concern for the Gender Parity Strategy, a devaluing of gender diversity and a reinforcement of systemic discrimination within the organization.

Data sources on gender parity

People analytics can provide a better understanding of diversity within an entity's workforce, while identifying where experience and engagement differences might exist. This is useful not only in tracking gender diversity within entities, but also in understanding how the experiences of underrepresented groups might differ from those of the rest of the workforce.

We find that there is uneven use of people analytics within United Nations entities. Line managers and HR often do not have access to real-time data to make

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148. Based on data from an HR survey conducted by the review team.

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, PROGRESSION AND TALENT MANAGEMENT

informed decisions in relation to gender parity objectives. A senior HR manager responsible for GPS implementation told us that she did not have access to the recruitment data (lists, candidate selections) on a real-time basis. Instead, she was provided with the information on a quarterly basis, making it difficult to take timely corrective action.

Most entities have administered a **staff engagement survey** and share the results with their staff. However, there is no United Nations–wide staff engagement survey. Within the United Nations Secretariat, three staff

engagement surveys (in 2017, 2019 and 2021) included questions on gender and diversity.

Interviewees reported a gender-balanced response to the staff engagement surveys, but also noted that female respondents were more critical in their responses. The results indicate that, to ensure greater gender parity within the United Nations system, senior managers need to look beyond quick fixes, towards broader issues of organizational culture and enabling environment (see the section on enabling environment for more details).

Exit interviews

In 2020, UN Women developed a quite comprehensive template for exit interviews.[149] Exit interview forms usually include a category called "personal reason", which conceals underlying workplace issues that force women staff to leave the organization. The model exit interview template aims to surface these issues by providing a wide menu of options for staff to select as their primary reason for leaving the organization. These include hostile working environment, sexual harassment, abuse, inadequate support for work-life integration or harmony, and misaligned personal and organizational values, and others cited in our interviews with former staff members. The exit interview includes all types of contracts, staff and non-staff.

Not all entities have exit interviews in place. Even when they do, they focus on identifying outstanding financial obligations on the employee or employer side (e.g., education or travel fees owed) and are implemented in an ad hoc manner and rarely structured in a way that helps the organization or agency undertake a meaningful analysis that can generate insights on GPS implementation. One interviewee noted that the field support suite for missions has deactivated or removed the components related to an exit interview. As a result, the exit interviews are no longer mandatory for a check-out process.

A few agencies have started taking a more structured approach to exit interviews. For example, DPPA is developing a more detailed exit interview that documents reasons for departure, and UNICEF has instituted an online questionnaire with the option to conduct face-to-face interviews. This has resulted in a better understanding of the reasons why women leave the agency. However, our interviewees noted that there is no special effort made to retain women talent as they plan their exits. For instance, one former staff member noted:

"Had a senior person checked in with me every six months or so, I might have returned. Didn't happen". (Former staff member, FSM1)

If the United Nations wants to encourage female talent to stay in the organization, it needs to go beyond the routine exit interviews. At the very least, line managers, HR and senior leadership need to communicate to an existing female employee that she can avail herself of special leave without pay (SLWOP) and that the entity or department will be willing to discuss career options, should she choose to return.

At present, to our knowledge, there is no roster of former staff within the United Nations, although former staff members are listed in the United Nations Secretariat's ERP system. Such a roster could have been an invaluable

149. Cheryl Travers, Samantha Stevens and Carole Pemberton, "Women's Networking across Boundaries: Recognising different cultural Agendas", Women in Management Review, Vol. 12, No. 2 (1 March 1997).

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talent pool for HR teams across the United Nations. Even better, a formal employee alumni programme would ensure that former staff have information and access to employment opportunities within the United Nations. Other parts of the United Nations could emulate the JPO alumni programme or the newly launched UN Women Alumni Association.[150] The JPO Alumni Association has over 2,800 members, maintains peer networks and facilitates job searches.

Organizational audit of gender parity efforts

Only 4 out of the 17 entities studied here or responding to our survey (excluding the United Nations Secretariat) had undertaken any recent audit of their gender parity efforts. Of these, two had undertaken the review as part of their EDGE Certification process. An entity-level gender audit would reveal some of the discriminatory structures that are in place, and would also reveal what is working well and what is not for each entity.

Recommendations

Office of Human Resources Management and human resources departments within other United Nations entities

1. Create a sponsorship programme for women staff. Identify and match women to both male and female mentors or sponsors within the organization. Mentors should be trained and coached to create a private and trusted space where their mentees feel safe to share issues that are important to them and to lean on the mentor's experience in making decisions regarding their careers. Mentors should occupy senior positions within the organizations and be encouraged to act as sponsors who actively connect younger women staff to networks and information that help them access career-advancing opportunities.

2. Prioritize recruitment of women from underrepresented countries at the entry level.

   • Create gender-balanced entry-level programmes for young people from underrepresented countries.

   • Ensure mandatory advertisement of positions to currently serving and past United Nations Volunteers.

   • Track gender balance within non-staff contracts.

3. Move beyond training programmes to addressing unconscious bias across the recruitment and performance management systems within the United Nations.

   • Make the P11 form non-mandatory for recruitment. Ensure that HR and hiring managers only have access to CVs and not P11s during the recruitment process. The P11 form should only be requested once the hiring decision has been completed, and used for verification. United Nations staff from the LGBTIQ+ community noted that the circulation of the P11 form can adversely affect selection, as it indirectly provides an indication of sexual orientation and reveals name changes or differences between the name on the application and the legal name, which can adversely affect the chances of trans people.

   • Remove non-essential recruitment criteria: As recommended by the GPS, review all vacancy announcements and terms of reference (TORs) for non- essential qualifications. Field missions tend to use generic TORs to save recruiting managers' time. But many of these contain male and Global North–biased expectations about experience and education, which weed out women. All TORs and vacancy announcements need substantial review. The United Nations system would benefit from

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150. UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka launched the Alumni Association on 23 March 2021. See UN Women, "UN Women Alumni Association".

Mentoring for women in the private sector

Deloitte, an American audit and consulting firm, has implemented a successful strategy for mentoring women. The Retention and Advancement of Women programme started in 1993. The number of women in leadership positions has close to tripled since the initiation of the programme. There were 21 women in the programme. Each woman was assigned to a sponsor, received executive coaching, shadowed members of the executive committee and took on global assignments. Eighteen of the 21 women received promotions.

Source: Martin Meyers, "Improving Mentoring for Women in Corporate America", Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Studies, Vol. 19, No. 2 (July 2015), pp. 77–79; Sheryl Sandberg, Lean In: Women, work and the will to lead (New York: Knopf, 2013).

developing good practice guidance derived from the experience of successful managers, including Chiefs of Staff in field missions and the sample inclusive vacancy announcement developed by UN Women.[151]

- Ensure gender parity in all recruitment boards and panels.

- Assess the effectiveness of using AI to remove gender bias within longlists and shortlists.

- Analyse performance appraisal to data to assess hidden or unconscious biases in performance ratings for women.

4. Strengthen people analytics to reveal the inherent biases in recruitment decisions and provide real-time information to hiring managers to make more informed decisions that support gender equality outcomes.

- Design people analytics and data management systems with the following considerations in mind:

- Use multiple data sources for people analytics. Data related to the workforce can be found in multiple systems – such as Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS), learning management systems, staff surveys and other qualitative data. To be informative and actionable, information across multiple data sets has to come together – for example, by combining responses of women in staff engagement surveys with exit interviews. This requires specialized skills and resource investment.

- Make available information related to the progress of the Gender Parity Strategy to everyone within the entity. As the GPS has suggested, each entity should have a dashboard that makes visible entity goals against progress towards them. Currently only a few entities have public dashboards. Having a dashboard is also a great way to keep leadership – and everyone in the organization – accountable vis à vis the GPS. For example, one agency mentioned that articulating metrics and regularly updating the dashboard allowed them to move the needle on gender parity.

- Undertake gender pay gap analysis. Globally, there is a significant gender pay gap, some of which is explained by the motherhood penalty (married women with children are likely to earn less than married men and single women).[152] The United Nations undertakes no systematic analysis of gender pay parity. UNICEF has done so, revealing how women's work progression is less linear than men's due to childcare responsibilities, and how that is reflected in their pay.

- Use an intersectional approach in data management systems, to understand how gender, race, sexual orientation, nationality and other factors impact the way staff experience the workplace. Use global staff surveys to understand how various diversity initiatives are making a difference for staff.

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151. UN Women, "Guidance on Creating Inclusive Vacancy Announcements: Good practice examples from the UN", May 2022.
152. Michelle J. Budig, *The Fatherhood Bonus and the Motherhood Penalty: Parenthood and the gender gap in pay* (Third Way, 2014).

5. Allow all United Nations system staff to apply for positions for which they fulfil the requirements, regardless of their current grade.

- Current practice allows staff to apply to job vacancies for positions that are one step higher than their current grade. As recommended by the GPS, allowing staff to leapfrog grades could broaden the applicant pool and increase the number of women staff applying for these positions. This change in HR practice would, in particular, encourage GS staff to apply for professional positions for which they meet the qualification, skill and experience criteria.

Executive Office of the Secretary-General

1. Immediately move forward with Phase 2 of the GPS, which includes gender parity targets for National Officers.

2. Set up high-level oversight through a task force comprising senior leadership across entities, chaired by UN Women and the EOSG, to continue monitoring the implementation of GPS and to strengthen accountability for reaching parity goals. The task force should meet every quarter, and their reports should be made public to supplement the gender parity trends available on the website.

Senior leadership, including entity heads

1. Provide flexible resources to employee resource groups and affinity groups, to provide networking opportunities for women and drive a diversity and inclusion agenda.

2. Create or strengthen existing gender parity or diversity councils to drive the GPS agenda across the entity. For the council (or the committee, group or task force) to be effective, it must be composed of senior management and chaired by an Assistant Secretary-General (or an equivalent position in specialized agencies and other bodies).

3. Make gender parity goals mandatory across all staff levels.

4. Foster feminist leadership to create an enabling environment for gender parity. Feminist leadership is about altering power relations that contribute to various inequalities, including gender inequality. The senior leadership of the United Nations can shape the vision and culture of the organization, so that the system, processes (e.g., recruitment and staffing practices), organizational design and culture (e.g., acceptance of flexible working arrangements, zero tolerance for sexual harassment in the workplace) that contribute to the marginalization of women and other underrepresented employee groups can be fundamentally altered. By adhering to feminist leadership principles, entity and departmental heads can shape the meaning of gender parity within their organizations, advocate for its value in their communications and actions, and demonstrate commitment to a more inclusive and equitable organizational culture.

Chapter 5: Senior Appointments

"We are moving clearly into gender parity in the part of the United Nations — [in] the Secretariat, funds and programmes and some other similar entities in which leaders are either appointed by me or elected by the General Assembly under my recommendation, we reached full parity. In relation to those that are elected by Member States, we have an over-whelming majority of men".

(United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres' remarks to the Group of Friends on Gender Parity, 6 March 2020[153])

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153. United Nations Secretary-General, "'We Must Catch Up', Secretary-General Tells Friends Group, Urges States Support Proposed Rule Changes to Achieve Gender Parity across United Nations", statement, SG/SM/19997, 6 March 2020.

Progress towards GPS recommended actions

Modern executive search function
- The EOSG's Senior Leadership Appointments Team has professionalized search processes, prioritizing and targeting women for the highest offices in the United Nations and encouraging Member States to front women candidates.

- Within DPPA and DPO, the Senior Leadership Support Section's executive search function has been upgraded since the GPS via the Senior Women Talent Pipeline (SWTP), and since 2018 Global Calls (for both women and men) have strongly encouraged women candidates.

Maintain a common platform with information on senior managers internally, and relevant profiles of externals
- The core of a senior talent inventory has been established by the SWTP, and Salesforce is used across a number of key entities as a common platform to record and share talent profiles at the senior-most levels. Salesforce was first used by OCHA and then adopted by the Leadership Support Section (LSS), EOSG, SWTP and the United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO).

- All Secretariat leadership positions have different assessment requirements.

Inclusion of additional assessment tools
- Methods of assessing candidates for senior roles have seen significant improvement in the past five years. DCO provided an excellent lead with a highly developed process for selecting Resident Coordinators using psychometrics and modern capacity assessment techniques. Some agencies and entities have adopted updated assessment tools that include some psychometric testing (e.g., by LSS and UNDP), but this is not universal. Most leadership selection processes today entail background checks on candidates, such as OHCHR human rights screening, in addition to screening on matters such as ethics, conduct and discipline.

- However, methods of assessing candidates for senior roles are not equivalent across the system, because of non-comparable skill sets required for different types of senior positions. While the Resident Coordinator assessment system uses a range of tools for selection of candidates, there is no indication that assessment centres have been used by any other entity to select senior leaders.

50/50 representation of women and men at all stages of the selection process
- Most interviewees confirmed there was significant representation of women at all stages of selection processes and on interview panels, in particular at the highest levels.

Induction
- Induction processes are uneven (and sometimes missing completely), and senior women interviewed for this report felt that these processes had been inadequate, inappropriate or rushed given the urgency to fill a vacancy.

Projection tables for each category of senior appointments
- The Secretary-General's report on the Composition of the Secretariat has detailed information on retirement patterns as a means of projecting openings in the near future. However, this was not disaggregated by job stream. Informants from the Secretariat noted that they maintain data for projection and planning with a slate for 3–4 years of upcoming vacancies.

- The Resident Coordinator branch confirmed that the Secretary-General requires a presentation on the projections on gender and geographical diversity with the appointment of every batch of Resident Coordinators.

Monitor data on senior staff selection at each level of the recruitment process

- The EOSG confirms that data on the selection of senior managers is monitored at every stage of the process. The data are confidential and not shared publicly.

- Deviations from GPS rules on assessment, listing, interviewing, etc., are not made public, nor is the number of exception requests known.

Written justification of efforts made to consider and recommend female candidates

- We do not know how many recruitment processes do not include these justifications.

- Some interviewees in the HR network asserted that if shortlists do not include at least 20–30 per cent women, they have to submit written justification of outreach efforts and seek approval of the Regional Director before proceeding with the selection process.

Effectiveness of Global Calls

- The first Global Call in 2017 received 719 nominations, of which 41 percent were women. The second Global Call was closed on 31 October 2019. The data show 16 women among the 25 nominees from the 2017 and 2019 Global Call who were appointed as Heads and Deputy Heads of Mission.

- A third Global Call was launched in the Fall of 2021.

- There has been referral of talent from the Global Calls to the SWTP, EOSG and Resident Coordinator track.

Efforts to address the depletion of the cadre of qualified women

- No data were available on the voluntary departure (resignation) rate of women compared to men or on the reasons for resignation.

- Exit interviews are inconsistently used and not systematically analysed, and rarely include details on reasons for departure. Exit interview forms are under revision currently at DPPA

Rank distinctions at senior levels: Note on terminology

Senior leadership in the United Nations includes the following categories of high-ranking managers:

- Under-Secretaries-General (USGs) and Assistant Secretaries-General (ASGs): Executive or Deputy Executive Directors of AFPs, specialized agencies and Secretariat entities, with broad relevant background experience, often in Government, but also in think tanks or academia.

- Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSGs) and Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (DSRSGs), who must have experience in fragile and conflict-affected States. In some cases, military experience is also valued.

- Resident Coordinators (RCs), Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs), representatives and coordinators of the United Nations system in country teams. The Development Cooperation Office (DCO) manages the replenishment, induction, and rotation of RCs; OCHA manages this for HCs. The Secretary-General reviews periodic cadre renewal 'tranches' of new appointments. The rank of RCs and HCs varies, and can be as low as P5.

- Symbolic leaders, on "1-dollar-a-year" contracts but high-status appointments, like the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect.

- Director-level (D1 and D2) positions, while also at the top echelons of the United Nations professional ladder, are not included in the GPS as senior appointments. They are discussed in Chapter 4 on recruitment and retention.

Gender parity at senior levels

Gender parity in the Secretary-General's Senior Management Group (heads of agencies and Secretariat departments, and senior advisers in the EOSG) was achieved in January 2019. Parity among all full-time senior leaders, Assistant Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General was achieved in January 2020, two years ahead of the target date; in late 2020, women represented 49 per cent of this category of senior leadership.[154] Parity in the leadership of United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) — among Resident Coordinators (RCs) — was achieved in May 2018. In addition, in field missions, by early 2021, 48 per cent of mission leaders were women, up from 2 per cent in 2006 and 23 per cent in 2017. Women led some of the most challenging missions (e.g., Haiti, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Democratic Republic of the Congo), and at some points between 2017–2021 there were all-female mission leadership teams in Iraq, Afghanistan and Cyprus.

The Secretary-General's discretionary power to appoint certain United Nations officials has accelerated the achievement of gender parity at the most senior levels. There are no guidelines around the Secretary-General's authority to appoint the members of the senior leadership group, and the General Assembly resolution 51/226 of 25 April 1997 does not mandate a standard recruitment or promotion procedure to be used for these positions. The Secretary-General has strengthened the senior leadership appointments office, which is responsible for preparing detailed information for the Secretary-General and the Chef de Cabinet regarding all potential candidates, succession planning and forecasting, and ensuring that the recruitment process of senior leadership is undertaken in adherence to the principles of gender parity and geographical balance.

The selection of individuals for Assistant Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-General positions, including Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General positions, has always been highly politicized.

In this context, the Secretary-General has made progress in appointing women and candidates from broader regional groupings. Between January 2017 and January 2021, the percentage of Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General from three under-represented regional groupings increased, while the percentage from the two regional groupings that had had the highest overall shares decreased.

There is a well-known skewed distribution of senior leadership positions in favour of some Western countries, reflecting their political prominence in United Nations bodies (with United Nations Security Council permanent members exercising particular influence), size of budget contributions, and the relative prominence of diplomatic missions at headquarters locations. The geographic imbalance among senior leadership — dominated by WEOG, as evident in a study of the past 30 years of appointments[155] — is an indicator of patterns of influence at the United Nations. Some Member States are routinely awarded the top posts in the largest AFPs: France, for instance, provides the Under-Secretaries-General for DPO; the United States of America (and previously the United Kingdom) for DPPA; the United Kingdom for OCHA; the United States for UNICEF; China for DESA. Major donors to peacebuilding processes in some fragile and conflict-affected States often apply pressure to ensure that one of their nationals is selected as Special Representative of the Secretary-General.[156] Member States often provide or endorse specific candidates for senior leadership openings, and increasingly this politicization has gone to the D2 level and below.

The professionalization of senior leadership selection at the United Nations has been seen as an urgent priority for some time, because according to one former staff member who held a senior HR position, an accretion of managerial failures, corruption and scandals involving sexual exploitation and abuse triggered a review of appointment methods:

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154. Paul von Chamier, "UN Senior Appointments: Looking Back at 2020", 5 April 2021.
155. Ibid.
156. Colum Lynch and Robbie Gramer, "Big-Power Rivalries Hamstring Top U.N. Missions", Foreign Policy, 22 July 2020.

"The tail was wagging the dog ... from a reputational standpoint, the UN had to improve leadership quality, particularly in missions". (Former staff member, FSM1)

According to this source, Kofi Annan began course-correcting by tackling corruption prior to 2005. Under Ban Ki-Moon, the Senior Leadership Section for appointments in the field was set up in the Department of Field Support (DFS) in 2007. But more was needed:

"We realized we are sending people to be leaders in UN missions with very little preparation. The way we are hiring SRSGs – we were not prepared for leadership support". (Former staff member, FSM1)

The 2017 GPS therefore joined a stream of reforms of leadership recruitment, selection and preparation at the United Nations.

Figures 9–11 show the difference that the Secretary-General's leadership has made to patterns of senior appointments. The sheer speed with which the Secretary-General engineered gender parity in the top United Nations leadership – in his Senior Management Group – suggests that he expended considerable political capital in urging Member States to provide female candidates for vacancies in top roles.

Field mission management, likewise, has seen a remarkable surge of women leaders. By late 2020, women accounted for 48 per cent of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. Reflecting ongoing challenges in putting women in the very top roles, 60 per cent of these women held Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General positions. Nevertheless, missions in Afghanistan, Cyprus and Iraq have been entirely headed by women.

FIGURE 9: Number of senior leaders in the United Nations, by Secretary-General and gender
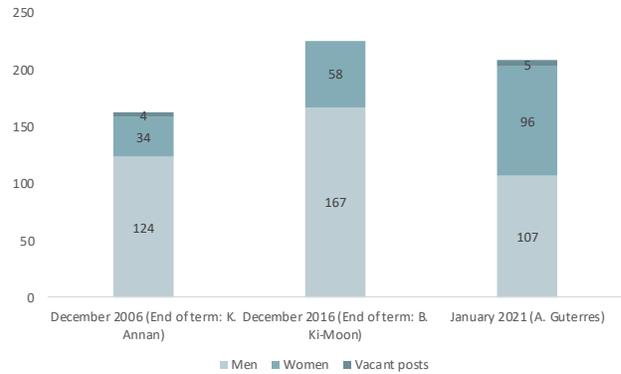
Note: Senior leaders include Assistant Secretaries-General, Under-Secretaries-General and equivalent ranks.
Source: United Nations, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, "Senior Officials of the United Nations".

FIGURE 10: Number of senior appointments in the United Nations, by Secretary-General and gender
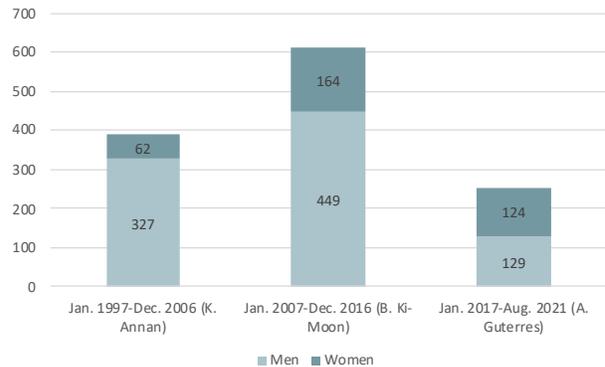
Source: Center for International Cooperation, UN Senior Leadership Appointments Dashboard.

FIGURE 11: Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General appointments, by Secretary-General and gender
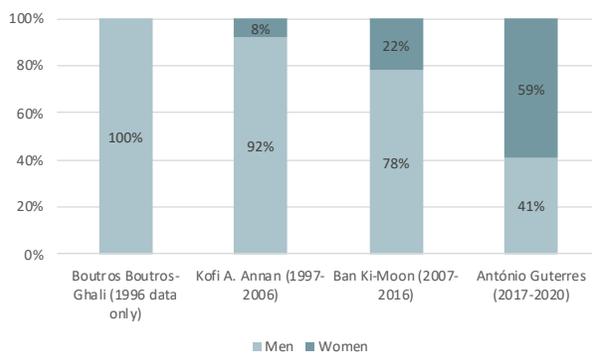
Source: Foteini Papagioti and Paul von Chamier, "Leadership of UN Missions: Halting progress on the road to gender parity", PassBlue, 30 September 2020.

In the leadership of UNCTs, parity was achieved as of May 2018. As of May 2021, 53 per cent of RCs were female (compared to 50 per cent in 2019). Forty-eight per cent were from programme countries (46 per cent in 2019), and overall, 58 nationalities were represented (54 in 2019).[157]

The remarkable determination to achieve gender equality and improve geographical balance among RCs has been enabled in part by the unique opportunity created by the June 2018 General Assembly decision to create (via resolution 72/279) a reinvigorated, independent, impartial and empowered RC system.[158] All RCs and Resident Representatives (RRs) were given the choice to remain as an RC or to transfer to UNDP and serve as RRs. According to an HR manager, "about 95 per cent of them chose to stay on as RCs, and as such UNDP lost 95 per cent of their regional leaders, but that actually opened up space to push for parity at the RR level" (HRN3). This was a unique one-off opportunity for parity in a relatively choked-up hierarchy and was impressively exploited to generate gender and geographic diversity within UNDP.

The reform delinked the functions of the RC from UNDP RRs, essentially moving the RC system – and the Development Operations Coordination Office (DOCO, now DCO) – from UNDP to EOSG. These changes were intended to provide RCs with greater impartiality, by making them independent from UNDP, and to create a sustainable, development-focused coordination function for the United Nations. The location of the RC system within the Secretariat enables the RCs to be connected more directly to the Secretary-General and brings them closer to the priorities identified in intergovernmental frameworks.[159] The Secretariat location has also facilitated consistent monitoring of gender parity in the RC pool and selection process.

There has also been progress in recruiting RCs with more diverse professional experience, and candidates from across United Nations agencies as well as from outside the United Nations system have been appointed. A recent review indicates that these recruitment successes have been underpinned by strong support from agencies.[160] UNICEF, for instance, now exclusively puts forward women candidates for the RC assessment process.

"The reform gave impetus for agencies towards the RC system and resulted in more agencies actively encouraging their right candidates to apply". (SL-RC4)

Increasing the number of women in senior applicant pools

The Senior Women Talent Pipeline (SWTP), launched in 2014 by the Department of Field Support (DFS), now the Department of Operational Support (DOS), developed a pool of primarily external candidates for D1 and D2 positions in peace operations in the areas of public information, political affairs, civil affairs and rule of law.

Following a public global call, candidates were screened for suitability, and an inter-departmental board selected an initial pool. Pipeline candidates were directed to suitable vacancies and received support in preparing their applications and throughout the assessment process. Candidates who were selected were also tracked into pre-deployment training, such as the Senior Mission Leaders Course, and received some limited post-deployment support, such as mentorship. The SWTP has brought approximately 260 women into its cohort, of whom 51 have been appointed to positions at the P5 to Under-Secretary-General levels, including 8 in 2020–2021.

Another initiative is the United Nations Senior Leadership Talent Pool (SLTP), an open call where anyone can put in a profile and a cover letter for positions at the Assistant and Under-Secretary-General level. The SLTP matches qualifications to positions. Data on the gender balance in this pool is not available.

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157. Report of the Secretary-General, Review of the Functioning of the Resident Coordinator System: Rising to the challenge and keeping the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/75/905, 7 June 2021.
158. Ibid.
159. Ibid.
160. Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN), "Lessons in Multilateral Effectiveness: UNDS reform", June 2021.

To expand and diversify the talent pool for head and deputy head of mission (HOM and DHOM) positions in field missions, the Secretary-General's Global Call for Nominations has been launched every second year since 2017. These calls have attracted official nominations from Member States as well as individual applications, both within and outside the United Nations system, including self-nominations and suggestions from NGOs and others – with the largest number of recommendations coming from self-nominations. Communications and outreach efforts have been geared towards attracting women and nationals from underrepresented regions. Between 41 and 44 per cent of applicants in the last three campaigns (2017, 2019, 2021) have been women.

At the application stage, Global Calls do not include assessments, because they are not structured rosters. However, when nominations are considered for specific positions, there is a post-specific assessment process. Since mid-2017, Global Call nominees represent over half of those interviewed for senior leadership positions in the field, and over a third of those appointed as HOM or DMOH. Female nominees account for the vast majority (61 per cent) of those appointed; out of 25 Global Call nominees who have been appointed to senior leadership positions in United Nations field missions, 16 are women. Through the Global Call, women applicants have also been referred to other internal talent pools, such as the SWTP and the RC and HC tracks.

A senior manager noted that Global Calls are an opportunity to establish relationships with Member States and shift the focus to broader leadership qualities and skills, in order to attract women from the so-called "soft" ministries.

"Member States do tend to approach USGs to introduce their own candidates, but the message that these USGs convey to them is that there is a credible selection process in place. There is great effort to maintain the objectivity and impartiality of the selection process to the greatest degree possible". (Secretariat manager, SL-RC2)

The RC/HC Talent Pipeline is a talent initiative launched in 2021 and jointly managed by DCO and OCHA. It aims to build a diverse pool of high-calibre candidates who demonstrate strong potential for RC and/or RC/HC functions, and to develop them for those roles. Within the RC and HC systems, talent is scouted both internally and externally. According to a Secretariat manager (SL-RC4), the factor that made the most difference in the RC system was the proactive talent scouting approach adopted since 2019. The RC System Leadership Branch has networks in all agencies that flag women and candidates from the Global South with active profiles. Accordingly, the Branch approaches agencies and encourages them to nominate those candidates. It has also opened a track to external candidates, who now constitute 6 out of 130 RCs, the third most represented category. The Branch is also building the RC talent pipeline (with due emphasis on women from the Global South) by funneling candidates through a professional external headhunting service.

Throughout the research, it was repeatedly mentioned that outreach efforts to potential women candidates are more labour-intensive and yield fewer results:

"Women are more likely to reject an opportunity outright, whereas men will be more opportunistic and open to learning more about the position, even if they have just started in a new role elsewhere". (Secretariat manager, SL- RC2)

While the assessment criteria and roles of senior leaders differ across the system, the high demand for women on long- and shortlists for all senior posts has put pressure on the more successful talent pools, which are being poached for talent across the system. For instance, the SWTP is drawn upon for a range of senior positions at levels P5 and upwards, in spite of variations in assessment criteria between field missions and other parts of the United Nations.

Objective assessment methods

Some of the interviewees have noted that there is no harmony in the assessment methodology across entities. Another senior member of the HR Network in the Secretariat noted that the assessment process still mostly relies on the interview. The RC selection process is among the most rigorous in the United Nations system. It entails agencies nominating candidates (from inside and outside the United Nations system) for an independent assessment, followed by nomination of high-calibre candidates from among those who pass the assessment, in-depth review and recommendations through an inter-agency review, and final consideration of a shortlist that culminates in a nomination by the Secretary-General. Interviewees assert that women candidates perform well under the impartial assessment methods used, and that this has positively affected gender parity within the RC system.

Most interviewees from the HR Network asserted there was significant representation of women at all stages of selection processes and on interview panels, in particular for recruitment at the highest levels. The Secretary-General sets up interview panels with gender and geographic balance. It was mentioned that in some cases, where it is relevant, panels may include someone from civil society or another type of expertise, but these are confidential arrangements.

A member of the HR Network in the Secretariat noted:

"Gender and geographic balance are a priority in the longlist. It is not always perfect – the longlist doesn't magically produce men or women from the South. There is a need to start upfront with the advertisement, and outreach, get people into the pool of candidates". (HRN11)

"I am the result of the gender parity decision. I was one of three names sent for decision regarding my first appointment – and that list had at least one, if not two, men on it". (SL-RC1).

Induction programmes

A member of the HR Network in the Secretariat noted that the OHR offers a general induction programme, and each entity is supposed to provide a tailored induction. The RCs appear to have the most developed induction process. While there is inconsistency across the Secretariat and in AFPs regarding the existence, duration and utility of induction procedures, there have been improvements in onboarding processes via the Senior Leadership Program (SLP). DPPA and DPO have guidelines for in-briefings, and for new heads and deputy heads of United Nations missions there is a Leadership Partnering Initiative, which is a dedicated mentoring program, as well as other initiatives to build a network of women heads and deputy heads of missions. OHR is in the process of developing induction and in-briefings for Assistant Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General.

Induction processes for RCs, developed by DCO, appear to be the most highly developed in the organization. The Secretary-General's 2021 review of the functioning of the Resident Coordinator system outlines that first-time and rotating RCs are offered comprehensive country-specific in-briefings with senior colleagues across DCO, the United Nations Secretariat (including OCHA and DPPA) and United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) entities. The report states that RCs also receive tailored support through mentors and coaches to help accelerate the learning curve of first-time RCs and help sitting RCs handle the challenges they are facing in real time. According to the report, around 47 RCs, including 30 first-time RCs, have benefited from this support so far.

All first-time RCs now systematically benefit from in-briefings with United Nations Secretariat leadership, sessions with an executive coach and six months of mentoring

from an experienced and reform-oriented former RC. Rotating RCs are systematically offered country-specific in-briefings at the global, regional and country levels.[161]

"We established individualized induction programmes, such as a whole integrated programme over 3.5 days in NYC, for deputies who were multi- hatted (UNDP/OCHA) — all this helped women". (Former staff member, FSM1)

However, a recent review indicated that the formalized training does not always address limitations in skill sets that would help newly appointed RCs more effectively perform their role of providing coherent leadership of UNCT.[162]

A concern was raised by some HR Network members about the effectiveness of induction processes, given that the real challenges faced by external senior appointments may be embedded in the unchanged front offices in which they are expected to "hit the ground running". Women externals (and men, too) can be seriously hamstrung by uncooperative front offices. Changeover of staff in front offices is hard to do in the United Nations system — at least, it cannot be done swiftly — and that can weaken the leadership of new appointees, because they do not have a trusted adviser at hand, while existing staff in the front office is loyal to the departed chief.

Building leadership capacity

Beyond induction, ongoing mentoring and leadership support may be useful to newly appointed women in leadership positions, particularly if they have made a lateral entry into the leadership ranks from an external source.

The RC system, managed by DCO, has attracted praise for the leadership support services it makes available. The recent review of the functioning of the RC system indicates that numerous steps have been taken to enhance the knowledge, skills and capacities of RCs, with dedicated support being provided for RCs who are double or triple-hatted as Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and/or Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs), to enable them to facilitate better coordination within the UNCT and strengthen the approach to holistic programming.[163]

Other learning packages include the SDG Primer, developed with UNDP and made mandatory for RCs to ensure a stronger and shared knowledge base on the 2030

Agenda as well as leadership dialogues on systems thinking, collaborative leadership and the application of foresight in the new Cooperation Framework process. DCO launched SDG Leadership Labs to strengthen the capabilities of RCs, UNCTs and Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) staff to innovate and lead transformational change, and is supporting an RC-led process to understand the experiences of women serving in RC roles and identify areas where tailored support is required.

The 2021 report on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of the United Nations Development System (QCPR) highlights that since the new RC system was put in place on 1 January 2019, Governments are seeing RCs with strengthened leadership (81 per cent), impartiality (67 per cent), and coordination capacity (73 per cent).[164]

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161. United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), "RC Leadership Development and Learning Portfolio at a Glance, 2019–2020".
162. MOPAN, "Lessons in Multilateral Effectiveness: UNDS reform".
163. Report of the Secretary-General, Review of the Functioning of the Resident Coordinator System: Rising to the challenge and keeping the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/75/905, 7 June 2021.
164. Report of the Secretary-General, Implementation of General Assembly resolution 75/233 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, A/76/75-E/2021/57, 26 April 2021, para. 14.

Using data and targets in senior appointments

According to a HR staffer at the EOSG, at the beginning of his first term, the Secretary-General requested projections on anticipated vacancies at the senior level in order to enable significant staffing changes. An HR Network member noted the challenges of dramatically altering the composition of senior leadership under these conditions:

"[The] slate is like a chessboard, like the Queen's Gambit where you are looking at the chessboard on the ceiling and plotting several moves ahead with many moving parts. It is like a negotiation". (HRN11)

Data on the selection of senior managers are monitored in real time, at every stage of the process — applications, screening, long- and shortlisting, interviews, recommendations and selections. The data are confidential and not shared publicly. The Deputy Secretary-General and the Chef de Cabinet review longlists and shortlists. Gender and geographic balance are priorities in the longlist.

The Secretary-General sets up interview panels with gender and geographic balance. The Chef de Cabinet approves panelists for interviews and has to make sure they are gender-balanced. Panels are either chaired by the Chef de Cabinet or the Deputy Secretary-General. The interview panel recommends three candidates to the Secretary-General, who selects one, and the other two are added to the senior leadership talent pool.

For D1 and D2 posts, by contrast, it would seem that monitoring the recruitment process is done ex post. DMSPC has a division that monitors compliance hand in hand with the EOSG. One manager of the SWTP said, "every department has a GFP to keep track of recruitment compliance".

Some men who are not selected for promotions have appealed the decision in internal justice reviews and tribunals. At least eleven cases brought by men at the United Nations Dispute Tribunal between 2017–2021 explicitly cite the GPS in their appeal against their deselection from a post.[165] The threat of triggering an internal justice investigation can act as a disincentive for promoting women over men, since rejected women candidates may be less likely to hold up a recruitment process by pursuing a formal complaint. In effect, this generates a form of anticipatory male preference, or "managing to the squeaky wheel", where future unpleasantness is avoided by complying with the expectations (or sense of entitlement) of some male applicants.

We have not been able to access information on whether DMSPC or EOSG pushes back against exception requests for D1 and D2 appointments. Appointments to the D2 level are made based on the advice of the Senior Review Group. Interviewees said there are a few cases where an entity had to go back to the drawing board to re-advertise and re-run the process. A senior HR staffer said:

"Departments where the three most recent D2s are men, they know they MUST justify and MUST try to find women. The word has spread that D2s have to be women … It has happened many times that the Secretary-General has said: readvertize — particularly D2 positions. D2, this is where we need more women". (HRN11)

Combatting depletion of women staff: Plugging the leaky pipeline

Data on the voluntary separation (resignation) rates of women compared to men are not publicly available, nor are there data on reasons for gender differences in exit rates. Exit interviews are inconsistently used across the Secretariat and AFPs, not systematically analysed, and rarely include details on reasons for departure. Most exit interviews focus on settling any outstanding accounts, such as unpaid travel or moving allowances. Of the 10 senior women former staff members interviewed, none reported a meaningful exit analysis, and only one reported being seriously approached to reconsider and rejoin.

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165. Kausumi Saha, "Cases Judged in the United Nations Dispute Tribunal Pertaining to the Secretary-General's Gender Parity Strategy", internal unpublished briefing note (Hyderabad: Gender at Work, 2021).

To the degree that succession planning is based upon waiting for space at the tops of ladders to open up via retirements (especially in the context of hiring freezes, budget cuts and downsizing), and to the degree that female candidates considered for the highest positions are primarily externals, any staff turnover projections and succession planning may appear very slow to existing women staff in the P4–P5 pipeline. One interviewee, a former staff member who left at P5 from OCHA, noted that OCHA's hiring, succession and parity approaches had not included an assessment of staff in his position – a P5 male from a WEOG country – who could "see the writing on the wall and was open to leaving to free up space". He proposed, and eventually received, a separation package, and believes this method of liberating space for women in the still male-dominated D1 and D2 positions has been deliberately ignored "for fear of triggering a costly exodus from the system" (former staff member, FSM10).

Mentorship programmes are almost all fairly informal and do not include troubleshooting or early warning about the potential departure of promising female staff. The general absence of structured career progression and the external sourcing of many senior appointments can weaken a sense of commitment to or investment in the organization among mid-level staff. Gender-specific forms of harassment and insubordination that are not addressed effectively may also undermine retention of promising female leaders, though there is no data to test this.

DPPA has addressed issues of workplace culture and commitment to individual professional growth through the Building Our Pillar initiative for operational effectiveness, inclusion and equality. The United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) has created a network for female P5 staff to, inter alia, support retention of women across all 60 entities. In New York, the United Nations system and a number of missions are joining together to launch a new initiative, Women in Leadership and Development, that will provide a space to address the challenges women face to career progression and establish an informal mentorship network.

A stronger, consistent mobility policy for all staff up to D2 would help open space for the recruitment of women in all job types and levels, and projections could be made based on expectations of some posts opening up, particularly in middle management in headquarters locations. A report submitted in late 2020 to the General Assembly by the Joint Inspection Unit proposed a revamped mobility policy, connecting mobility constraints to a lack of diversity.[166]

Sustaining progress and pushing for parity beyond the senior level

Appointments at the Assistant and Under-Secretary-General level are directly under the Secretary-General's control, unlike appointments at lower levels. The Secretary-General also reviews and approves recommendations for RC appointments. The Secretary-General's demonstration of the effectiveness of an unswerving commitment to parity has also had the effect of eliminating the excuses commonly used in parts of the United Nations that are still lagging on parity internally, particularly the specialized agencies. It has put paid to the myth that women are not qualified for or interested in many of these positions, particularly in field missions, confirming the findings of the 2013 "Bridging the Civilian Gender Gap" study that inspired the creation of the Senior Women's Talent Pipeline.[167] In other words, persistent male dominance of some positions is not a reflection of a paucity of female candidates, but rather, of gender-insensitive outreach and gender bias in the final assessment phase. Determined leadership can overcome these dynamics.

The senior appointment success story, however, benefits from several conditions specific to the time period and political circumstances of the Secretary-General's first term in office. As the head of a new administration at the United Nations, in 2017 the Secretary-General had at

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166. Report of the Secretary-General on a New Approach to Staff Mobility: Building an agile Organization by providing opportunities for on-the-job learning and skills development, A/75/540/Add.1, 19 November 2021.
167. United Nations Department of Field Support, "Bridging the Civilian Gender Gap in Peace Operations: Final report", 2013.

his disposal a number of open leadership positions to fill as part of the conventional turnover of top leadership in parts of the United Nations, such as in his own Executive Office, and as his prerogative in setting priorities for his tenure in office. In his first year in office (2017), he made 72 senior appointments, then 64 in 2018, 58 in 2019, 37 in 2020 and 22 by mid-2021. The decrease year-on-year may reflect slowing turnover as well as a natural drop-off in special new appointments, and thus can be expected to continue.

The challenge will be to sustain the exceptional commitment to gender parity in these appointments after the surge of the first few years. By mid-2021, the proportion of women had dropped to 36 per cent of the 22 appointments made. Figure 12, from the Center for International Cooperation's UN Senior Leadership Appointments Dashboard, shows the shifting proportions of women in the Secretary-General's appointments since 2017.

The "low-hanging fruit" focus on women in senior leadership may crowd out attention to other areas of concern, such as the thinning pipeline of women in the management track (at the P4 and P5 levels), particularly in non-duty stations and conflict situations. One senior HR policymaker said,

"I am afraid that the Secretary-General will declare victory in the gender parity strategy because he has got there on women in senior management, and that obscures what a long way there is to go elsewhere". (HRN15)

Other emerging problems affecting women in senior leadership positions include microaggressions, pressure to conform to dominant leadership styles, and lack of geographical diversity.

FIGURE 12: Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General appointments, by Secretary-General and gender
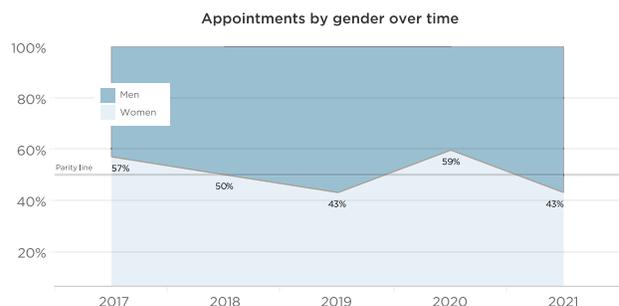
Note: These data do not include the heads of specialized agencies, and includes some appointments of certain special advisers on special $1-a-year contracts with few staff and small budgets. Source: Center for International Cooperation, UN Senior Leadership Appointments Dashboard.

Microaggressions and gender bias in perception of leadership styles

Some women senior leaders and RCs complained of insubordination from male agency heads at the country level, as well as collusion between male United Nations entity leaders and male government officials in undermining women's authority. Many women RCs prefer not to report such insubordination to headquarters, in order to avoid conflict.

"I was told they couldn't face being managed by a woman". (Woman RC, SL- RC1)

"Women are double-judged. We are starting to see a trend where women are accused of being not reliable or bad-tempered". (RC in a focus group discussion)

Furthermore, the prototype of a male leader is still the dominant model of leadership. Gender parity in senior leadership should not camouflage gender biases that are still widespread within the United Nations system. For instance, women RCs spoke of a new phenomenon: Outspoken women RCs are finding difficulty in being reassigned to new countries when their terms are up.

"Women leaders can be described as hysterical, compli-cated … if they push certain triggers". (Woman RC, SL-RC1).

"The environment in which you work in is not necessarily willing and is not necessarily able to integrate a new form of female leadership". (RC in a focus group discussion)

There is a need to create an enabling environment that supports a new type of transformative feminist leadership and disrupts the "male, pale, Yale" model. The Secretary-General has declared himself a feminist leader, and his assertions were matched with actions in terms of improving gender parity and striving towards a more diverse and inclusive United Nations. However, feminist leadership has not been fully explored within "an enor-mous bureaucracy that has long run on a deep patriarchal culture", and more efforts should be made on this front.[168]

Uneven geographic diversity

While there is near parity in the 173 senior appointments undertaken between 2018 and 2020, nearly 49 per cent of those were from the Western Europe and Other States region (Figure 13). Women from Eastern Europe were the most underrepresented, making up only 2 per cent.[169]

"The system which was built to fit the prototype of a 'fine-educated' white man is discriminatory". (Country team manager, SL-RC9)

Gender parity in the RC system has not ensured the desired geographic diversity. Within the RC pool, there is still underrepresentation of programme countries, in particular countries from the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and Small Island Developing States.[170]

FIGURE 13: Senior appointments of women, by region, 2018–2020
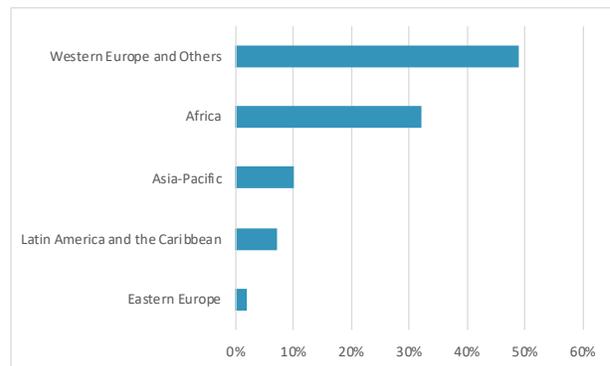
Source: Centre of International Cooperation, UN Senior Leader-ship Appointments Dashboard.

Inconsistent support from Member States

The Group of Friends of Gender Parity is surely also part of the senior appointment success story. Currently chaired by Rwanda and Qatar, it is the largest example of this type of Member State collaboration at the United Nations, with 140 members. It was formed out of the efforts of a set of Member States working in 2015–2016 to encour-age the selection of a woman for the Secretary-General post. Initially chaired by Colombia and the United Arab Emirates, this group was very active in the early days of the Secretary-General's administration, sponsoring, for instance, a large exhibit and publication on women's lead-ership throughout United Nations history.[171] It is hard to know for certain, but Member States may have facilitated the Secretary-General's parity work in a stepped-up effort to supply women candidates for top roles.

168. Lyric Thompson, Teresa Casale and Lila O'Brien-Milne, "Baby steps toward a feminist United Nations", Foreign Policy, 29 January 2019.
169. Centre of International Cooperation, UN Senior Leadership Appointments Dashboard.
170. Report of the Secretary-General, Review of the Functioning of the Resident Coordinator System: Rising to the challenge and keeping the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/75/905, 7 June 2021.
171. HERstory: Celebrating Women Leaders in the United Nations, 2018, privately published, https://books.google.com/books/about/Herstory.html?id=I8B6swEACAAJ, accessed 28 July 2022.

But not all Member States have been supportive of the parity effort, and some have expressed reservations in General Assembly committees, such as the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), particularly where the parity effort might incur costs or sideline what Member States consider to be the greater priority of achieving fair geographic representation. As a Secretariat manager stated: "Member States tend to use the perceived tension between geographic diversity and gender parity to challenge the GPS" (SL-RC2).

Many HR managers complained that Member States insist on making all United Nations positions open to external candidates, making an internal career trajectory via promotion virtually impossible and creating a destructive dynamic that damages morale, discourages investment in skill acquisition on the job, and erodes institutional memory. It means that the United Nations bureaucracy is not a merit-based system, a point made many times in the 2013 DFS "Bridging the Civilian Gender Gap" study.[172]

Recommendations

Member States

1. Develop national talent pools of women to put forward for senior vacancies.

2. Support the development of merit-based internal promotion tracks to help professionalize the bureaucracy.

3. Provide financial support for the development of internal talent pools of geographically underrepresented women staff, and provide accelerated leadership capacity-building.

Secretary-General; Executive Office of the Secretary-General; Development Coordination Office; Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance; and Office of Human Resources

1. Focus on developing internal talent pools of women candidates – promotion at the P3, P4 and P5 levels.

2. Report on gender parity not only in terms of numbers and percentages, but also on the positions men and women are occupying, variations by gender in the number of staff that women and men manage, variations in the size of budgets handled by leaders, and how women are influencing the decision-making environment.

3. Investigate the low rate of compliance among senior United Nations leaders in joining the Gender Champions (see Chapter 3). Monitor delivery on the existing programming commitments made by Gender Champions.

4. Support mentoring arrangements for incoming senior leaders, including through adding a gender component to mandatory senior leadership retreats.

5. Advocate for reimagining expectations of leaders and leadership styles to excise gender, racial, nationality and other biases.

6. Develop a zero-tolerance policy for cases of insubordination by staff towards women leaders.

UN Women

1. Strengthen further the linkages between the GPS and broader diversity and inclusion issues, through the Enabling Environment Guidelines, without scuppering the gender parity goal.

2. Support feminist leadership among women and men at the most senior levels by:

   • Consolidating data to build a compelling case for the value of parity and the power of feminist leadership for the United Nations' operational effectiveness and normative mandate, and respond to critics by

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172.   United Nations Department of Field Support, "Bridging the Civilian Gender Gap in Peace Operations: Final report", 2013.

highlighting historical patterns of underrepresentation that the GPS seeks to address.

- Reimagining expectations of leaders and leadership styles to excise gender, racial, nationality and other biases. This could include an internal United Nations process exploring the following:
- Identifying feminist leadership principles in dialogue across staff categories and United Nations operating environments to include conscious efforts to resist and mitigate patriarchal, colonial and racist power dynamics.
- Assessing mechanisms for United Nations agencies and departments to make collaborative and collective decisions and display non-exploitative leadership.
- Assessing the need for changes in policies, system capacities and hierarchies to implement feminist leadership principles, especially within HR systems (in recruitment, competency assessment frameworks, etc.)
- Identifying and strengthening connections between gender parity in staffing and gender equality commitments in leadership.
- Empowering UN Women to continue to build communications, mentoring and networking systems with feminist leaders across the system, women and men, to connect gender parity to feminist practice.[173]

Human Resources

1. Address root causes, and not only symptoms, of failures to achieve gender parity. Despite the importance of the TSMs, and the focus on achieving targets at the D1—D2 levels, due emphasis should be given to the P4—P5 levels, which form the pipeline into senior leadership.

2. Investigate obstacles to the appointment of women to D2 positions, and monitor efforts to overcome these.

3. Enforce obligatory written justification from hiring managers in cases where male candidates are selected for senior leadership posts for which parity has not yet been attained.

4. Update surveys and exit interviews to assess gendered differences driving voluntary separations.

5. Recruit more activists and feminists from civil society to break the stereotypical profile of United Nations leaders.

Entity senior leadership

1. Take special measures to build a pipeline of women and men from the Global South into senior leadership appointments by:

- Facilitating the transition of national staff to the professional level.
- Talent scouting of women with active profiles.
- Creating an enabling environment where diversity and difference are assets and not vulnerabilities.

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173. The challenges of feminist organisational change and the meaning of feminist leadership are discussed further in Chapter 8: Recommendations.

Chapter 6:
Mission Settings

"We are a collection of all the world's chauvinisms", a woman in middle management said. "Working here is like walking on eggshells. You never know when you turn a corner which chauvinism you are going to meet".

(Cited by Barbara Crossette, "Is the UN an Equal Employer? Women say no", New York Times, 10 April 1995)

Progress towards GPS recommended actions

Realistic targets and accountability

- Target-setting done at headquarters (DMSPC/DOS). Targets seen by some as over-ambitious and as calculated via a mathematical formula, not a realistic assessment of constraints in each mission setting.

- In terms of accountability, it is not clear to some mission staff to whom reports should be made about gender parity efforts.

Cultivating a positive image of women in the field

- There have been strong efforts at headquarters and in individual missions to broadcast the important work of civilian and uniformed women, international and national staff.

- Multimedia from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, for example, has systematically featured women peacekeepers in action and incorporated the voices of women in more than 90 per cent of the stories in its news, video and radio outlets (this includes survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and women in politics, CSOs and communities).

DPO, DOS and UN Women campaigns promoting women in the field

- Many campaigns have been launched, including "Peace Is My Mission", intended for uniformed personnel; OCHA's #WhatItTakes, for women in humanitarian work; and SWTP's "Time to Lead".

Centralized recruitment in the Secretariat, internal promotion track

- Recruitment is decentralized below the D2 level according to delegation of authority measures, to allow for flexibility and responsiveness at the field mission level.

- Internal candidates from downsizing missions with continuing or permanent contracts are prioritized according to the Horizon placement system. This entrenches male bias.

- A near 100 per cent incumbency rate, and dwindling male dropout rates, further narrow opportunities for internal female candidates.

Replicating UNHCR's good practices in building an internal female pipeline

- UNHCR conducted an all-female recruitment drive in 1995–1996 for P2–P3 staff. This investment yielded UNHCR's currently healthy parity levels. Elsewhere in the Secretariat, all-female recruitment proposals have been rejected.

- UNHCR has mandatory mobility or transfers after seven years in post. This frees up headquarters positions and enables circulation of internal candidates.

TSMs in underperforming missions; collaboration between missions

- There is little evidence of additional TSMs beyond those recommended in ST/AI/2020/5.

- There is little evidence of collaboration between Special Representatives of the Secretary-General on addressing gender parity as a whole across missions.

Female talent pools supported by TSMs

- The updated August 2020 administrative instruction encouraged TSMs, but with the exception of the SWTP, female talent pools have not been established for field mission work, because of the 2018 Office of Legal Affairs (OLA)/OHRM determination that this could be discriminatory

Removal of restrictions on UNVs

- More effort is needed to support and encourage women UNVs to stay in the field.

Establish, with inputs from women, workplace and accommodation minimum standards

- Field missions must deploy their own individual initiative to apply for extra-budgetary resources (e.g., via the Elsie Initiative) to finance improved ablution, accommodation and security facilities.

- Not all missions comply with existing standards, particularly in remote, difficult-to-access and emergency field outposts

Review and revision of International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) duty station classifications

- The ICSC last conducted a review of benefits and emoluments in 2013–2015, and is currently conducting a review of duty station classifications. It tends to be conservative in its view on the family, and relatively blind to the specific needs of women with complex care obligations.

Reinstate policy of stationing family members close to a duty station

- Some field mission leaders resolve this on a case-by-case basis, but there is currently no formal arrangement to allow for families to be located in neighbouring countries.

- Some staff members who are single mothers face blackmail from the care workers they pay to take care of their children and elderly relatives in their home countries.

Flexible working arrangements (FWAs) in the field

- Provisions for frequent rest and recuperation are considered to be de facto FWAs.

- COVID-19 has multiplied the range of FWAs available to staff, with some locations, such as Somalia, out-posting up to two thirds of civilian staff since the start of the pandemic in back offices in safer neighbouring countries.

The frontline of the United Nations

The – until recently – relatively low numbers of civilian and uniformed women in United Nations field missions, particularly at the visible leadership level and in mediation efforts, has long been considered damaging to the credibility of the United Nations Women, Peace and Security agenda. That agenda asserts – as evidence shows – that improved gender balance in peacemaking produces socially inclusive decision-making in conflict-affected situations, and broad buy-in to conflict resolution arrangements.[174] In field missions, the work of uniformed peacekeepers, whether military or police, as well as civilians engaged in peacebuilding, is the closest the United Nations comes to "street-level bureaucracy", which means direct service delivery to affected populations.[175]

Studies of street-level bureaucrats repeatedly confirm that representative bureaucracy – with commonalities of gender, class, race and ethnicity between service providers and clients – contributes to operational effectiveness, because it builds trust and provides for shared communication and awareness of context-specific social norms.[176] A recent study confirms that the operational effectiveness of peacekeeping is enhanced by gender parity, because women civilians, soldiers and police bring advantages in communicating with women and children in conflict situations and reduce the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse.[177]

The Gender Parity Strategy dedicates a special section to the challenges of reaching parity in United Nations field missions. Non-family duty stations are contexts that can be dangerous, require rapid deployment, and can be characterized by politically volatile environments, meaning that job assignments may be cut short or extended in unpredictable ways. These situations have tended to produce highly male-dominated staff concentrations and serious management challenges. Field mission structure, staffing and management has been the subject of many reform initiatives, among the most significant of which was the 2000 report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations, better known as the "Brahimi report",[178] which put in place some of the mechanisms still used to ensure rapid deployments, such as rosters.

Reforms promoting the deployment of women to both the civilian and uniformed contingents of these missions have also been numerous, as the timeline in Figure 14 shows.

Uniformed peacekeepers

The face of United Nations military and police peacekeeping is decidedly male, although there have been important changes. Women constituted 1 per cent of uniformed peacekeeping personnel in 1993, but in 2020, out of 95,000 peacekeepers, they were 4.8 per cent of military contingents and 10.9 per cent of formed police units.[179]

174. Nahla Valji and Pablo Castillo, "The importance of gender parity in the UN's efforts on international peace and security", Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Spring-Summer 2019), pp. 4–19; Jacqui True and Yolanda Rivera, "Towards inclusive peace: Analysing gender-sensitive peace agreements 2000–2016", International Political Science Review, Vol. 40, No. 1 (2019), pp. 23–40.
175. This term comes from Michael Lipsky, Street-Level Bureaucracy: The Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services (Russell Sage Foundation, 1980).
176. Hannah Davies, "The promise of diversity in the administration of international peace operations", unpublished mimeo, 2021, available from Gender at Work; Fanny Badache, "A representative bureaucracy perspective on workforce composition in international organisations: The case of the United Nations Secretariat", Public Administration, Vol. 98, No. 2 (June 2020), pp. 392–407; Séverine Autesserre, Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2014); Michael Zürn, "Global governance and legitimacy problems", Government and Opposition, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Spring 2004), pp. 260–228.
177. Strikingly, this study also notes that information about women's operational effectiveness is not welcomed by male peacekeepers: "Numerous PKO personnel felt that the UN's campaign to depict women as 'more effective' peacekeepers and to boost women's representation in missions incited resentment, hostility, and a sense of disenfranchisement amongst uniformed men". See Robert U. Nagel, Kate Fin and Julia Maenza, "Gendered Impacts on Operational Effectiveness of UN Peace Operations" (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, May 2021), p. 27.
178. United Nations, Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations, A/55/305-S/2000/809, 2000.
179. United Nations Peacekeeping, "Women in peacekeeping".

FIGURE 14: Gender parity initiatives in field missions, including uniformed personnel

Efforts at achieving Gender Parity within Mission Settings

1995
October 27 DPKO – concerns are raised about the low numbers of women uniformed staff in peacekeeping – (1957 – 89, only 20 peacekeepers were women; 1957 – 93, Zero women military officers served at DPKO HQ). Call for increase of numbers of women uniformed staff

2000
October Call for more women as special representatives and envoys to pursue SG's good offices.
Call for more women in field-based operations, and especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel.

2011
'Respect for Diversity' Task Force (previously the 'SWAT team' set up by ASG at DFS (Fabrizio Hochschild) to address lack of women in field missions.

2013
'Bridging the Gender Gap' study predicts 'A Decade of Stagnancy' in proportion of women in UN field missions

2014
Senior Women Talent Pipeline created to build pool of women candidates for P5 – D2 positions. 260 women included to date, 51 appointed, often for positions higher than D2

2015
Call for double the proportion of women military and police peacekeepers

2017
Elsie Initiative created to fund field-level innovations to improve working environments and to provide cash incentives to TCCs/PCCs
SG's gender Parity Strategy is launched. Deadlines for parity in field missions are two years later than for any other UN entity. 50% at all levels of field missions (international civilian staff) by 2028

Spring 2018
'Emergency Working Group' formed to likely failure to reach parity by 2028 in field missions

2019
Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy released - adapting GPS goals to uniformed peacekeepers
Women to be:
- 25% of contracted military staff by 2028
- 35% of seconded police in contracted professional posts in UNHQ and 30% of police in field missions by 2028.

2020
SWTP launches 'Time to Lead' campaign to attract more senior women to UN peace and security work

May OCHA launches #whatittakes campaign to elevate awareness of women in humanitarian work.

'Peace is my Mission' campaign to build a positive image of women's contribution to field missions

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Soldiers and police are directly supplied by United Nations Member States, as are justice and corrections personnel. In 2020, women reached 34 per cent of these contributed staff to United Nations Peacekeeping missions.

The United Nations makes it clear that it cannot take responsibility for the rate of increase of women in any of these functions.[180] Nevertheless, it offers support to incentivize progress in this area. From 2015, for instance, UN Women has partnered with DPO to build the pipeline for staff officers to deploy under a United Nations flag via the Female Military Officers Course (FMOC).[181] The

FMOC provides peacekeeping training for women military officers (e.g., rules on protection of civilians) with a view to increasing the pool of trained women military officers with United Nations Member States who could be made available to DPO for deployment to a United Nations mission at short notice.

In 2019, DPO released, in partnership with UN Women, the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy. It sets targets of 15 per cent women in military contingents and 20 per cent in formed police units by 2028.

A "decade of stagnancy" foretold

The 2013 DFS study, "Bridging the Civilian Gender Gap in Peace Operations", predicted that without decisive steps to increase the recruitment, retention and promotion of women in civilian peacekeeping, the organization

would move "towards a decade of stagnancy in the representation of women and, in fact, regression, given the current organizational context".[182] The report identified a triple threat: a recruitment system at maximum yield for

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180. Ibid.
181. Bradley Orchard, "A Briefing on the UN Women Female Military Officers' Course", Journal of Peacebuilding and Development, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2019), pp. 117–121.
182. United Nations Department of Field Support, "Bridging the Civilian Gender Gap in Peace Operations: Final report", p. 5.

women, a concentration of men in downsizing missions, and high dropout rates (turnover) of women at mid- and senior levels.[183] Nearly a decade later, the prediction has proven accurate. In spite of well-meaning efforts, there have been only slow increases in the share of women among civilian staff in field missions. In 2013, it was 27 per cent.[184] In 2017, it was 28.3 per cent.[185] In 2021, it was 31 per cent. These increases are likely thanks to the GPS, but the rate of change is far behind what is needed to meet the 2028 parity target.

The practice of averaging the percentage of women in field mission staff across different types of mission settings obscures some distinctions. Peacekeeping missions perform worse than Special Political Missions (SPMs) in terms of the proportion of staff that are women. Within peacekeeping missions (DPO), the proportions of women staff actually decreased between 2008 and 2017, from 29.8 to 28.2 per cent,[186] marginally recovering since 2017, to reach 29 per cent. Proportions of civilian women International staff in special political missions (DPPA) increased between 2011 and 2017, from 27.3 to 30.6 per cent,[187] and stood at 33.4 per cent in 2020, but declined to 33.2 percent by April 2021.[188] Women across both types of mission accounted for 30 per cent of civilian staff positions in mid-2021. Figure 15, derived from the Secretariat's Gender Parity Dashboard, shows the change in the percentage of women in peace operations, by staff grade, excluding the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA).

Change has been incremental except at the senior leadership levels (Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Special Representatives of the Secretary-General), where the Secretary-General was personally able to intervene to produce a sharp increase in the combined group—from just 2 per cent in 2007, to 25

per cent in 2017, to 48 per cent in mid-2021 (32 per cent of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General; 64 per cent of Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General).

FIGURE 15: Change in percentage of women in peace operations, by staff grade, 2017–2021
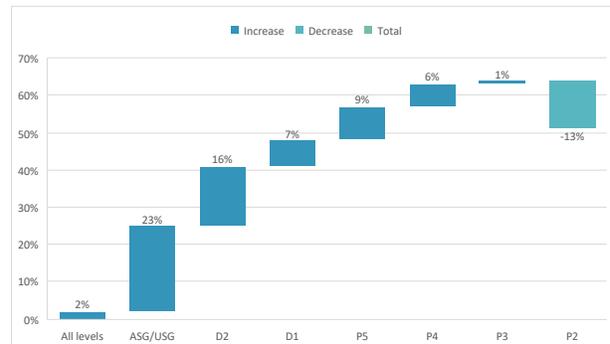
Source: 2017 data: United Nations, "System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2017, p. 35; 2021 data: UN Secretariat Gender Parity Dashboard (accessed 5 August 2021).

Figure 15 shows increases in the proportion of female staff at all levels of International Professional positions, with the curious exception of P2 positions, where the proportion of women has shrunk by 13 per cent , from 41 per cent in 2017 to 28 per cent in mid-2021. Overall numbers of these entry-level positions may have decreased because of mission downsizing , but there is no obvious reason why so much ground would have been lost by women P2s in this four year period. If this trend is sustained, it may make a deep cut in the numbers of women entering the pipeline for field mission work, a cause for concern not only because it will limit field-experienced female candidates for mid- and senior positions in later years, but because it will rigidify the mission staffing mix with bloated mid- to higher ranks.

183.   Ibid., p. 69, para. 3.
184.   Ibid., p. 15.
185.   UN Secretariat Gender Parity Dashboard (accessed 5 August 2021).
186.   Timo Smit and Kajsa Tidblad-Lundholm, "Trends in women's participation in UN, EU, and OSCE peace operations", SIPRI Policy Paper 47 (October 2018), p. 10.
187.   Ibid.; there is no reliable data, according to Smit and Tidblad-Lundholm, on SPM civilian women staff prior to 2011.
188.   Report of the Secretary-General on overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions,
A/76/198, 18 August 2021, p. 15, para. 68.

TABLE 3: Percentage of women staff by rank in field missions, 2017–2021 and projections

	2017	2021*	% change between 2017-2021	Average annual % change	% of women in 2028 at this rate of change	Expected year for gender parity to be met at current rate of increase
All levels	28.3	30	1.7	0.42	32.94	2062
USG + ASG	25	48	23	5.75	88.25	2022
D2	16	32	16	4	60	2026
D1	25	32	7	1.75	44.25	2032
P5	23	32	9	2.25	47.75	2029
P4	29	35	6	1.5	45.5	2031
P3	32	33	1	0.25	34.75	2037
P2	41	28	-13	-3.25	25.25	-
FS7		13	13	3.25	35.75	2033
FS6	18	22	4	1	29	2049
FS5	20	30	10	2.5	47.5	2029
FS4	28	27	-1	-0.25	25.25	-
FS3		13	NA	NA	NA	NA

Note: Includes the following DPO missions and entities: United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Cong (MONUSCO), United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), and the following DPPA entities: United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, United Nations Mission to support the Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA), United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL), United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) are not included. The DOS mission in Somalia (UNSOS) is included.

Sources: 2017 data is from United Nations, 2017, 'System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity', page 35.
2021 Data is from 'United for Gender Parity, https://www.un.org/gender/content/un-secretariat-gender-parity-dashboard, accessed August 5, 2021.

Women's share of field staff (FS) positions (Table 3) has increased, although at no level exceeding 30 per cent (at FS5 levels), with women taking 13 per cent of the highest rank (FS7), a level from which they had been completely absent in 2017. Women are showing a modest increase at other levels.

Data limitations make it difficult to calculate the current rate of increase or decrease at each level, and events or conditions that will trigger changes in the staffing mix in any given rank or mission are next to impossible to predict. Table 3, however, attempts a projection based on average annual rates of increase or decrease in the past four years. There is significant variation between ranks, with the rate of increase at senior mission management levels not matched at any other level, and with contractions in the P2 and FS4 levels undermining the overall rate of increase. The table shows that at current rates of change evident from the mid-2021 data, for International Professional staff, parity will not be reached until 2041. Junior and mid-level ranks, the crucial feeders to the pipeline for senior management, seem to be suffering from the most significant recruitment stagnation.

One interviewee suggested the United Nations needs to re-introduce a P1 position for recently graduated engineers, pilots, computer specialists, etc. This might serve to encourage women into field mission work prior to their main childbearing years, and leave the door open to their return should they wish to move to safer family duty stations during periods of heavy family responsibilities.

A concern raised by field mission recruiting managers and chiefs of staff is that it is proving more difficult to attract women at the P4 level and below than at higher levels. One manager said this is a form of pre-deployment turnover — where P4 women are offered positions, accept, then decline at the last minute: "They have a change of heart. It is far more difficult to get women P4s than higher levels. There are a lot of them in headquarters, but the mission setting is much harder". (MSM 8). It is not clear whether this problem stems from inadequate communication about field mission conditions, or from the opposite. Women applicants, whether single, in a relationship or with family responsibilities, are aware of the downsides of field mission work, notably the United Nations' well-known deficiencies in combatting sexual harassment.

UNHCR specifically addressed this problem in 1995–1996, with a significant investment in cultivating a female talent pool by exclusively recruiting women at the P2–P3 levels that year. The resulting bulge in female staff at the P2 and P3 levels became the backbone of UNHCR's parity achievements at higher levels in later years. Another contributor to UNHCR's parity performance is the fact that selection authority at UNHCR is retained at headquarters. Field managers make recommendations, but not final decisions. This system has enabled UNHCR to monitor and ensure consistency in diversity efforts, and to override the gender bias of field recruitment managers. Ironically, the Secretary-General's delegation of authority arrangements for field missions, designed to make missions nimbler and more responsive, may have functioned to sustain gender bias in field recruitments.

Target-setting and accountability

Interviewees raised concerns that targets set up by headquarters for reaching gender parity are calculated backwards from what is felt to be an arbitrary achievement date (2028), and are not fixed via consultation with each field mission to adequately factor in developments like expected handover to Government, drawdowns, contingencies like resumed conflict or disasters and, above all, challenges in recruiting internal and external women candidates for extremely male-dominated skill sets. Instead, targets are perceived to be derived from a rigid

mathematical formula. While complaints about difficult targets are understandable, it is impressive to see the Secretary-General's and DMSPC's clarity and drive on this matter, since field missions have so often in the past been excused from meeting even much less ambitious targets.

Snapshot of gender imbalance in field missions

The specific skill sets and job families found in the civilian and uniformed components of United Nations peace operations are male-dominated, and the United Nations' failures in attracting women to these positions have been explained as mirroring gender biases in the global labour force. The bulk of field mission jobs (over 60 per cent) are in mission support (logistics, administration, ICT, engineering, HR and finance). About 20 per cent are substantive (e.g., political or civil affairs), and the rest are security positions. The precise distribution varies by mission. In mid-2021 in Mali, for instance, 55 per cent of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) staff were in mission support, 18 per cent in security and 27 per cent in substantive work. Within this job distribution, women account for 28 per cent of mission support positions, just 10 per cent of security and 40 per cent of substantive staff.[189]

Uniformed peacekeeping is the most gender-imbalanced of all field mission work. While the DPO's Office of Military Affairs has endorsed standards for "gender-receptive" environments to enhance the capability of troop and police contingents, the actual arrangements (accommodation, ablution facilities, security) are the responsibility of troop and/or police contributing countries (T/PCCs) and are not financed by the United Nations.

In 2019, the Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations (EIF) – a multilateral effort initiated by Canada, with a trust fund based in UN Women – was launched to accelerate progress toward achieving the targets in the United Nations 2018–2028 Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy. It offers incentives for T/PCCs to identify and overcome barriers to the deployment of women uniformed peacekeepers – including members of military contingents and formed police units, and officers who deploy individually, as police officers, military observers or staff officers. The EIF provides funding for T/PCCs to conduct a barrier assessment, identifying deployment and retention problems amenable to operational fixes. This barrier assessment is required to access additional project funding. The EIF can also be used to fund a premium to a T/PCC to deploy a Gender Strong Unit – a formed military or police unit that exceeds by 5 per cent or more the uniformed GPS target for that year. The premium is designed to incentivize T/PCCs to train, deploy and integrate more women into formed units across all roles and ranks.[190] In 2021 and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the EIF provided funding to 8 T/PCCs and 11 security institutions.

Interviewees in field missions welcomed EIF support, but noted that, as a relatively modest extra-budgetary resource, it is limited in impact. One senior manager of a small political mission – in a context in which the SPM offers no physical protection, and where "you hear fighting every night" – acknowledged the support of the Elsie Initiative but said she was "shocked at how few concrete changes were actually proposed to address the real problems of recruiting women [for peacekeeping]". (MSM10).

Cultivating a positive image of women in the field

The Secretariat has mobilized its communication resources to project an image of women's heroism in field missions, intended to amplify and incentivize applications from women and to build awareness of their operational effectiveness. The SWTP has developed the "Time to Lead" campaign, to showcase the leadership capabilities of the members of the SWTP.[191] Individual missions highlight the work of their female staffers. UNMISS multimedia, for instance, has systematically featured women peacekeepers in action as well as incorporated the voices of women (survivors of conflict-related sexual violence as well as women in politics, CSOs and communities) in its news, video and radio outlets.

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189. Email communication from key informant, MSM14.
190. The Elsie Initiative Fund, "Funding types".
191. United Nations, "Senior Women Talent Pipeline". Includes video and contextual information on "Time to lead" campaign.

In 2020, DPO initiated the "Peace Is My Mission" campaign,[192] releasing videos of women at all levels in civilian and uniformed peacekeeping. The campaign coordinates with the Elsie Initiative to generate resources to incentivize Troop Contributing Countries to increase numbers of women in peacekeeping contingents.

The job of projecting a positive image of women in field missions and humanitarian work is complex. In early 2020, a 90-second PSA issued for the OCHA campaign #WhatItTakes was criticized for playing on stereotypes of women's roles. It depicts a real-life OCHA staff member from the perspective of her son back in her home city. She is described as "stubborn" and "unreasonable, uncompromising, unstoppable" and, crucially, mostly unavailable to her teenage son since she is far from home much of the time. The implication is that she is a hero to her son in spite of being inaccessible, with little play on a potential spouse or partner's responsibility to sustain domestic functions.[193] The episode illustrates ambivalences about women, particularly mothers, in field mission work, and the cultural traps for well-meaning creative efforts to advertise field mission work as an attractive option for women. Ironically, the PSA had been designed to attract mid-career women with families to field mission work, and to model alternative norms about motherhood. "We were not targeting college students", said an HR manager, "that is not who we are having trouble hiring". (HRN15).

Associated with the challenge of communicating a positive image of women in field missions is cultivating buy-in to the GPS from male staff. Many senior managers expressed frustration with two aspects of the GPS messaging: first, the contradiction between the expansiveness implied by the GPS's call for new female talent, and the imperative of protecting long-serving staff on continuous contracts, and second, the GPS's evasiveness about men's perceptions of shrinking options in the system. One senior manager noted that they felt there was "unconstructive ambiguity" and "disingenuous messaging", and went on to say, "we need to admit that in the short term the men will suffer. There has been an effort to sell the virtues of the strategy, [but] there is no good answer to the question of 'what about the men?'" (MSM11). The key message is that "qualified men will not be sidelined from getting opportunities, but if an equally qualified woman is there, she will get it. It's a hard sell". (MSM11).

Structural changes in mission settings: downsizing and hiring freeze

The GPS was introduced in the midst of a sharp contraction of United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions, amounting to a 45 per cent reduction in civilian staff since 2010.[194] According to the report, in 2010 there were almost 20,000 staff (19,955) in field missions, which dropped to 11,010 civilian staff in United Nations peacekeeping operations in December 2019. This represented a 14 per cent decline between 2018 and 2019, and a 36 per cent decline over five years.[195] A further 1,440 civilian posts are being eliminated as the United Nations–African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) withdraws.[196] Data on the gender of staff whose contracts have been terminated from downsizing missions were not available for this study.

As part of the United Nations duty of care to staff on continuing contracts, the Horizon HR system requires efforts to be made in every recruitment procedure, including in start-up missions, to identify candidates from the pool of staff released through downsizing processes elsewhere. This means an emphasis on recruiting internal, experienced United Nations mission staff from downsized or terminated missions, particularly internationals in the Professional categories with extended institutional tenure.

The Horizon system generates priority candidates for any new recruitments. Rosters are heavily male-dominated across most skill categories, and Position-Specific

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192. United Nations Peacekeeping, "Peace is my mission".
193. Ben Parker, "Why did this UN ad irk Women aid workers?", The New Humanitarian, 18 February 2020.
194. Report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat: Staff demographics, A/75/591, 9 November 2020.
195. Report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat: Staff demographics, A/65/350, 8 September 2010.
196. Katharina P. Coleman, "'Downsizing survivor syndrome' in UN peace operations', IPI Global Observatory, 19 January 2021.

Job Openings (PSJOs) tend to favour incumbents (who may have been acting in an ad interim capacity). The duty of care towards existing staff is stressed in field mission staff instructions in ST/AI/2010/3.[197] It is vital that current downsizing dynamics do not override the organizational imperative of achieving gender parity. One senior manager noted, "it is an understandable policy, but the longer you serve doesn't mean you are better. It can mean non- development and stale and not more competitive staff" (MSM9). Another noted, "the effort to recruit or promote women is completely trumped by the imperative of retaining people with continuing contract status and absorbing staff from downsized missions" (MSM3).

Introduced in late 2020 because of funding constraints, the hiring freeze increases the numbers of people occupying positions ad interim or in an acting capacity. This is likely to create downstream pressure to regularize these internals once the freeze is lifted. The COVID-19 crisis on top of this dynamic will likely have concentrated male staff presence (and hence male incumbency) in missions that have sent non-essential civilian staff to work from their homes or neighbouring countries.

Factors contributing to gender imbalance in field missions: ceilings, walls and floors

Landmark studies of the composition of staff in peace operations, such as the 2013 DFS study "Bridging the Civilian Gender Gap", have highlighted features of the recruitment practices and environment of United Nations field missions that keep down the numbers of women found in all ranks as well as in all areas outside of "substantive" jobs. These include "glass ceilings" (obstacles to internal promotion), "glass walls" (entry barriers created by male-dominated skill sets) and "dissolving floors", whereby promising women in the vital P2–P5 pipeline drop out of the system. These obstacles are detailed in the 2017 GPS.

At the time of this external assessment, it appears that much of the "glass ceiling" problem has been resolved through the direct intervention of the Secretary-General to override gender biases that obstruct the selection of women for Assistant and Under-Secretary-General mission management roles. The proportion D2s who are women in United Nations field missions has doubled since 2017 – a significant increase, but not as impressive or rapid as the increase in the proportion of women in Assistant and Under-Secretary-General positions. Earlier shortages of internal women candidates for consideration at this level generated the proposal, in the 2013 DFS "Bridging the Civilian Gender Gap" study, to develop a talent pool of women at this level, a de facto roster of senior women managers. This eventually resulted in the SWTP (see section below on field-focused talent pools).

The "glass walls" problem, whereby women are segregated into substantive roles and away from technical jobs, has not been resolved. The 2013 DFS report debunked the myth that women with technical skills are not interested in field mission jobs. It indicated that women constitute about 30 per cent of applicants to United Nations rosters for these skill areas, but that the screening of applications by Occupational Group Managers (OGMs), along with the expert panel interviews for those who make it through screening, introduce biases that discount women's expertise, in spite of objectively strong qualifications. Clearly, targeted outreach to women with technical skills in such areas as engineering, ICT, hydraulics, logistics, aviation and transport is needed to increase the volume of female applicants, along with efforts to address unconscious gender bias among OGMs and expert interviewers. The most significant TSM to accomplish this would be establishment of female talent pools, as proposed in the GPS, via women-only calls for field roster replenishment. In 2018, this idea was dismissed as discriminatory by the Office of Legal Affairs (see below).

It is not currently possible to determine whether the "dissolving floor" problem of women leaving the pipeline

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197.   United Nations Secretariat, Administrative Instruction on the Staff Selection System, ST/AI/2010/3, 21 April 2010.

towards leadership has been addressed, because there is a lack of business intelligence on the rate of turnover of female staff compared to men. We do know that the turnover of male mission leaders has lately been higher than that of women Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. But what is of much more concern is the staff turnover rate among women lower down the scale. The 2013 DFS study had evidence that women's dropout rate was higher than men's (e.g., 11.8 per cent of women left field mission positions in June 2012, compared to 8.2 per cent of men),[198] but although this information is collected by DOS, recent data on staff turnover is not publicly available. Inconsistency in the application or analysis of exit interviews and a lack of information on staff turnover compounds the difficulty in assessing the extent of the female dropout problem, the ranks at which this is most acute, or the missions in which this happens most frequently. Information from qualitative interviews suggests that the women staff in the P2–P5 levels continue to leave at higher rates than men, and that male turnover has decreased in response to the global economic contraction in the COVID-19 context, with staff perceiving few employment alternatives beyond the United Nations.

The longstanding firewall between local recruits (national staff) and the International Professional staff group is an obstacle to building geographic and to some extent gender diversity in United Nations mission settings. Women local hires have historically held a minority of positions in national staff complements in most mission settings, reflecting patriarchal cultures in some conflict-affected and fragile State settings. The GPS recognized women National Officers as "an important pipeline for addressing not just gender parity but geographic diversity, particularly with regards to underrepresented countries".[199] There was a call for a dedicated strategy to make progress towards recruiting and retaining more women National Officers as well as supporting their transition to international positions.

To combat the challenges in retention and advancement of women National Officers and women in the junior ranks in United Nations mission and emergency settings, in 2020 and 2021 OCHA invested in a career development initiative with ImpactPool, through which 100 women staff, either National Officers or P3 staff who had been at that rank for at least two years, were given management training and close mentoring.

Recruitment and promotion systems

Pre-dating the challenges of mission downsizing and hiring freezes, the two main methods for recruiting staff to United Nations missions — rosters and position-specific job openings (PSJOs) filled by open advertisement — have gender-specific constraints.

Rosters for global recruitment to specific, often narrow and technical, job families are designed to enable rapid hiring, appropriate for staffing missions in emergencies; they allow for a seven-day job advertising period compared to 30 days for PSJOs, which can sometimes take as long as a year to fill. They tend to produce 30 women to every 70 men applying, and the process of assessment and testing of candidates introduces human error and bias. According to one mission leader:

"The starting point is the roster, and that starting point is not good for women. Institutionally, it is more defensible to go to the roster first. But it has huge deficiencies. I cancelled some recruitments because no women were shortlisted. … Rosters favour people who have been in missions and apply for lots of jobs because they get rostered when they apply and fail". (MSM 2)

In male-identified skills categories (engineering, logistics, aviation) there are few women on rosters, as noted by one observer, "With less mobility, UN rosters swell, leaving rostered individuals resenting the competition and un-rostered staff frustrated by their exclusion".[200]

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198.   United Nations Department of Field Support, "Bridging the Civilian Gender Gap in Peace Operations: Final report", 2013, p. 27.
199.   United Nations, "System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2017, pp. 14–15.
200.   Katharina P. Coleman, "'Downsizing survivor syndrome' in UN peace operations', IPI Global Observatory, 19 January 2021.

Mission leaders whom we interviewed said they needed flexibility to bypass the roster system; alternatively, they argued, "the GPS needs some all-women calls to populate the rosters" (MSM 9). Six areas with vacancies at the P5 and D1 levels had been proposed by DFS in 2018 for all-female roster calls, on the grounds that the 2018 roster call produced a higher than normal (70-30) ratio of men to women. However, according to several interviewees, in a meeting of the Secretary-General's Cabinet at the time, OLA and OHRM insisted that a gender-specific call would violate the United Nations Charter's commitment to non-discrimination. Gender parity advocates argued that since this was merely a call to pre-qualify individuals, not an actual hiring process, there was no discrimination. However, the Secretary-General chose not to make this argument, and the proposal for all-women calls to populate specific rosters was rejected. Precedents such as UNHCR's all-female hiring effort at P2—P3 levels in 1995—1996 were not invoked.

Post-specific job openings (PSJOs) advertised publicly are the alternative to rosters. According to a senior HR manager, "PSJOs do not necessarily generate more female hires" (MSM14). PSJOs tend to favour incumbents, people who may have been in an acting or ad interim function. This incumbent focus also militates against bringing in new external female talent or promoting from lower ranks. According to several mission leaders, PSJOs provide recruiting managers with opportunities to design job searches in ways that ensure that just one individual (the incumbent) meets requirements. But standardizing job descriptions and TORs does not necessarily generate diversity, either. As one individual in charge of staffing a new mission said:

"A problem for the GPS is when a post description is very generic, e.g., when it comes to education and experience requirements. If you are not careful, in national and international markets, one specific criteria will mean the female candidates are screened out. Or men from some parts of the world. When you are doing [a large number of] recruitments you are churning them out pro-forma. … I obsessed over the job descriptions — I knew that the wrong criteria would weed out good female candidates. There are some constraints on changing the TOR, because that may lead to the need to reclassify jobs". (MSM 9).

Whether recruiting from rosters or via direct advertisements, recruiting managers say they have difficulty generating gender- and geographically-balanced shortlists.

Some mission chiefs of staff interviewed for this study argued that it is justified to call for female-only applicants for some positions. One noted, "There should be some posts automatically tagged for women. For instance, in a small mission with no clinic, we need a female doctor who can do everything a male doctor can, and more, such as address women's specific health needs". (MSM8). This person argued this is not discriminatory in view of the fact that some jobs, such as security and drivers, have historically implicitly been the domain of men.

Another mission manager noted:

"Why can't we say that there are gender gap areas, like IT and logistics and mechanics, and say we need to do targeted women-only recruitment for IT specialists and women data scientists? Let's admit this is positive discrimination. … We also need targeted recruitment of men in support roles (e.g., G staff), where they are scarce". (MSM9).

Field-focused talent pools

The Senior Women's Talent Pipeline (SWTP) was set up in 2014, as one of the top recommendations of the 2013 DFS project on "Bridging the Civilian Gender Gap". It was intended to expand the pool of women candidates for P5–D2 field mission positions. There are approximately 260 women in the pool, of whom 51 (8 in 2020–2021) have been appointed from P5 to Under-Secretary-General positions. It has proven highly successful in generating candidates for positions more senior than its original intended purpose.

It is funded through extra-budgetary resources and has held retreats as well as training and mentoring sessions for candidates to senior positions. This opportunity to build a network among senior women is one of the most valuable of the SWTP's many resources, according to participants:

"I had been in [my country's diplomatic service] for decades, but had no network or pathway to UN leadership. [The Global Call] was like the parting of the waters". (senior mission leader, MSM2)

The SWTP has also enhanced outreach activities within and outside the Pipeline, including through quarterly SWTP newsletters, the SWTP annual report and the "Time to Lead" campaign, and improved engagement with other United Nations entities as part of the effort to ensure that the SWTP is seen as key service provider on gender parity across the United Nations. Indeed, it has, according to a staff member, become a "victim of its own success", to the degree that AFPs currently mine it for candidates for senior positions.

We did not hear of all-female talent pools in other areas, such as the male-dominated areas of ICT, aviation, logistics or engineering. One HR Network manager noted that much more targeted outreach is needed to encourage promising female applicants with mission support skill sets from Global South countries:

"We need to go after women in engineering who are willing to work in conflict zones. But we are not an attractive employer, particularly for women with kids". (Staff member associated with UN field missions, MSM14).

It is not clear why this type of targeted talent pool development has not occurred.

Temporary Special Measures and their implementation

According to the 2020 administrative instruction on TSMs, any manager making a hiring decision for a unit that has not achieved gender parity must provide written explanations for failures to recommend women in the final set of candidates forwarded for approval.

The follow-up or accountability system for handling exemption requests (registered on the P401 form) was not clear to some interviewees. As one mission leader noted, "if we fail to submit the P401, no-one asks where it is". (MSM2). At the time of this external assessment, there were no publicly available data on the percentage of recruitment processes that finish with an exception request, nor on the percentage of those exceptions that are reversed and sent back for another recruitment round.

One interviewee noted:

"The exception process in the EOSG is not rigorous or consequential, not method-rich. Capricious. I am surprised there have been no internal justice complaints. You can write a memo saying 'we can't select the woman on the list because there are men who are better', and that's it". (MSM14).

One mission chief of staff said that it is easy to draft justifications for selecting men, since recruitment processes are invariably subjective:

"Often the differences between candidates are not clear. There are always ways to justify and highlight the

positioning of specific candidates, and that is where the justification from the hiring manager matters. Often the first selected was male, and second or third was female. I could tell there were biases in the justifications. I could easily turn these around and seek to justify other aspects. There are a lot of biases and unfairness towards women. I had that margin to elevate the second choice. But it has a cost because you are imposing someone on the boss of a unit. And they can challenge you or the candidates can. The element of fairness and justification is so important, because an aggrieved person can file a case. In the international positions for which I was hiring, the male applicants overwhelmingly outnumbered women, 85 to 15". (MSM8)

This mission staff member gave an example of security staff hires in which combat experience was invoked to select a shortlisted male candidate over a female candidate. This was for a mission in which there was no active conflict. Pointing out that combat experience was not a requirement, the MSM was able to dismiss this spurious justification for eliminating a female candidate.

Gender biases and friendship networks that favour the hiring or retention of well-networked men not only mean that spurious justifications for eliminating women finalists can easily be fabricated, but that active undermining of female candidates can happen. As one HR network member argued:

"The situation in field missions since 2017 is now very different. Now I see the most significant backlash I have ever come across in my life. Now, hiring managers fail women at the interview stage, so that they are not on the recommended list. This is an unintended consequence of the GPS". (MSM14)

A final constraint on the effectiveness of the TSM requiring special justification for the selection of male candidates for male-dominated units is that the monitoring of this measure is ex post facto, and can be seriously delayed, in part because of the lack of dedicated staff at headquarters for reviewing exception requests. Adequate implementation of the TSM requires careful scrutiny of TORs, of advertising processes, of long- and shortlisting procedures, assessments and interviews. By the time spurious justifications get flagged, it may be too late, and a recruitment process may have generated few women on the shortlist or in the group of finalists.

The lack of swift monitoring of – or consequences for – recruitment decisions that result in hiring men in already male-dominated units can produce a cynical expectation of impunity for failing to implement TSMs. Some observers remarked that the swift succession of managerial and other reforms in field missions, which have been subject to a high degree of scrutiny and a rapid pace of change ever since the 2000 "Brahimi report" triggered a succession of efforts to professionalize peace and security functions,[201] has engendered reform fatigue and cynicism. That so many institutional reforms are launched and then expire without producing significant change may produce a "wait it out" culture at the field level. Recruiting managers may feel unconcerned about accountability checks that will happen in the distant future, when the current reform effort has lost steam.

On the other hand, recruiting managers may feel motivated to avoid complaints from male staff who are disappointed at not being selected for promotions or reassignments. Interviewees noted that disgruntled male staff are much more likely than women staff to take further action, such as complaining to staff unions, lodging an official complaint or taking a matter to a United Nations internal justice mechanism such as a tribunal. Anticipation of the "squeaky wheel" – the demanding, disgruntled staff member – may trigger decisions along the recruitment process that favour male applicants.

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201. United Nations, Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations, A/55/305-S/2000/809, 2000.

Working conditions in the field environment

Women, sexual minorities and gender-non-conforming minorities have in the past (according to interviewees) expressed reservations about mission settings with overwhelming male dominance in civilian and military or police roles. Field missions that are non-family duty stations are also in effect an impossibility for some single parents, and the majority of this category are women.

Family location and arrangements such as schooling or spousal employment are still seen as private matters to be resolved through personal efforts. Women field staff with children have made many kinds of adjustments and say that they are more likely than male colleagues to apply for work in duty stations not far from where their families live.

Married mothers are not consistently able to rely on spouses to handle childcare in their absence. On the contrary, interviewees expressed worries about infidelity and child neglect. According to one senior mission leader:

"Long absences from families results in bitterness, infidelity. I'm not sure men handle it better – many seem lost, lonely and sad". (Senior mission leader, MSM2).

Single mothers in non-family duty stations faced the most serious problems, entrusting upbringing of children either to relatives or paid domestic staff. Under COVID-19, because these homecare and home-schooling duties have expanded, some single mothers in field missions, according to one mission manager, faced constant demands for pay increases from domestic staff, with little capacity to ensure children were well cared-for, amounting to "blackmail and extortion" (senior mission leader, MSM2). A senior staffer involved in setting up a new special political mission noted:

"For the GPS, the need to focus on work/life balance is the key element. If we want women in harsh duty stations, we need to care about childcare. But we also need to ask: why would men suffer less to be separated from a daughter or a wife?" (Senior mission leader, MSM8).

Another senior mission leader, however, noted that men, particularly older men, sometimes have complex or multiple families, making mission settings – with distance, as well as danger and hardship pay – convenient for them:

"Some have numerous (ex-)wives and children – they can't leave mission work because they need the pension and the education benefits. Also, they have to finance huge divorce pay-outs". (Senior mission leader, MSM2).

To support initiatives to accommodate the wide range of challenges that staff face when integrating personal and professional commitments in demanding field work (especially non- family situations), UN Women produced Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines in 2021 (discussed further in Chapter 7).[202] Based on interviews with United Nations mission personnel, these guidelines go beyond documenting existing best practices to provide United Nations mission civilian staff with flexible working arrangements (FWAs). The field-specific guidelines are remarkably frank about the constraints faced by women in non-family duty stations, and about the types of support they need that are not currently available (such as support for the employment of their spouses). These guidelines are also deeply sensitive to intersectional concerns and do not limit themselves to analysing the concerns of married women and mothers:

"Importantly, the integration of professional and personal life goes beyond care responsibilities. An enabling environment is not only about family-friendliness. Personnel without care responsibilities face challenges related to retention and career development, managing long-distance relationships, loneliness and isolation, as well as difficulties in finding a partner when working in a remote duty station".[203]

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202. UN Women, "Make Parity a Reality: Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System in Support of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2021.
203. UN Women, "Make Parity a Reality: Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System in Support of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2021, p. 19.

These guidelines point to areas for future personnel policy adjustments. Some of these will require United Nations Member State support, discussed below.

ICSC review of duty station classification

The International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) is a 15-member international body with members elected to four-year terms by the United Nations General Assembly. The ICSC's designation of duty stations on a scale from A to E, in terms of hardship and danger levels, is mainly based on United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) assessments of security threats. The ICSC determines the range of international staff entitlements to accommodate the risks and costs to staff and families of taking up duties in specific locations. In non-family duty stations, staff receive an allowance to maintain their second household and family in another country (usually their country of origin), in addition to specific allowances for hardship and danger.

Observers of the ICSC's methods and agenda commented that the ICSC both works very slowly and is "more conservative than the outside world" (MSC10). As a result, the GPS's call on the ICSC to develop more finely-calibrated classifications of duty stations has so far not resulted in significant shifts in strict designations of field mission duty stations as "family" or "non-family". A finer calibration of classifications could, for instance, enable families to be located in neighbouring safe countries, or childless staff members to bring spouses to duty stations, or could accommodate variations in types of family and dependents.

Two dynamics undermine efforts in non-family duty stations to extend accommodations for international staff with family responsibilities.

- First, many staff elect specifically to work in dangerous non-family contexts in part because of the significant

earnings available from hardship, danger and (non-local) family or dependent allowances. Some staff resist any duty station reclassification that would eliminate these payments.

- Second, financial and leave accommodations for parents, including to accommodate childbirth, can be resented by non-parents. According to one interviewee, "A minority of the UN population have children, and even fewer are childbearing women. So how does the majority of UN staff feel about maternity leave, parental leave and burden-sharing for that? We are breaking our heads to sell this to staff". (MSC10)

The 2013–2015 ICSC compensation review approved certain types of additional duty station allowances (such as hardship payments) regardless of numbers of dependents, a move that assuaged some resentments about the privileging of staff with family responsibilities. According to one observer:

"The ICSC, and the UN, have a male-headed family idea. It is very hard to break barriers in these ... very conservative views. ... We need to redefine what family means in the UN system". (MSC10)

The COVID-19 pandemic has opened the door to a much wider range of flexible working arrangements (FWAs) than had been possible or even imagined earlier. The ICSC should take advantage of lessons from the COVID-19 experience to expand FWAs, extend parental leave, accommodate the variety of modern families and care obligations, and eliminate rigidities in the designation of peace operation duty stations.

(Im)mobility

The paucity of options to make a lateral move from field mission work to positions in AFPs produces a sense of entrapment in the field. According to a staff member who spent a year at the P3 level in a remote sub-station of a peacekeeping mission:

It is hard to escape from non-family stations. People had been there for 10 years in the same position. It's not good for you ... There is no sense in the UN of a career development path for field staff. Except for networks – you can attach to networks and get a faster promotion track – it is opaque if you aren't in it. ... Everyone wants to leave after one year ... It is the number-one topic of conversation ... The mobility policy doesn't really seem to work. People have been there [a remote and dangerous outpost of the mission] for 5 years and they are dying to get out – same, difficult living conditions for all genders. If you have no plan to get out, you could end up stuck – which is reality – very little assistance provided by the UN ... Emphasis on parity makes it harder to get out – so there is some resentment. (MSM5)

Sexual harassment

In heavily male-dominated missions such as South Sudan, Mali and Somalia, mission leadership has initiated reforms to address sexual harassment. In one mission:

"The major gathering space was more like a beer hall, with posters of scantily clad women. We took them down. Also, we decentralized social space to provide other 'more genteel' gathering spaces. ... We started a 'Don't be creepy' campaign – communicating that it's harassment, not harmless flirtation". (Senior mission leader, MSM2)

Some interviewees, all of them women, said that some missions are perceived to be places where women are harassed, and are therefore avoided. According to one senior manager in a special political mission: "We all have stories of harassment" (MSM10). They noted that

"Women don't report because they get labelled as a complainer, and when they do complain, either no action is taken, or action does not go far enough: managers are not held sufficiently accountable in this regard". (MSM 6).

Recommendations

Executive Office of the Secretary-General and United Nations leadership

1. The Chef de Cabinet should strengthen the monitoring process so that it is rigorous and properly staffed, to ensure that exception requests from field missions are submitted on time and based on credible justification, with evidence of adequate efforts to identify women candidates.

2. Review and strengthen accountability mechanisms, starting with an assessment of whether hiring authority has ever been revoked in cases of persistent failures to hire women in male-dominated sectors.

3. Systematize review of all exception requests at all levels from all field missions.

This could involve face-to-face reviews between hiring managers and mission leadership and quarterly face-to-face reviews between mission leaders and DPO/DPPA leaders.

4. Endorse all-female calls to populate talent pools, and equalize their gender composition. Establish that this is not discriminatory, as it involves pre-screening, not hiring.

5. Express consistent and convincing zero tolerance for sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse, improve reporting procedures and security for victims and survivors, and use all accountability measures to sanction perpetrators.

6. Investigate costs and mechanisms to open vacancies at senior field mission levels through early retirement arrangements for men, particularly at the D2 level.

7. Encourage Member States to investigate actions to support retention of women staff, such as more flexible working arrangements, posting families in nearby countries, and longer parental leave.

Senior mission leadership

To support and sustain recruitment of women at all levels, ensure that mission Chiefs of Staff:

1. Closely monitor recruiting managers, particularly in male-dominated sectors, and hold them to account for implementing the 2020 administrative instruction, including by reviewing outreach, shortlist creation and the selection process.

2. Identify and prohibit practices of deliberately padding or weakening shortlists with underqualified women who can easily be sidelined.

3. Ensure that all hiring managers complete and sign an inclusive hire checklist before posting a job description.

4. Separate underperforming international staff.

5. Add entry-level P1 and P2 positions in areas with few women, such as supply chain, civil affairs, aviation and logistics.

6. Discourage hiring managers from "managing to the squeaky wheel" — that is, from making decisions based on anticipation of complaints or legal action from men who are disappointed that they have not been hired or promoted.

7. Implement the recommendations of the Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines.

To support retention of women staff and to sustain a robust pipeline into senior mission management:

1. Create a P4 mission-level dedicated Career Development Officer for female staff.

2. Establish mentoring arrangements for junior women staff.

3. Promulgate and sustain an unambiguous and determined zero tolerance policy against sexual harassment among staff and sexual exploitation and abuse of host country civilians.

4. Expand parental leave provisions and flexible working arrangements for new parents.

5. Enable location of families in neighbouring countries in the case of non-family duty stations.

To connect gender parity to a gender perspective in mission work:

1. Ensure adequate visibility and status for the mission's gender unit and all personnel responsible for promoting gender equality, including GFPs and Focal Points for Women.

2. Consult with women political, social and economic leaders locally, support their efforts to participate in conflict resolution and public decision-making, and elevate their visibility in the missions' civil affairs work.

Human resources managers at headquarters

1. Resolve tensions between the GPS and the demands of mission downsizing (e.g., imperatives created through the Horizon system), hiring freeze and established recruitment methods by updating field mission staff instructions in ST/AI/2010/3 to ensure that these structural dynamics do not override the organizational imperative of achieving gender parity.[204]

2. Formalize female talent pools for international staff at levels P5 and below and for FS positions, including through periodic refreshment initiatives such as all-female calls for applicants to rosters. Make it clear that this is a pre-screening, not a recruitment process, and is therefore not discriminatory.

204. United Nations Secretariat, Administrative Instruction on the Staff Selection System, ST/AI/2010/3, 21 April 2010.

3. Strengthen the talent pools of women with field experience.

4. Create a talent pool of retired women uniformed peacekeepers for work as international contractors and consultants.

5. Ensure that current and former women UNVs are included in talent pools.

6. Associate rosters with similar functions, and manually identify and link promising female candidates across roster job categories.

Human resources departments and managers in mission settings

1. Generate business intelligence with quarterly or trend information on:
   - Gender composition of staff at all levels, including national, FS and GS staff.
   - Composition of staff voluntarily leaving the United Nations by gender, rank and field mission location (turnover rate).
   - Rate of change in the proportion of women occupying P2–D2 positions.
   - Consistent application and analysis of exit interviews, including systematization and collection of reasons for departure (e.g., drop-down menus for staff to select).
   - Numbers of exceptions requested for selection of men for new recruitments from rosters or PSJOs.
   - Continuously updated projections of staff by gender at all ranks, according to current rates of change, with a particular focus on projections to 2028, in order to identify the most likely areas of shortfall.
   - The percentage of recruitment processes that finish with an exception request (P401), and the percentage of those exceptions that are reversed and sent back for another recruitment round.

2. Issue a quarterly gender trends scorecard to the Senior Leadership Team.

3. To support recruitment of women, including national staff, to field mission positions:
   - Improve outreach, including to national populations via job fairs.
   - Avoid use of rosters if they are likely to generate all-male shortlists, and if using PSJOs, support extended outreach to women potential candidates.
   - Maintain an updated list of UNVs who have worked in mission settings.
   - Ensure that all draft job descriptions and TORs are reviewed by the DOS/OHRM Diversity team before posting.
   - Launch the delayed Phase 2 of the GPS, as recommended in the 2017 Strategy document: "OHRM to initiate in 2018 Phase 2 of the Gender Parity Strategy focused on expanding the current strategy to cover G staff and national staff system-wide".[205]

4. To support retention of women mid-career staff:
   - Produce accessible guidance on flexible and alternative working arrangements that provide for better work-family balance.
   - Support career development and leadership training for women international and national staff (modelled, for instance, on OCHA experience with ImpactPool).
   - Address sexual harassment in the workplace, through a serious campaign, guidance and sanctions, as well as safe and absolutely confidential reporting facilities.

5. Revise exit interview formats to include questions on reasons for resignations from the United Nations, to permit analysis of trends driving women out of specific positions. Provide annual analyses of exit interview data, and report it to the Senior Leadership Team.

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205. United Nations, "System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2017, p. 15.

UN Women

1. Where there is a UN Women country office, encourage retention and career development of mission female civilian staff through access to networking opportunities among international and national female staff across AFPs and missions.

2. Support gender mainstreaming and gender parity efforts in the mission's work through collaboration on programming and policy advocacy on women peace and security.

Member States

To address the work-life balance constraints preventing some mid-career women staff from field mission work:

1. Encourage an accelerated review of duty station classifications by ICSC, taking into account the work pattern alterations introduced by COVID-19 that can support accommodations such as work from home and more frequent trips to locations where families are based.

2. Encourage discussion, including in the ACABQ and Fifth Committee, of measures to accelerate gender parity, including longer parental leave, support for employment of trailing spouses, and early retirement for some men.

Chapter 7: Creating an Enabling Environment

"You cannot look at gender parity without looking at gender equality. There is a denial (in the UN) of the difference between men and women in the world of work, not just in the psyche of men but also in the women. As we look at parity, a lot of the concerns might be left unsaid. There is a need to look beyond the numbers to that of culture. The environment is not enabling enough for women to stay in the system".

(Resident Coordinator, SL-RC8)

Progress towards GPS recommended actions

Enabling environment guidance developed

- The Enabling Environment Guidelines have been developed through consultation and cooperation between the Human Resources Network of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the Office of Human Resources Management and UN Women, and shared with each entity to incorporate into existing policies, monitoring and implementation.

- The guidelines were launched with high visibility, and several written communications products synthesize the messaging from the guidelines.

- Although the report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system reports on implementation of the enabling environment guidelines, monitoring can be strengthened by using standardized and mandatory indicators against which all entities, missions and AFPs can report.

Standards of conduct / addressing sexual harassment

- The UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment has been launched and entities have been encouraged to adopt it or align their own policies with it.

- Bullying and aggressive management behaviour was alluded to by some respondents, especially former staff members.

- All entities and missions consulted for this assessment reported that a strong legal framework on sexual harassment was in place.

- While staff were aware of the policy and actions to take, several respondents pointed to significant barriers still in place in reporting sexual harassment in the workplace.

Gender assessments / impact studies

- This assessment did not find any impact studies assessing qualitative change at the individual or organizational level due to the GPS and enabling environment.

- Respondents reported a lack of leadership will to conduct gender assessments and impact studies.

Enable flexible working arrangements

- Flexible working arrangements (FWAs) in the field are offered by 77 per cent of surveyed entities with field-based staff. However, this assessment did not find systematic data collection at the entity, mission or departmental levels on the number of FWA requests and approvals.

- COVID-19 has normalized FWAs, but also significantly added to the pressures women face in balancing work and family life, as the separation between the two has disappeared.

- COVID-19 had a positive impact on enabling remote work, and respondents hinted at wider institutional receptivity to this mode of work. The review has not been able to assess whether telecommuting or work-from-home arrangements have been institutionalized through policy changes, though some entities were planning to do so.

- There have been several communications efforts to showcase senior managers role-modeling the use of FWAs.

Family-friendly policies

- This assessment has not had access to a centralized database about entity-specific use of family-friendly policies or their uptake. Evidence of crèches in some workplaces was found. The report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system noes that 27 per cent of surveyed entities reported offering onsite childcare services.

- This assessment could not evaluate if data related to the granting of work visas for spouses and resulting changes are being systematically collected.

- There have been some efforts to ensure equal treatment for personnel in same-sex partnerships.

The need for an enabling environment

The need for an enabling environment, along with gender parity, is recognized in the GPS and in commitments made to ensure transformative leadership within the United Nations,[206] to foster an organizational culture that is inclusive, diverse and provides equal opportunity to all staff so that gender parity can be reached. The Gender at Work framework highlights the importance of addressing gender bias in the deep structures and culture of an institution.[207] Biased practices, shaped by cultural and normative belief systems, remain an unquestioned part of institutions and have a negative impact on how different individuals experience workplace opportunities and growth. Changing these deep-set cultural and normative practices requires progressive policies and significant resource allocation – and can lead to transformed workplaces that treat everyone equally irrespective of gender, race, nationality or religion.

This chapter analyses the progress made in promoting a system-wide enabling environment, a key element of the implementation of the GPS. It primarily looks at the Enabling Environment Guidelines and associated positive workplace policies developed as an accompaniment to the GPS, the communication of these guidelines, and the accountability mechanisms in place to ensure that entities and missions adopt them (also covered in part in Chapter 3 of this report).

The Enabling Environment Guidelines

The Enabling Environment Guidelines (EEGs) and supplementary guidelines were launched in 2019 by the Secretary-General.[208] The EEGs were developed in response to the Secretary-General's specific recommendation and request, detailed in the GPS, for UN Women to develop "good practice guidelines for an enabling and inclusive organizational culture" to support the achievement of gender parity.[209]

The EEGs were developed by UN Women, in association with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG), the HR Network of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), and the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM).[210] Subsequently, supplementary guidance, taking an intersectional approach, was also developed by UN Women in consultation with the HR Network, UN Globe and the Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. UN Women also prepares the report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations system,[211] with reporting from inter-agency networks and the Gender Focal Point Network on progress made in achieving gender parity and creating an enabling environment for it.

The Office of the Focal Point for Women in the United Nations System supports the implementation of the GPS and the EEGs, in particular through leading and coordinating the network of nearly 450 Gender Focal Points (GFPs) across the United Nations.[212] The support provided by the Office includes tailored capacity-building sessions, technical guidance and practical resources to all United Nations entities, as requested. On average, the Office provides support to 150 United Nations entities each year. The GFPs

206. United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, "The United Nations system leadership framework", CEB/2017/1, 18 April 2017; Claire Messina, "The UN leadership framework: A catalyst for culture change at the UN", 30 May 2017.
207. Aruna Rao, David Kelleher, Joanne Sandler and Carol Miller, Gender at Work: Theory and Practice for 21st Century Organisations (Routledge, 2015).
208. United Nations, "Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System", 2019; UN Women, "Supplementary Guidance on the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System in Support of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2019.
209. UN Women, "System-wide strategy on gender parity: UN Women implementation plan", December 2017.
210. UN Women, "Gender Focal Points and Focal Points for Women".
211. Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021.
212. UN Women, "Gender Focal Points and Focal Points for Women".

and Focal Points for Women should be appointed in each department, office, regional commission and mission, and can be the agents of change in the process of achieving gender parity.[213]

The EEGs include specific recommendations for organizations, leaders, managers and personnel to implement and negotiate better working conditions and provide several illustrative best practice examples and practical scenarios from entities across the system. The guidelines propose ways and means to support flexible working arrangements, family-friendly policies, implementing standards of conduct to reduce the abuse of power, including sexual harassment and the abuse of authority. The Supplementary Guidance covers topics including recruitment, talent management and retention as well as implementation.

Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines

In 2021, the Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines (FEEGs) were launched, focusing on personnel in mission settings and aiming to increase representation of women in the field and to accelerate efforts to reach gender parity across the system.[214] An assessment of internal policies and the views of a cross-section of staff informed these guidelines. The field-specific guidelines have a stronger focus on intersectionality and look at the specific barriers that women of diverse identities and sexualities as well as LGBTIQ+ individuals might face in working in mission and field settings. The issue of spousal employment and how that impacts the ability of staff, particularly women, to take on certain jobs is also highlighted.

In establishing the need for enabling policies and offering solutions for field mission settings, the FEEGs take a holistic socio-cultural lens. They include first-person perceptions and accounts that illustrate the real problems and barriers that women in field settings face, along with solutions, offered as recommendations. Real-life case studies are highlighted to illustrate the positive impact of enabling environment policies on individuals' careers and lives, to motivate departments and field settings that are slow in adopting these practices. The FEEGs contain suggestions on how to demonstrate the impact of inclusive workplace policies:

"Sensitize team members on gender stereotypes in daily work and encourage positive role models, beyond the mandatory training. For instance, consider shining a spotlight (e.g., through videos or intranet articles) on a diverse group of personnel who have benefited from parental leave, including fathers and same-sex parents. Avoid making assumptions about colleagues' family structures and how domestic responsibilities are shared. Be mindful of women's various roles and the fact that not all women are mothers, as not all men are fathers".[215]

In order to motivate change and the adoption of the FEEGs, this recommendation to "shine a spotlight" must be adopted. Such real-life stories, told via videos and shared widely, have the potential to showcase the impact of an enabling environment on the lives of staff. This will be a worthy addition to efforts such as the "Making Parity a Reality at the UN" leadership advocacy video series, with nearly 20 videos, each featuring a United Nations leader from a field, regional or country office speaking about the importance of gender parity and implementation of the FEEGs.

213. Secretary-General's bulletin on departmental focal points for women in the Secretariat, ST/SGB/2008/12, 1 August 2008.
214. UN Women, "Make Parity a Reality: Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System in Support of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2021.
215. Ibid., p. 26.

Accountability mechanisms to monitor the creation of an enabling environment

The GPS working group members consulted as part of this assessment reflected on the challenging nature of developing system-wide guidelines for creating an enabling environment. They noted that measuring shifts in organizational culture and practice is complex. Even at the GPS drafting stage, there were challenging debates on the value of setting targets in relation to creating an enabling environment, as these measures are intangible and hard to monitor in quantitative ways.

While the report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations system reports on the enabling environment via contributions from the GFPs, monitoring the full extent to which various entities have been able to create enabling environments for the achievement of gender parity can be strengthened by using a set of standardized indicators that all entities, AFPs and missions mandatorily report against, similar to the tracking of the numerical achievement of gender parity itself.

Many entities undertake organizational culture assessments through staff engagement surveys, which may include questions that indicate some aspects of the enabling environment required for gender parity. However, given that there are no system-wide mandated sets of questions included in the organizational culture surveys, and no centralized reporting mechanism, it is not possible to compare across entities and clearly review the progress on enabling environments across entities, agencies and departments over time.

Two resolutions, adopted in late 2019 and late 2021, A/RES/74/128[216] and A/RES/76/142,[217] demonstrate political commitment and support among Member States for the work of UN Women and the importance of the system-wide Gender Focal Point network in achieving gender parity. The adoption and implementation of these guidelines depends greatly on the energy and commitment of GFPs, performing this function on top of their existing jobs, and on leadership will and motivation in individual departments, entities and field missions.

The Gender Focal Point Network

The nearly 450 Gender Focal Points (GFPs) across the United Nations system act as the agents of change towards achieving gender parity by 2028. According to the TORs developed in 2008 (ST/SGB/2008/12),[218] GFPs act as advocates and liaise with the leadership to address systemic issues and changes to processes that are discriminatory. They promote awareness on gender parity and equality, and provide information to staff on policies relevant to advancing gender equality in the workplace and creating an enabling work environment, as well as on means to report sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse of power. They also initiate and support training

and capacity-building efforts on gender sensitivity, work-life balance and career path strategies.

Several respondents alluded to the lack of dedicated funding and resources to do this work, or noted that the lack of top-up compensation or a reduction in existing workloads for staff fulfilling the demanding role of GFP militates against effective monitoring of parity efforts. This demonstrates the undervaluing of this work, seen as something that must happen in people's free time rather than being adequately resourced and monitored.

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216. General Assembly resolution adopted 18 December 2019, Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, A/RES/74/128, 13 January 2020.
217. General Assembly resolution adopted 16 December 2021, Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, A/RES/76/142, 6 January 2022.
218. Secretary-General's bulletin on departmental focal points for women in the Secretariat, ST/SGB/2008/12, 1 August 2008.

GFPs mentioned a limited role in hiring decisions, which limits their effectiveness. Respondents pointed out that substantive gender advisers, working in different entities and AFPs towards mainstreaming gender concerns in programming, may or may not take on the GFP role and are also not always part of the implementation architecture for the realization of gender parity or an enabling environment. This disconnect between gender parity efforts within the United Nations and the substantive gender equality diffusion of responsibility and resources for supporting parity and enabling environment efforts is a missed opportunity to harness internal capacity and address structural and inherent biases and harmful norms.

"It is really wrong to say something is a priority and not put resources behind it. The GFPs become responsible for shepherding the 'homeless' issues – for example, gender bias trainings is a homeless issue in our department. And I see this as an issue within the GPS too. Trainings (on unconscious bias) are mentioned, but they aren't done, maybe because of the lack of resources, both human and financial. It is very difficult to do something where there is no dedicated capacity". (GFP in an HQ department, GFP13)

Communicating the Enabling Environment Guidelines

The Department of Management, the EOSG, UN Women and the Department of Public Information (now the Department of Global Communications) were tasked in the GPS with developing a communications strategy to produce messaging primarily for an internal audience, including personnel, managers and leaders, with regard to the adoption of the EEGs.[219] The messaging is focused 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 working arrangements, family-related leave, and the goals of parity generally. The EEGs and Supplementary Guidelines are supported by a range of communications initiatives to take this messaging forward. GFPs are an essential part of the communications architecture supporting the EEGs.

The assessment revealed wide awareness of the enabling environment guidance in most entities and departments, with some exceptions, and decreasing awareness the further one moved away from the Secretariat and headquarters. Respondents from entities and AFPs were less aware about the specifics of the EEGs. However, field mission staff contacted for this assessment were very aware of the EEGs, perhaps because of the additional push to address the enabling environment in the field mission setting specifically. Yet, surprisingly, a group of women Resident Coordinators consulted during the last phase of this assessment claimed limited to no exposure to the EEGs. This may simply be an indicator of the challenge of providing regular reminders and topping-up knowledge of the EEGs with a leadership group in which there is considerable turnover and multiple competing priorities. A few staff members of AFPs reported addressing gender parity and an enabling environment prior to the development of the GPS and associated guidelines, as part of their core commitment to gender issues and in response to internal demands as well as to the tidal wave set off by the #MeToo movement. Interviewees from these agencies tended to be less aware than Secretariat staff of the specific components of the EEGs.

UN Women has launched communications efforts connected to the core messages of the guidelines, to provide resources and information to internal audiences in the United Nations system and to encourage the adoption of the EEGs and FEEGs across the system. Many of these communications products are available on the UN Women Gender Parity Resources web page.[220] They include:

219. United Nations, "System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2017, p. 44.
220. UN Women, "Gender parity resources".

- Briefs and videos, such as a one-pager on why gender parity is important,[221] the benefits of flexible working arrangements.[222]

- Infographics on the representation of women in the United Nations system.[223]

- More detailed guidelines on mentoring[224] and addressing intersectionality.[225]

- Video series to support the launch of the EEG in 2019 and FEEG in 2021 ("Making Parity a Reality in the UN"),[226] featuring leaders and staff from within the United Nations system sharing the importance of creating an enabling environment and the benefits of an inclusive workplace. The videos have collectively garnered over 2,000 views.

- A shorter brief on FEEGs,[227] as well as two-page collated recommendations for the organization, for managers, and for all personnel, to encourage implementation by all personnel, irrespective of seniority.[228]

- A walk-through video presentation of the FEEGs.[229]

- Printed copies of the FEEGs will be delivered to field offices this year, and the FEEGs and summary briefs are being translated into other languages, including French, Arabic and Spanish.

A strategic behaviour change campaign, rooted in the wealth of real experiences across the United Nations, could provide even stronger motivation for change. All the topics covered in the EEGs, such as discrimination, diversity, inclusion, harassment and flexibility, involve difficult power negotiations. Convincing resistant leadership

to adopt practices that go against the norm is a challenging project. Increasing application of the EEGs and associated policies requires staff to have courage to hold the system to account. For such actions to become widespread requires behaviour change at many levels within the system.

Inspiring such change would entail going beyond the current communications efforts, which are all either written guidance or motivational messages from senior leaders. Communications showcasing the first-person accounts of diverse staff, at all levels of the system, who have benefitted from positive workplace policies, could help convince leaders, managers and personnel to adopt and use transformative policies and change practice. This kind of campaign could detail the socio-cultural and normative barriers, and the strategies that have worked to change them, by exploring people's real experiences of these barriers, and showing real outcomes resulting from the EEGs and associated policies. Such a comprehensive communications effort to exhort the system to adopt the EEGs, in order to fulfil a key requirement of the GPS, should be an integrated effort of the Department of Management, the EOSG, UN Women and the Department of Global Communications, with greater funding and leadership commitment.

221. UN Women, "Why gender parity?".
222. UN Women, "In brief: Benefits of flexible working".
223. UN Women, "Infographic: Representation of women in the United Nations system", https://www.un.org/womenwatch/uncoordination/documents/overview/unsystem/unsystem-infographic.pdf.
224. UN Women, "Mentoring as part of creating an enabling environment: In support of the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the UN system".
225. UN Women, "Intersectionality and the enabling environment guidelines: In focus – LGBTIQ+".
226. UN Women, "The importance of gender parity: SRSG Carlos Ruiz Massieu (full version)", video, https://youtu.be/Vhy2qp7i2Pk.
227. UN Women, "The Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines: In brief".
228. UN Women, "The Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines: Summary of key recommendations for managers", "The Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines: Summary of key recommendations for organizations", "The Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines: Summary of key recommendations for personnel".
229. UN Women, "Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines: Walkthrough presentation for system-wide colleagues", video, https://youtu.be/RfvnYCCfwiA.

Coordination, alignment and integrated approaches

This assessment revealed positive examples of how entities have addressed enabling environment concerns in tandem with the implementation of the GPS through coordination and alignment. In the joint UNOV-UNODC office, a comprehensive strategy deals with both the achievement of gender parity in the institution and addressing gender mainstreaming and related programming priorities. The office reported that the main accountability for achieving gender parity lies with the HR division, but the GFPs have played a critical role in advancing gender parity by working closely with HR.

This assessment has shown that some agencies that have traditionally lagged in addressing gender went on to show significant progress through an integrated approach to reaching parity and establishing enabling factors in the workplace. The good practice examples detailed in the FEEGs also demonstrate experimentation across the United Nations system in addressing gender parity. These examples should be studied in-depth to understand their impact, with a view to replicating successes.[230]

Increased support for UN Women's role in monitoring implementation of the EEGs

Respondents felt that the EEG is an important instrument, but insufficient in its current form to address and shift organizational culture, without greater resource commitments. Some respondents felt that UN Women should be supported for better monitoring of the implementation of the EEG, and that all entities, AFPs and missions must report achievements via a monitoring system that is integrated with the tracking of gender

parity itself. Suggestions included a call for a human resources expert to be hired by UN Women to specifically monitor progress in creating an enabling environment and its specific components, and for the entity to be given a greater leadership role in monitoring talent pipelines, exceptions justifications, TSMs and the use of affirmative action, and to document what works with a view to replicating successes.

Addressing sexual harassment in the workplace

The Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the United Nations system was established in 2017 by the Secretary-General to develop a common United Nations system approach to tackling sexual harassment, by bringing together senior managers from across the organization.[231] As the Task Force states: "Leaders of UN System organizations reiterate their firm commitment to uphold a zero-tolerance approach to

sexual harassment; to strengthen victim-centred prevention and response efforts; and to foster a safe and inclusive working environment".[232]

The CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment has created several products to prevent sexual harassment, including developing the "UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment",[233] the "Guide for Managers: Prevention of, and response to, sexual harassment in

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230. UN Women, "Make Parity a Reality: Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System in Support of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2021.
231. The Chief Executives Board for Coordination is the longest-standing, highest-level coordination forum of the United Nations system.
232. The Workplan of the CEB Task Force for 2020–2021 on Addressing Sexual Harassment organises the Task Force into five workstreams: (1) Implement: support the roll-out of products endorsed by HLCM; (2) Strengthen: advance a victim-centred approach to tackling sexual harassment; (3) Learning and Communication; (4) Outreach and Knowledge Sharing; and (5) Leadership and Culture.
233. United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination, "UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment", 2018.

the workplace",[234] the "Facilitator's Guide: A session on values, attitudes and organizational culture",[235] the "Code of Conduct to Prevent harassment, including Sexual Harassment at UN System Events",[236] and the ClearCheck Screening Database.

According to the report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the United Nations system, 91 per cent of the surveyed entities have in place the minimum standards of the Model Policy on Sexual Harassment; 86 per cent apply the Code of Conduct at their events; 82 per cent use the Guide for Managers; and 87 per cent indicated use of the ClearCheck screening tool.

In 2021, the CEB Task Force launched the "Investigators' Manual for Investigations of Sexual Harassment Complaints in the United Nations".[237] The Manual aims to enhance a common understanding and approach to investigations of sexual harassment complaints, with a view towards strengthening investigations in the long term. Together with the United Nations' Victim's Rights Advocate, the Task Force also launched "Advancing a Common Understanding of a Victim-centred Approach to Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the United Nations",[238] which provides a set of aspirational principles intended to engender trust and confidence among victims and survivors to speak up when they experience sexual harassment. The last was presented as a crucial tool to bolster investigative capacity, harmonize victim-centred investigations and improve communication during investigations of sexual harassment complaints.[239]

The Outreach and Knowledge Sharing workstream of the Task Force, jointly led by the United Nations Secretariat and UN Women, aims to strengthen knowledge sharing across the board. In 2021, the Workstream hosted five peer-to-peer learning dialogues aimed to inform and inspire United Nations organizations to tackle sexual harassment within the United Nations system and beyond, as well as enable peer-to-peer learning. Specifically, the dialogues had a threefold purpose: 1) to inform the international community about efforts to address and prevent sexual harassment within the United Nations system; 2) to identify good practices and efforts being undertaken to tackle sexual harassment by United Nations actors, Member States, civil society representatives, international financial institutions and the private sector; and 3) to deepen the dialogue on continued joint efforts to prevent sexual harassment within the United Nations system. These dialogues have reached over 800 participants and brought together the collective wisdom of over 30 speakers. The Workstream, together with UN Women, launched a publication, "Making Zero Tolerance a Reality: Peer-to-peer learning to prevent and eliminate sexual harassment in the UN system and beyond", based on the first four dialogues, which provides an overview of the key messages and puts forward concrete recommendations for preventing and eliminating sexual harassment.[240]

Interview respondents referred to the UN Model Policy and its adoption at entity, fund and mission level. However, many respondents spoke of sustained barriers to women being able to report sexual harassment and abuse, in spite of being aware of the reporting avenues. Structural issues in the field compound opportunities for harassment, and appointment of known harassers has had a further chilling effect.

234. United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination, "Guide for Managers: Prevention of, and Response to, Sexual Harassment in the Workplace".
235. United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination and Inter-agency Standing Committee, "Facilitator's Guide: A Session on Values, Attitudes and Organisational Culture", March 2021.
236. United Nations, "Code of Conduct to prevent harassment, including sexual harassment at UN System events".
237. United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination, "Investigator's Manual: Investigation of Sexual Harassment Complaints in the United Nations", March 2021.
238. United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination, "Advancing a Common Understanding of a Victim-centred Approach to Sexual Harassment within the Organisations of the United Nations System", May 2021.
239. UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 'Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, Standing Committee 70th meeting, Update on Human resources, including staff welfare' , 31 August 2017, EC/68/SC/CRP.26., page 4 https://www.unhcr.org/59c4e2877.pdf.
240. UN Women, "Making Zero Tolerance a Reality: Peer-to-peer learning to prevent and eliminate sexual harassment in the UN system and beyond", 2021.

"A large number of cases will remain unreported, because of fear of retaliation or retribution. The UN has not reached that level of comfort or trust where everyone feels confident enough to go forward in seeking justice". (Regional Gender Adviser in AFP, GFP14)

To address the underlying issues of values, attitudes and culture, the CEB Task Force on Sexual Harassment held a leadership dialogue to consider how change can be driven individually and collectively.[241] The Task Force on Sexual Harassment has also worked closely with the CEB Task Force on the Future of the United Nations System Workforce to reflect issues of harassment and discrimination in the Senior Leadership Commitments developed by the latter. The role of technology — both how it increases risks of sexual harassment, and how it can be leveraged to mitigate these risks — has become particularly relevant during increased online work during COVID-19, and will also be a subject of study for the Task Force.[242]

These are welcome developments and will hopefully lower the sustained barriers to women being able to report sexual harassment. Respondents across the assessment, however, pointed to the continued, systemic barriers to survivors being able to report safely without fear of retribution.

"People do not trust whistle-blower protections. Some agencies report zero cases of sexual harassment, which is highly improbable. The response overall across the system [to sexual harassment] has been inadequate". (Representative from an affinity group, MSC1)

Respondents spoke of the continued stigma associated with women who report sexual harassment, and the particularly acute situation in the highly sexualized work culture of field mission settings.

"In some places there are intimate relationships outside marriage, sex without consent; in one case a woman was investigated by men who left the case hanging, in the meantime she was stressed — UNVs and interns have

no rights. In a mission, if senior leaders are not committed to creating an enabling environment, bad things can happen. We had a case where the perpetrator left to another mission and the woman was left behind and was labelled a whore". (Senior Gender Adviser in a Field Mission, GFP2)

In some instances, however, respondents from a range of ranks in field settings referred to national female staff members soliciting or enjoying attention from senior white male staff, with attitudes that seemed to suggest prejudice against the women. The very unequal context of such relationships is not the focus of reportage, which instead seems focused on the story of women using privileged men to climb the career ladder or gain other privileges. This opens up concerns regarding how consent and choice are perceived and framed in settings where harmful norms and narratives might go unchallenged and perhaps distort people's perceptions of such incidents.

Some respondents mentioned that while the existence of the policy was be in itself seen as a solution, it has not led to an increase in reporting. Based on inputs from UN Women, we recognize that it is understood within the United Nations system that a low reporting rate does not indicate low rates of harassment. Despite this, our observation from the interviews is that women still feel unsafe in reporting instances of sexual harassment or bullying.

"Entitlement and bad behaviour are tolerated. This is a broader cultural issue. There is a need to think of the tools suggested in the GPS or the EE guidance as a starting point, not the end point. And that requires a shift in the thinking of the organization as a whole". (SL-RC13)

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241. United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, "News: Addressing sexual harassment", https://unsceb.org/news-addressing-sexual-harassment, accessed 25 August 2022.
242. United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, Report of the High-level Committee on Management at its forty-first session, CEB/2021/3, 31 May 2021.

Family-friendly policies

The GPS and the EEGs prescribe a set of family-friendly policies, such as a single parental leave policy that treats men and women equally, and provision for an additional six months of parental leave for those posted in non-family duty stations. It is well recognized that women do not take certain postings, as they do not offer stable employment opportunities for their spouses. Chapter 6 in this report details the barriers that women face in being able to apply for and hold on to roles in field mission settings. While these constraints are recognized in the system, it is not clear how the system is responding through the adoption of family-friendly policies. Innovation in monitoring and documentation of the impact of such policies would be a valuable contribution, perhaps via reports every other year on building a system that can accommodate and support diverse staff, thereby enabling more women to apply and take up postings earlier considered unsuitable for them.

Many respondents said that there is an inherent understanding of a "model family" in the United Nations, which is heteronormative, and that the entire super-structure panders to that norm. The CEB website lists the various

commitments so far to address this, but challenges persist.[243]

"In March, we will see if the HLCM will agree to the new definition of family. There are parts of the UN (the ICSC, staff unions, etc.) that are disinclined to be forward-looking". (HRN11)

A key issue raised was the applicability of the EEGs to consultants within the United Nations system. While the EEGs suggest that family-friendly policies can be accessed by consultants, particularly those in long-term roles, staff from entities that have a large number of consultants reported that they have found it challenging to get Member State approval for family-friendly policies, such as improved parental leave, to be accessed by consultants, largely due to financial constraints.

"Cultural biases also pre-mediate to what extent flexible working arrangements or policies are adopted. These are not mandatory and require leadership will — so not always uniform". (Gender Adviser in a Specialized Agency, GFP5)

Flexible working arrangements

One of the key focus areas of the EEGs is making flexible working arrangements (FWAs) available to all staff. Several communications materials provide information on the benefits of adopting FWAs,[244] with detailed guidance to managers on how to facilitate this. The human resources portal has a dedicated page on FWAs,[245] and a dedicated podcast has been launched featuring leaders talking about the benefits of adopting FWAs, along with a one- pager.[246] The human resources portal collates data dating back to 2017. The lack of sustained data collection to understand the impact of the EEGs in promoting more FWAs across the system undermines efforts to learn from past practice.

Respondents spoke of a 2019 campaign on flexible work, whereby the burden of proof to justify flexible work was shifted to managers, who had to justify a negative answer in writing. Conversely, it was also noted that requests for FWAs might be perceived as gendered and end up further stereotyping women.

"When you push for family-friendly policies and flexible working arrangements, senior management think it is only for women with children and care-giving duties. This is very damaging, when policies are used to again stereotype women". (Gender Adviser in a Specialized Agency, GFP5)

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243. CEB, "Work/family issues".
244. UN Women, "In brief: Flexible working arrangements for the United Nations — Why it makes sense".
245. United Nations HR Portal, "FWA guidelines".
246. UN Women, "In brief: Benefits of flexible working".

The introduction of FWAs has led to interesting discussions in some departments, including the DPO, an operational department where remote work was considered next to impossible to arrange. Women were vocal during a staff focus group held in 2020, and this led to a senior leadership meeting that agreed to certain principles, such as not scheduling meetings after hours or not requiring emails to be answered after working hours.

The impact of COVID-19 on flexible working arrangements

The global pandemic has made FWAs a reality for all staff, while also posing significant challenges for staff with care responsibilities, particularly women with young children. Several entities reported activities to support women to work from home and find work-life balance. Respondents noted that extended working hours have become an issue. Some entities reported issuing a value statement that not everyone is expected to work in similar ways, and that there must be no expectation of email responses during non-working hours. The needs of people with young families have been noted, and communications briefs on this have been made available as part of the outreach from UN Women.[247] Written guidance on addressing an enabling environment during COVID-19,[248] how to handle online sexual harassment during COVID-19,[249] and promoting inclusivity during COVID-19 have been issued. Information about the uptake, use and impact of these resources was not available.

On a positive note, respondents reported a democratizing of meeting spaces during COVID-19, as more people can attend Zoom meetings than can crowd into a room. This has had a softening effect on hierarchy, where everyone is potentially equal in a Zoom room, where earlier the seniors would be at the table and juniors at the back. This has led to people feeling more comfortable in speaking up.

Addressing the deep culture

Addressing structural and normative barriers

Respondents pointed out that in spite of positive workplace policies and efforts such as the EEGs, there is an inherent heteronormativity in the way in which such guidance and policies are interpreted and implemented by entities. Respondents alluded to the fact that the default understanding of the family, for example, is still heteronormative, and even if guidelines suggest alternatives, it will take decades to shift such deep structural culture and biases.

Respondents pointed out that gendered practices continue, such as the blindness to care and domestic work, the expectation to socialize outside office hours (often a space where career progressions are secured), or equating certain roles with certain genders. There is little in the guidelines on the deep structural barriers that operate within institutions and in interpersonal relations that might prevent certain genders from accessing opportunities and benefiting from positive workspace policies. The guidelines could be more explicit in laying out how and where people experience barriers and, further, how individuals might be able to negotiate these within organizations.

"The enabling environment guidance can be interpreted in a very gendered manner. There is not much to address cultural biases. The UN being a multicultural organization, it is fascinating that we fail to actually come to terms with or abide by a common set of norms". (Gender Adviser in an entity, GFP5)

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247. UN Women, "Top tips to foster inclusivity online during COVID-19".
248. UN Women, "Ten ways to create an enabling environment during COVID-19".
249. UN Women, "How to address online sexual harassment during COVID-19".

UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP were among the AFPs that reported addressing workplace culture and social norms through separate processes, with UNICEF being the first United Nations agency to receive an EDGE (Economic Dividends for Gender Equality) certification in 2018.[250] There was acknowledgement that the Secretariat has emulated these efforts to address gender parity and organizational culture.

"Agencies, funds, and programmes are performing much better not only on GPS implementation but on broader inclusion and diversity. The Secretariat is learning from them and that is why it is important to have a system-wide strategy". (Secretariat source, HRN13)

Addressing privilege: Class, race, nationality and gender

Respondents pointed out that the United Nations system, particularly in recruitment, operates within a residual, unacknowledged, colonial mindset. Respondents felt that not enough is being done within different entities to address issues such as inherent and unconscious bias. Respondents felt that one-off trainings are not enough to shift deep structural barriers to gender-, race- and class-related inclusion and diversity. Respondents felt there was a strong normative culture that automatically translates into preferential treatment for privileged white men. The very nature and conditions of certain postings make it tough for qualified women to apply.

"There is a need to look at the intersectional nature of discrimination, where young, coloured, single and gay women might have a radically different experience. The archetypal leader is a white man with a wife, where the wife handles the logistical issues of settling down in a country". (Senior leader, SL- RC8)

Many respondents said the system of political appointments is contrary to the spirit of both gender parity and diversity and inclusion. Respondents felt that not enough attention is being paid to whether only the privileged from hitherto marginalized communities are gaining access into the United Nations, thereby further entrenching privilege.

"There is a much lower representation of Asian women at the senior levels (P5 and above). If you look at RCs globally, among women, you have more women from the Global North. From the Global South you see more African than Asian women. It is very rare that you will see Asians (men or women) as country reps in other parts of the world. But northern or African candidates do head up country offices in Asia. This is because of the role that Member States play, and African member states have been more successful in backing their candidates. At that level it is politics rather than how qualified you are. (Regional Gender Adviser in a Fund, GFP14)

Respondents also pointed out that it is not enough to appoint women of colour, but that more critical work is needed to identify if only privileged women of colour were making it into the system.

"In ensuring gender parity there is very little focus on 'who' is getting recruited. We don't find evidence of practices within HR to ensure representation of diverse women, women of colour for example. There needs to be a focus on quality, not just quantity". (Gender Adviser in an entity, GFP5)

The assessment revealed that there are efforts to work with affinity groups, such as UN Globe, to address LGBTIQ+ and non-binary inclusion issues as well as the considerable barriers that arise from the Member States–related politics of appeasement.

"The LGBTIQ+ programmes are very new. Not a lot has been done yet. There are Member State implications to think of, too. We are working with UN Globe on that closely". (Human Resources Staff in an AFP, GFP3)

The assessment revealed the variation between different entities when it comes to receptivity and understanding of gender issues. Shifting embedded institutional cultural norms, especially in contexts like mission settings, within a hyper-masculine culture, might take decades.

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250. UNICEF, "UNICEF becomes first UN agency to get workplace gender parity certification", press release, 17 June 2018.

"All this talk of parity and an enabling environment is very rosy, especially 50/50 already being achieved in New York. But for those of us working in the field – these are two different worlds. Men are used to paying lip service to gender equality. They know it will be noted if they don't 'do gender'. In our mission they see me as just 'gender' – they call me 'hey gender' instead of my name – in the mission we follow the military institutional culture – so people are known by titles, not names!" (Gender Focal Point, GFP2)

Addressing male resistance

The push for gender parity is creating anxiety among men about their prospects for advancing, and potentially making them even more resistant to gender equality. From the start, the implementation of the GPS was met with allegations that some unworthy women candidates were getting hired by virtue of their gender and not their ability.

Some respondents felt this can be addressed by visibly and intentionally broadening the enabling environment–related activities so they benefited both men and women, and framing the effort as making the environment more conducive for everyone to thrive. Expanding flexible working arrangements, improving workplace culture or offering career development should be available to all genders. An example of this is the DPPA "Building Our Pillar" effort, which is a concerted, complex, multi-year effort to improve working conditions and link that to operational effectiveness. Others reported tackling resistance in the human resources department and among hiring managers using similar strategies:

"There has been success with hiring managers who were completely unaware about diversity and inclusion, by

talking about the benefits of gender diversity, importance of representation, its uses in creativity and problem solving … we never said 'we are doing this so we can have more women', that will not work. So, the explanation is in terms of its value, and also that it's for the good of our entity and it's not just about women, but women and people from marginalized communities. That without representation we fail our own mandate". (GFP3)

But the inherent tension within the GPS regarding men's career prospects, and a lack of strategy at the highest levels for dealing with resentment, entitlement and backlash, is a challenge to which many respondents alluded.

"I don't think anyone has said that this has had no impact on male hiring – I think people have tried to say that it is better to have a diverse workplace and a multiplicity of voices and speak to the benefits of what that has to offer, but people gloss over the second part, and in glossing it you end up with an unconstructed ambiguity. I don't know how you get around that". (Senior leader in a department, MSM11)

The EEGs and associated documents and policies are all aimed at creating ideal conditions for all personnel, in all their diversity, to progress in their careers without harassment and discrimination. Current efforts to document the impact of the guidelines are primarily through reporting by the GFP Network in the reports of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system. A system-wide effort that holds all entities, AFPs and missions accountable against a standard set of parameters will greatly enhance understanding of how the guidelines, when implemented, have changed workplace culture and impacted the lives and careers of personnel in the United Nations system.

Recommendations

Executive Office of the Secretary-General and United Nations leadership

1. Ensure an enabling environment and inclusive workplace:

   • Along with ensuring the achievement of gender parity across all levels of the United Nations,

demonstrate equal determination to hold entities to account to change organizational culture and to address the social, cultural and normative barriers that have the potential to limit the effectiveness of gender parity efforts.

- Support UN Women with additional human and financial resources to strengthen the monitoring system documenting the adoption of the EEGs and its impact. Reporting on this should be mandatory, with both quantitative and qualitative elements, and connected to the accountability mechanisms in place to ensure the achievement of gender parity.

- Increase funding allocations to properly resource efforts to create an enabling environment, rather than relying on volunteerism and good intentions. Gender Focal Points need a seat at the table (and allocation of time) during hiring discussions to ensure inclusion, diversity and reduction of unconscious bias.

- Create awareness and will among Member States to commit to gender equality, beyond tokenistic gestures. This is necessary owing to the blockage from Member States and the fact that the reforms related to gender parity continue to exist outside of legal frameworks.

Human resource managers

1. Support accountability measures for the achievement of an enabling environment:

   - Integrate qualitative and quantitative monitoring mechanisms related to FWAs and family-friendly policies (number of people benefiting, type of change, positive outcomes due to change) with gender parity tracking efforts. Questions can include: What made a difference in a certain case? What factors worked in favour? Are these replicable in other settings? The evidence can inform future institutional commitments and staff expectations.

   - Undertake a desk review of all career development programmes in AFPs, and map factors that help people progress. Then determine the conditions for an enabling environment, with a view to removing barriers that impact women unfairly.

   - For tricky areas such as male resistance, document instances and initiatives that provide an alternative narrative. These could include human resources solutions as well as everyday good practices.

- Document how discrimination related to race and sexuality, as well as sexual harassment claims, are recorded and addressed, to track if there is an increase in the number of cases being handled and the quality of their resolution. This will involve digging deep to find cases that have not even surfaced due to institutional and cultural barriers.

UN Women

1. Communicate the agenda for change:

   - Ensure that the EEGs can be adapted for the different countries and contexts the United Nations operates in, particularly sections that deal with socio-cultural or normative change, especially for field and country offices. Develop an accompanying communications strategy to address behaviour, social and institutional changes, making the content accessible to United Nations staff from different regions and nationalities.

   - Develop a behaviour change campaign based on evidence of stories of change or positive deviance — a leader who went against the norm, a staff member who benefited from a workplace policy — to counter continued resistance and help change institutional and individual practices. Include staff from multiple levels, displaying the diversity across ranks of the United Nations system. Such a campaign will need to be adequately resourced.

   - Make all guidelines available in multiple languages and non-text formats, such as animations or comics. An associated communications strategy should aim to take messaging to a wide internal audience at all levels of the United Nations system.

Chapter 8: Recommendations

Each of the chapters in this review ends with a set of recommendations. This section outlines some of the key recommendations we have made in each section. In addition, we have added one overall recommendation on resourcing the GPS, which we feel is critical to the sustainability of gender parity efforts within the United Nations system.

Before listing these overarching recommendations, we offer a reflection on the link between numeric parity and substantive capacity to promote gender equality within the organization, a matter brought up frequently in consultations with civil society groups that were held by the research team.

Will numeric parity lead to gender equality?

The connections between gender parity in staffing and the advancement of the United Nations' core goals of gender equality and justice are not made clearly in the 2017 Gender Parity Strategy. That a connection might be assumed is mentioned on page 9, which clearly admonishes that "gender parity should not be conflated with the totality of the UN's efforts on gender equality. Dedicated financing, expertise, and strengthened programming on gender equality are needed to achieve this goal".[251] Throughout, the GPS defends the goal of parity in staffing as a worthy objective in and of itself, as a means of deepening diversity and building a representative bureaucracy.

Nevertheless, both in the Strategy itself and in popular assumptions, there is a tendency to conflate gender parity (in staffing) and two aspects of gender equality: equality in the work environment (respect for women's leadership and ideas, accommodation of constraints often specific to women, challenging masculinist work cultures), and equality in the outcomes of the United Nations' work (improved United Nations programming on gender equality and gender justice).

The first connection – between parity in staffing and less masculinist work conditions and styles – is logical. Sustained levels of recruitment and retention of women requires – and should in turn generate – changes in working conditions and work culture, as is made clear by UN Women's work on the enabling environment. But the second connection is less easily achieved: a feminizing of the staff body and of work cultures and conditions is not the same as feminist directions and leadership in policy-making and implementation.

The GPS strategy argues that gender parity in staffing is "a crucial first step to orienting the system more strongly to deliver on gender equality and Agenda 2030 as a whole".[252] In other words, it is necessary, but not sufficient. The GPS does not set out to explain how the entire system can promote gender equality globally more effectively – that is a matter that is UN Women's mandate in its support for the entire system's gender mainstreaming efforts.

However, in various places the GPS itself conflates parity and equality, for instance in discussions of performance goals for senior staff, where the words "parity" and "equality" are used together and almost interchangeably.[253] The occasional conflation of the two in the GPS is not uncommon and speaks to the need for a more public debate on whether or how parity leads to equality. Put differently, any reinvigoration of the GPS in the Secretary-General's second term should be explicit about connections – or disconnects – between parity and equality.

Feminist institutionalism

The question of whether feminization of a staffing body – or institutional participants – produces feminist organizational cultures and outcomes has animated a significant body of research into private and public organizations and an entire subset of gender studies, known as feminist institutionalism.[254] This analytical field is driven by the observation that merely increasing the proportion of women among institutional staff, leaders and members may not generate changes in workplace cultures, if the institution's deep culture, objectives and operating

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251. United Nations, "System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2017, p. 9.
252. Ibid., p. 9.
253. Ibid., pp. 17–18.
254. See, for example, Louise Chappell, "'New', 'old', and 'nested' institutions and gender justice outcomes: A view from the International Criminal Court", Politics & Gender Vol. 10, No. 4 (2014), pp. 572–594; Fiona Mackay, "Nested newness, institutional innovation, and the gendered limits of change", Politics & Gender, Vol. 10, No. 4 (2014), pp. 549–571; Fiona Mackay, the International Criminal Court", Politics & Gender Vol. 10, No. 4 (2014), pp. 572–594; Fiona Mackay, "Nested newness, institutional innovation, and the gendered limits of change", Politics & Gender, Vol. 10, No. 4 (2014), pp. 549–571; Fiona Mackay, Meryl Kenny and Louise Chappell, "New institutionalism through a gender lens: Towards a feminist institutionalism?", International Political Science Review, Vol. 31, No. 5 (2010), pp. 573–588; and Georgina Waylen, "What can historical institutionalism offer feminist institutionalists?' Politics & Gender, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2009), pp. 245–253.

systems reflect male practices and preferences. Important organizational transformation efforts aiming towards gender equality may find themselves nested within unaltered institutional dynamics that create incentives to repeat past patterns, which can include sexist, elitist and racist exclusions.

On the whole, this body of research indicates that an increased proportion of female staff, on its own, does not trigger institutional transformation, because incoming women may not perceive themselves to be feminists or be able to resist institutional conformity incentives. It is important to recognize that there is some ambiguity on this point. Early feminist research into organizations showed that above a certain "token" level, an increase in the proportion of women (usually above 30 per cent) in the rank and file and leadership of organizations enables resistance to pressures to conform with male preferences (at a minimum, fighting sexual harassment and the disparagement of female leadership; more ambitiously, inserting gender equality into the organization's goals).[255] It is rare to find cases where an institution has very rapidly

increased the proportion of female members to parity in the way that the United Nations is doing. This makes the United Nations' current gender parity effort of enormous significance to feminist institutionalists.

Many interviewees offered anecdotal evidence that a stronger presence of women among decision-makers was producing much more attention to a range of gender issues in the organization's operations. For instance, observers of United Nations field missions noted that in the United Nations missions with female leadership, gender issues were regularly and organically raised in briefings — issues such as conflict-related sexual violence, the gender composition of national leadership, or the need to address women's needs and participation in quick impact projects and confidence-building measures. These are matters that in the past have been either neglected or seen as secondary to peace and security objectives. However, some interviewees complained about female colleagues and bosses who rejected the "feminist" label, who took on high-handed and bullying management tactics, or who undermined junior women.

Monitoring the gender equality impact of gender parity

The question of whether parity at an institutional level produces equality in the institution's work is researchable, and could be monitored as part of the next phase of the GPS. In addition, the nature of connections (or disconnects) between parity and equality — and meeting not only the United Nations' gender justice goals but the SDGs more broadly — should be addressed more explicitly in the Strategy, and in the way it is communicated and defended throughout the organization. This issue was raised by many interviewees, as noted throughout this study.

Many members of the HR network said they would like to have at their disposal stronger evidence and argumentation to explain the instrumental value of parity, the ways in which a more gender- diverse staff body can generate a stronger focus on gender equality in the United Nations' development, peace or human rights work, whether in peacekeeping operations, deployment of the

Secretary-General's good offices, and day-to-day engagement with Member State Governments at the country level. For many interviewees, the conflation of parity with equality undermines the United Nations' gender mainstreaming goals, reducing it to a matter of "jobs for the girls". This notion disparages the gender mainstreaming effort.

Finally, the call on senior leaders to join the International Gender Champions (IGC) network of over 250 leaders of international organizations, permanent missions and CSOs indicates the GPS's hope and expectation that the Secretary-General's appointees will commit to gender equality work. However, the IGC has no mechanism for tracking whether its Champions either renew or actually deliver on the two commitments per year they are supposed to make to gender equality; there is no monitoring or assessment mechanism.

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255. Rosabeth Moss Kantor, Men and Women of the Corporation, new ed. (New York, Basic Books, 1993), and Drude Dahlerup, "The story of the theory of the critical mass", Politics & Gender, Vol. 2, No. 4 (2006); p. 511–522.

The Senior Compacts signed by United Nations leaders appointed by the Secretary-General do apparently specify both parity and gender equality goals, tailored to the entity in question, but as these are not made public, it is difficult to know whether senior leaders are adequately implementing their gender equality objectives. Achievements of gender goals set out in Senior Compacts would be a much more relevant way of assessing the internalization of parity and equality goals than is the call for leaders to join the IGC. The extent to which senior leaders meet gender goals in their Compacts should be monitored and reported on publicly by the EOSG and UN Women, as a major step towards fostering gender-responsive (or feminist) leadership at the United Nations.

Summary of recommendations

Setting targets, accountability and monitoring

1. Launch Phase 2 of the Gender Parity Strategy (GPS) as soon as possible. Phase 2 is overdue and critical to dismantling regional and racial disparities in staffing and career progression that tend to disproportionately affect women. It should be launched.

2. Make gender-disaggregated staffing data consistent, timely and publicly available to increase transparency and encourage civil society shadow reporting.

3. Set up high-level oversight through a task force to continue monitoring GPS implementation and strengthen accountability for reaching parity goals. The task force – comprising senior leadership across entities, chaired by UN Women and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) – should meet every quarter, and their reports should be made public to supplement the gender parity trends available on the website.

4. The Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance (DMSPC) in the Secretariat and human resources (HR) chiefs in agencies, funds and programmes (AFPs) and specialized agencies should systematize the collection and review of data on Temporary Special Measures (TSMs), exception requests and justifications for not hiring women across the system.

5. Establish alert mechanisms for backsliding or under-performing entities and grades.

6. EOSG and all HR managers should enforce obligatory written justification from hiring managers in the case of selection of male candidates for posts in sections and grades where parity has not yet been attained.

7. Entity leaders and HR chiefs should hold managers accountable for the achievement of gender parity and gender equality goals. Staff promotion to senior leadership positions should be contingent on demonstrated support for women staff and gender parity goals within the organization.

Senior leadership

1. The United Nations Secretary-General, who has declared himself a feminist, should encourage other leaders to follow suit, and hold public discussion on the meaning of feminist leadership in multilateral institutions.

2. Consolidate evidence and advocacy material to build a compelling case for the value of parity and the power of feminist leadership for the United Nations' operational effectiveness and normative mandate, and respond to critics by highlighting historical patterns of underrepresentation that the GPS seeks to address.

3. UN Women should strengthen communications, mentoring and networking systems with feminist leaders, both women and men, across the system (e.g., feminist Resident Coordinators), to connect gender parity to feminist practice. Networking United Nations senior leaders with feminist CSOs, for instance via UN Women's Civil Society Advisory Group, is one way to accomplish this.

4. United Nations senior leaders should make public the content of their Senior Compacts that pertain to their

gender parity objectives (staffing and management) and their gender equality objectives (substantive focus of their entity's work). If they are members of the International Gender Champions network, they should make public the two gender equality commitments they make annually, and report on delivery.

Recruitment, retention and talent management

1. Create a female talent pipeline with proper representation of women from the Global South, including establishment of entry-level professional programmes for women from the Global South and in senior leadership appointments. Develop rosters of women candidates or talent pools for promotion at the P5, D1 and D2 levels.

2. Facilitate career advancement of national, General Service and Field Service staff to the International Professional level. The United Nations should give its employees options to pursue alternate career tracks without ever having to leave the United Nations system. The approach towards multi-track career progressions within the United Nations should include facilitation of lateral movement across functions and agencies, allowing staff to work part-time or remotely, encouraging secondments and prioritizing alumni or returnees for jobs. The organizational culture should allow for and respect all pathways for promotions, including for those who have opted to stay away from paid employment for some time.

3. Encourage applications from civil society feminists by addressing recruitment and assessment biases against civil society activists. For example, ensure recognition of and equal value for activist experience compared to Government or other public- and private-sector employment.

4. Create structured sponsorship programmes for female staff, to ensure that promising women managers and leaders are alerted to opportunities for promotion and stretch assignments.

5. Dismantle archaic HR rules to facilitate lateral moves and inter-agency mobility for all staff, and eliminate "time-in-post" restrictions when seeking opportunities within the system. Eliminate the prohibition on staff applying for positions more than one grade higher than their current grade. All staff should be permitted to apply for positions for which they are qualified, even if they involve leapfrogging a grade.

Mission settings

1. Resolve tensions between the GPS and the demands of mission downsizing (e.g., the imperatives created through the Horizon system), hiring freeze and established recruitment methods, by updating field mission staff instructions in ST/AI/2010/3 to ensure that these structural dynamics do not override the organizational imperative to achieve gender parity.[256]

2. Demonstrate to staff that the impact of downsizing will be cancelled out by the large number of male retirements anticipated in the next few years.

3. Empower the Emergency Working Group for field missions to consider temporary measures such as an identification and separation of underperforming staff, and targeted early retirement packages for select male staff in order to create space for women staff at mid- to higher levels.

4. Energize the entry levels in field missions through an increase in posts available (possibly seeking Member State sponsorship) and curated career development opportunities for United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) and national staff to enter at the P1 or P2 levels.

5. Rigorously review P401 exception request forms to identify sectors and missions repeatedly failing to shortlist or recruit women. Decisively suspend or revoke hiring authority in those cases.

6. Conduct women-only calls to populate rosters, accompanied with campaigns to show that this is not discriminatory, as it merely involves pre-screening potential candidates, not making job offers.

7. Develop internal female talent pools for mid- to higher-level appointments.

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256. United Nations Secretariat, Administrative Instruction on the Staff Selection System, ST/AI/2010/3, 21 April 2010.

Enabling environment and organizational culture

1. Harmonize policies and systems for institutional culture change across the United Nations (where possible) with the Enabling Environment Guidelines, the Supplementary Guidance, and the Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines.[257]

2. Continue to communicate good practices for achieving gender parity through the United Nations Gender Focal Point Network, the HR Network and other networks.

3. Urgently address the persistence of sexual harassment and abuse of authority in the workplace. Consider establishing a position for an Special Representative of the Secretary-General on eliminating sexual harassment of United Nations staff, based in the EOSG.

4. Give greater visibility and support to the role of Gender Focal Points (GFPs) in monitoring the achievement of an enabling environment and broader gender parity. Appoint more GFPs to share the work burden, as per ST/SGB/2008/12.[258] Release those who volunteer as GFPs from a portion of their other responsibilities. Integrate GFPs into their department or section's personnel planning, to enable sustained monitoring of recruitment.

5. Affiliated systems, such as the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), must support gender parity reforms. The Secretary-General and the Group of Friends on Gender Parity should request the ICSC and ACABQ to accelerate their reviews of staff benefits and classification of duty stations to support more family-friendly arrangements.

6. Communicate the value of an enabling environment internally within the United Nations by showcasing examples of the positive impact of certain practices on a mission, an AFP and the lives and careers of staff members. These impact stories can demonstrate the transformative potential of behaviour, social and institutional change resulting from the adoption of progressive workplace policies, and they can motivate resistant leadership, AFPs, missions and others to adopt such policies. Feature United Nations staff from diverse regions, nationalities and genders in this content, and make it available in multiple languages.

Resourcing

1. Resource GPS implementation adequately, from the core budget of the entities or from regular or assessed contributions within the Secretariat. Record budgets allocated to the implementation of the GPS in entities' annual reports and report them to the respective executive bodies.

2. Increase resources to produce targeted social and behaviour change communication products that highlight changes in the lives of staff members as a result of enabling policies. Showcase leaders who have changed practice in varied settings (see above).

3. Dedicate resources to support a narrative that true gender parity cannot be achieved unless an enabling environment — including a true embracing of equality, diversity and inclusion — is a core component. Numbers on their own will not bring about institutional change.

4. UN Women should provide accompaniment to under-performing entities so that they — even the smaller ones with very limited resources — can identify means of overcome obstacles to gender parity progress. This could include i) support for developing tools to hold critical conversations on gender, race and sexual orientation within the United Nations, ii) co-developing learning resources with the United Nations System Staff College and other learning centres, and iii) working with the employee resource groups (such as the United Nations Feminist Network) and the HR Network as well as the GFP Network to disseminate good practices and support dialogue sessions on challenges and opportunities for advancing gender parity within the United Nations.

5. Address the expectation that GFP work can be conducted on a voluntary basis. Establish clear provisions to release GFPs from a portion of their non-gender-related workload annually, to ensure that they can accomplish their tasks as GFPs.

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257. United Nations, "Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System", 2019; UN Women, "Supplementary Guidance on the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System in Support of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2019; UN Women, "Make Parity a Reality: Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System in Support of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity", 2021.
258. Secretary-General's bulletin on departmental focal points for women in the Secretariat, ST/SGB/2008/12, 1 August 2008.

Finally, to sustain and communicate this important institutional reform:

Revitalizing commitment

1. Create a burst of new commitment and conviction. Use the launch of Phase 2 as an occasion for senior leaders to recommit to the GPS and to galvanize energy for the final push to parity by 2028.

2. Articulate parity-equality connections. UN Women has a vital role to play in building support for gender parity by connecting it to the United Nations' gender equality- and justice-related normative and operational commitments. UN Women, along with EOSG and the Department of Global Communications, should produce communications materials that look beyond numbers and explore the value of parity and the connections between diversity in institutions and operational performance that is responsive to the needs of the United Nations' diverse constituents. The United Nations system should explore showcasing the impact of achieving gender parity to an external audience, which can help motivate resistant Member States to sign on to the parity and culture change agenda.

3. Foster feminist multilateralism. UN Women can support feminist leadership support networks as well as gender mainstreaming by examining what feminist multilateralism means in international relations. This could include both collaborating with other multilateral institutions that are exploring feminist institutional reform (e.g., the European Union, the African Union and the Organization of American States), and building partnerships with countries developing feminist foreign policy.

Building and leveraging political will

1. Member States: The Secretary-General and United Nations senior leadership should encourage the Member State Group of Friends on Gender Parity to become more engaged in advancing the GPS, given the support of Member States to resolution A/RES/76/142, adopted by the General Assembly in 2021. The resolution includes strong language on the importance of achieving gender parity and creating enabling working environments (see paragraph 35). At the least, a series of high-profile events should accompany a reinvigoration of the GPS, including the launch of Phase 2 of the GPS. Additional discussions should be held with Member States regarding obstacles to fast-tracking family-friendly reforms in the ICSC, and regarding support for funding measures that would strengthen the GPS via the ACABQ.

2. Civil society: Hold an annual discussion on the progress in meeting gender parity goals at the United Nations at the Commission on the Status of Women and other international civil society convenings. The United Nations can demonstrate leadership around the issue of gender parity and establish a reference or advisory group consisting of academics, women's rights organizations and other non-profits that interact with a core team (from EOSG, UN Women and other entities), to spotlight challenges and good practices towards achieving gender parity within the development, aid and humanitarian sectors.

Confronting and countering resistance

1. Communications: The United Nations Secretariat, with support from UN Women, should communicate support for the GPS and respond to critics with data and historical accounts that show the patterns of underrepresentation that the GPS seeks to address, and the many parity efforts that have been sidelined in the past, and showcase impact stories from the current adoption of gender parity in various settings.

2. Staff unions and internal staff representatives: A senior United Nations management group should have ongoing meetings with staff union members and representatives to discuss GPS progress and address concerns, including the concerns of male staff who feel sidelined.

3. Building supportive constituencies within the United Nations: Continue to engage with affinity groups like the United Nations Feminist Network, the women's Resident Coordinator group, UN Globe, UN Push and others, among which there is tremendous interest. Present information on GPS progress to these groups, and co-create a communication strategy that cascades across the United Nations system.

Annex 1: Semi-Structured Key Informant Interview Guides

Note: The questions included in this document are meant to guide key informant interviews and small focus group discussions (where relevant) to triangulate with data gathered through a broad-based survey and a review of other available databases and secondary literature. This is not an exhaustive list of questions, nor is it expected that all questions will be covered in each interview. Under each category, interviewers should assess which sub-sections and questions are most relevant for the chosen interviewee.

Guide 1 - Task Force members, GPS drafters, Group of Friends of the GPS, EOSG members

Strategy development

1. Can you please give us the background and specific reasons for the timing of the GPS and why it was developed? What motivated it?

2. How was the GPS developed? Who was consulted? Did the consultations go beyond headquarters? Can we speak to some of the people involved in consultation? Input: consultations held across the system, including with staff unions, Senior Management Group, chiefs of the Chief Executive Board for Coordination and the Human Resources Network.

3. Did you plan to address potential resistance to the GPS? Did it materialize? What mitigation measures were put in place?

4. How were the five working group domains identified?[1]

5. What was the outreach to communicate the Strategy? (Explore means of communication e.g.: internal memos, townhalls, others?)

Strategy implementation

6. How did you envision the Strategy translating within entities, missions and departments? How is Strategy adaptation working in practice? Explore: mission settings.

7. Are you aware of any entity-specific implementation plans that have been drawn up, as envisaged in the Strategy?

a. Any examples of entities that were able to cover General Service staff and national staff in Phase 1?

8. What were the different checks and balances put in place to ensure the Strategy was being implemented? Explore: Benefits and limits of Temporary Special Measures (TSMs), targeted outreach. To what extent were the TSMs promoting diversity and other inclusion criteria?

9. How effective are those checks and balances? For instance, is there an alert system to help focus attention on specific problems? Who or what is alerted, by whom, and what actions can they take?

10. What resources have been made available to entities and sections that have made progress and to those that have not?

Accountability and monitoring

11. Who is accountable at different levels of the United Nations system? Explore: Is the implementation and monitoring of the GPS the responsibility of the office of the Gender Focal Point in UN Women, or is it the EOSG's responsibility, or some other department's?

Specific queries for Secretary-General/EOSG:
a. How many specific, time-bound and entity-specific targets for parity (at all levels) have been introduced in Senior Managers' Compacts?

b. How are senior managers held accountable for meeting targets?

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1. Five working groups based on focal areas: Targets and Accountability, Special Measures, Enabling Environment, Field Settings, Senior Appointments

12. Are the duty bearers or main focal points for implementation powerful enough within their entities to be able to hold the rest of their staff to account? Explore: what are the challenges if, for example, the Gender Focal Point has no power within the mission or entity?

13. How is reporting staggered across the system? Is it working in principle? What can be done better?

14. How are the data fed back to different entities to record progress or lack thereof? Are the data in accessible formats?

Enabling environment

15. How is the value-add to the organization due to gender parity communicated across entities, missions and departments?

16. How were potential challenges due to institutional culture and socio-cultural norms in different contexts to be handled? Explore: Are methods accessible and adaptable to different contexts?

a. What are the system-wide frameworks for addressing sexual harassment in the workplace? How are whistleblowers dealt with?

b. Are senior managers given training on unconscious bias? What checks and balances are in place to ensure reduction of unconscious bias in senior appointments?

17. To what extent were issues of diversity among women considered in the drafting stages?

Looking ahead

18. Examples of evidence of successful implementation: Why do you think it worked in this instance? Explore: Examples beyond headquarters. Does successful implementation require one individual with a clear political will to make it happen? How institutionalized is the notion that gender parity is a value-add?

19. Of the five focal areas,[2] would you say a few need prioritizing at this stage of implementation? If so, why?

20. What has been the impact of COVID-19 on GPS implementation?

Guide 2 - Senior managers, implementers, HR managers at the headquarters, mission and field levels (ensuring a good spread of the different agencies and entities), including any International Gender Champions

1. When and how did you become aware of the GPS?

2. Were you involved in the preliminary consultations?

a. At the organizational or national level, did you have consultations? What were these consultations like? Was there any resistance?

3. How was the GPS communicated across your organization? Explore: verbal, written memos, synthesis of main strategy principles.

4. What is your specific responsibility to implement the GPS?

GPS implementation

5. What do you (as a senior manager) identify as key enablers and key obstacles in implementing the GPS across its five areas?

a. Can you please tell us about the (entity-specific) implementation plan you followed? Was an entity-specific plan developed based on the targeted approach suggested in the GPS?

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2. Focal areas: Targets and Accountability, Special Measures, Enabling Environment, Field settings, Senior Appointments.

b. Specific query for OHR (and other HR departments): Are you looking at gender biases or other issues within United Nations HR policies? Who is responsible for ensuring consistency across all bodies? Explore: national quotas, women considered unfit for certain roles or postings, conflict situations.

6. What stage of implementation would you say you are at now? Can you give us examples where things worked? Explore factors for success: Specific organizational culture, motivated person in power.

Targets, monitoring and accountability

7. What do the senior managers identify as the key enablers and key obstacles to advancing gender parity in terms of the prescribed targets, TSMs and the accountability mechanisms suggested in the GPS?

   Specific queries for senior staff in OHRM (and other HR departments):
   a. Has the Human Resources Network commissioned a study to take inventory of all existing senior talent pipelines, rosters and databases to propose a common platform for system-wide sharing of senior female talent data (at P5 level and above)?

   b. We understand that clear targets were set for each entity, including targets at the field level. Can you tell us how this works in practice, and how monitoring mechanisms to fit specific organizational practice have been developed? Explore: Who is responsible for tracking? Have a methodology and template been provided to develop targets and baseline (by level) for entities?

   c. Who are you accountable to when it comes to results of the GPS? Who is accountable to you? What are the reporting mechanisms? Any difficulty with the reporting mechanisms? How often was this experienced, do you think that the reporting measures are duly fulfilled? How are targets met?

   d. Are you aware of the special measures that could be used to ensure gender parity in recruitment? Did you ever use one? Have you heard of a department or entity that used one?

e. How is accountability built into senior staff's performance appraisals? Is achieving gender parity clearly articulated in performance appraisals? Explore: Senior Managers' Compacts; specific, time-bound, and entity-specific targets for reaching parity at all levels.

f. Do you have any alarm bells within your system that are activated if negative parity asserts itself? What are these? At what level of the organization is the accountability to keep track of this?

g. Did you or someone else get rewarded for meeting targets on gender parity? Examples: more funding for gender equality programming, recognition on the intranet?

h. Status and percentage of women national staff: Are data available on women national staff transitioning to international?

i. How are exit interviews used to improve recruitment and retention of women candidates? When mid-to-senior women staff leave, are efforts made to retain them, encourage them to stay or discover their reasons for departure? Are exit interviews of any use in documenting departure decisions? Is anonymity preserved?

Enabling environment

8. What do the senior managers identify as the key enablers and key obstacles to advancing gender parity in terms of their institution's (agency's) culture, including in field offices? What are the prevailing practices in staff recruitment and capacity building?

   a. Did you experience any challenges in implementing the Strategy? What were these? Explore: internal backlash, staff unions, senior male staff.

   b. Are you aware of the Enabling Environment Guidelines? Are there instances of use of this along with the GPS? What are the specific barriers to achieving gender parity in the environment you are working in?

c. In your office, how many women are there in powerful positions, compared to men?

d. Is there a gender difference in the numbers of staff who resign? Any difference by staff rank? What do you think are the reasons for any differential rate of leaving the United Nations? Explore: women leaving for family reasons, lack of childcare, spousal employment or visa.

e. How is sexual harassment within the workplace handled? What are the legal frameworks on sexual harassment?

Looking ahead

9. How has COVID-related disruption affected the implementation of the GPS? What was the differential impact of COVID on women?

10. What specific steps would you suggest to bridge the gap specifically arising out of COVID-related challenges?

11. Any further suggestions for ensuring gender parity is achieved system-wide?

Guide 3: Women within the United Nations (ensure diversity of respondents, taking into consideration the following variables: rank, peace operations, gender identity, colour, nationality, region, etc.)

General questions about when they joined, location, movement, etc.

1. Please tell us a bit about the culture in your organization when it comes to gender equality. Explore: any barriers, deep cultural bias, "women can only go this far". Hyper- masculinity in certain agencies. Organizational cultures, and differences between uniformed and un-uniformed settings.

2. As a woman, have you felt supported in your career within the United Nations? Please give us examples of how you were mentored. Did you advance to increasingly senior roles? Explore: In what situations did women feel supported? Combination of right mentor along with enabling environment?

3. Did the performance appraisal systems allow for specific gendered obstacles to be addressed? How are these handled by HR?

4. Please tell us a bit about the factors — both within the office and outside — that might have prevented you from advancing in your career or taking certain posts. Explore: family responsibility, spouse's career, schooling, medical. Unaccompanied posts. "Boy's club" culture. Any race, caste, class and identity dynamics. Sexual harassment, bullying.

5. Are you aware of the GPS? How were you made aware of it?

6. Do you feel the GPS is having an impact on hiring and retaining more women?

   a. If yes, explore specific instances where respondents feel this has happened.

   b. If no, what are the barriers to its implementation? How can these barriers be removed?

7. Are you aware of the Enabling Environment Guidelines? Do you see them being used alongside the GPS?

8. What are the legal frameworks for addressing sexual harassment in the workplace? Are staff aware of support in place and actions to take?

9. Is the GPS "owned" by senior leaders in mission settings? If not, why not?

Guide 4: Key informant interviews and focus group discussions with Gender Advisers and Gender Focal Points

Strategy development and their role

1. Were you involved in the development of the GPS?

   a. To what extent were issues of diversity among women considered in the drafting stages? Have you seen these issues becoming more prominent as a result of the GPS, where some women might be marginalized because of race, ethnicity, sexuality, etc.

2. What are your views as GFPs about the power and limits of your role as advocates for gender parity within your entities or missions?

   a. As a GFP, what can you say about the time, financial resources and trainings allocated for the fulfilment of your role as a GFP?

Strategy implementation

3. What do you, as a GFP, see as the main opportunities and barriers in implementing the GPS?

   a. How supported do you feel in your role in rolling out the GPS? Who are the other stakeholders with automatic responsibility for the GPS? What and how is your working relationship with these departments?

   b. Did your entity prepare an action plan for the GPS? How much were you involved in the preparation? Any specific points you would like to highlight about the process, objectives or resources?

Monitoring and accountability

4. Where does your entity stand now in terms of the GPS targets? If it is performing well, what were the main enabling factors? If not, what were the disabling factors? Can you highlight the major impediments?

   a. As a GFP, to whom are you accountable in terms of reporting on GPS implementation? Who is accountable to you? What are the reporting mechanisms? Any difficulty with the reporting mechanisms? How often was this experienced, and do you think that the reporting measures are duly fulfilled?

   b. Did your entity adopt any Temporary Special Measures to enhance gender parity in recruitment? What were these measures? Did they yield the desired results? Are these measures still adopted? Do you know of entities that have adopted such measures?

   c. Was your entity held accountable to meet the GPS target? Do you know about other entities? Any examples to share? Are there any systems for you to connect with other GFPs? Is this structured or ad hoc?

   d. Did anyone get rewarded for meeting their target on gender parity? Have there been any entities whose selection authority has been revoked for failing to reach targets by 2019? Any that still failed to meet targets a year after resumption of selection authority?

   e. Can you as a GFP ring an alarm bell if negative parity asserts itself? What are the means of raising an alarm? At what level of the organization is the accountability to keep track of this?

Enabling environment

5. What has worked in your contexts to enable an environment for women to be hired, retained and promoted?

   a. Have there been any efforts to build feminist or gender-inclusive organizational cultures? What do these efforts look like in your specific setting or entity?

   b. What are the gender-transformative policies and practices in your entity? Explore: facilitative policies, work-life balance, leadership, mentoring, flexible working arrangements and a supportive architecture.

   c. What are the location-specific barriers? Explore here factors such as the low representation of Arab women, other under-served categories.

d. Does the GPS further exacerbate certain forms of discrimination because of the target-setting approach? Do women of colour, lower caste women, non-binary persons or others have equal opportunities?

e. What can you say about sexual harassment policy enforcement?

f. What do you think were major or significant changes in the organization's work environment as a result of the GPS? Do you think these changes would have been possible without the GPS?

Guide 5: Resident Coordinators

1. Are you aware of the GPS? When and how did you become aware of the GPS?

2. Can you please describe the specific accountability you have to ensure gender parity?

3. How do you delegate responsibility to ensure achievement of gender parity? Who holds the primary accountability in your office? To whom do they report? Is this working?

4. How are GPS targets and priorities communicated by your office at the country level?

5. Can you give us some examples from your country where things have worked vis à vis achievement of gender parity?

6. Does achievement of gender parity come up during your discussions with the UNCT?

7. Are there plans to ensure gender parity among national staff?

8. Is there a database of well qualified nationals who could be recruited into international positions?

9. How does the RC assessment system ensure that performance, vis à vis diversity in country teams or

Looking ahead

6. How has COVID-19—related disruption affected the implementation of the GPS? What was the differential impact of COVID-19 on women?

7. If you wished for a set of tools to help you roll out the GPS better, monitor progress better and communicate the purpose of the GPS better, what should these tools look like, in your specific contexts?

8. Would you like to add any recommendation to advance gender parity that the GPS may have missed?

achievement of gender parity, is meeting expected standards? Has the recruitment or assessment system undergone any change? (That is, in response to things like the GPS.)

10. Do you (as an RC) have any control over hiring of international staff? Or is it very much an agency decision?

11. Is there a way to report back to the DCO if they find that that some agencies are in violation of the GPS guidance?

12. The Management and Accountability framework assigns RCs responsibility for GPS implementation. How is it measured?

13. What is the utility of the UN-SWAP and the gender scorecard in relation to the GPS? Are they complementing each other at this point?

14. Do you have suggestions for how transparency and accountability can be improved, in country offices, for the implementation of the GPS?

15. What has been the impact of COVID on achieving gender parity? How is the impact being felt in terms of retention of talented women staff?

ANNEX 2: Human Resources SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic Information

1. Please indicate your current rank.

2. Please indicate your designation.

3. Please indicate which United Nations agency you currently belong to.

Institutional HR strategy or action plan for gender parity

4. What best describes your current stage of development of a gender parity strategy/action plan? Please select one.

	We do not have a gender parity strategy.
	We are developing a gender parity strategy.
	We have developed a gender parity strategy with a time-bound action plan for reaching gender parity that has measurable indicators and targets.
	We have developed a gender parity strategy with a time-bound action plan for reaching gender parity that has measurable indicators and targets; the plan is adequately resourced.
	We have developed a diversity and inclusion strategy that includes gender parity as a target.
	Other (please specify).

5. What time period does the strategy/action plan cover?

6. Has your entity's plan been influenced by or aligned with the GPS?

	Yes, the GPS was the incentive/template for developing an entity-specific strategy/plan.
	Yes, we had a strategy/plan that predated the SG's GPS (2017) that was updated to incorporate elements from the GPS.
	No, our existing strategy/plan already addressed the issues covered by the GPS.
	Not sure.
	If yes, please elaborate.

7. Were you involved in the consultations organized by the Executive Office of the SG for the development of the SG's Gender Parity Strategy?

	Yes
	No

8. What was your role in the development of your entity's gender parity action plan/strategy?

	Lead role in conceptualizing the strategy/action plan
	Part of the consultation but did not lead.
	I have had no role in the development of the strategy, but am responsible for implementation and monitoring.
	I have had no role in the development of the strategy, and I am not responsible for implementation and monitoring.
	If yes, please elaborate.

9. Have you undertaken an external evaluation or certification of your gender parity strategy?

	Yes
	No

10. Which priority areas does your plan cover? (Check all that apply)

	Leadership and accountability
	Professional development/talent management
	Recruitment and retention
	Internal mobility
	Organizational culture and enabling environment
	Other (please specify)

11. Does your plan address the following categories? (Check all that apply)

	All staff grades (including GS staff)
	All Professional staff grades
	All staff categories (without national staff)
	All staff categories (including national staff)
	All contractual modalities (including independent contractors, SSAs, temporary contracts, fixed term contracts, etc.)
	Interns
	United Nations Volunteers
	Procurement/vendor contracts
	Other (please specify)
	None of the above

12. Please briefly describe any specific measures taken to extend the GPS to national staff.

13. Does your plan/strategy address other kinds of diversity? (check all that apply)

	Geographical diversity
	Race
	Disability
	LGBTIQ+ staff
	Other (please specify)
	None of the above

14. In what grades is your entity farthest from reaching gender parity? (Check all that apply)

	P3
	P4
	P5
	P6–P7
	D1
	D2
	Other (please specify)

Monitoring, reporting and accountability

15. To which office are updates on staff numbers and other arrangements relevant to the GPS sent? (Check all that apply).

	All HR
	HR Directors
	Executive Director's/Director-General's office
	Senior Management Committee/Leadership team
	EOSG's office
	DMSPC
	Gender Adviser
	Resident Representative
	Resident Coordinator
	None of the above
	Other (please specify)

16. How frequently is progress reviewed and/or reported in your entity?

	Weekly
	Monthly
	Quarterly
	Annually
	Reporting to the EOSG's office when requested
	None of the above
	Other (please specify)

17. Please indicate whether workplans in your entity include gender goals.

		Senior managers	All staff	None	N/A
	Gender parity				
	Gender equality				

18. Are these goals reviewed as part of performance appraisals?

	Yes
	No
	Not sure

19. Please briefly describe any reward/recognition systems for staff/departments that have performed well on gender diversity.

20. Please briefly describe any oversight mechanisms in your entity (check all that apply).

	Advisory boards
	A committee within the HR
	A committee/board consisting of senior leadership of the entity (USG/ASG/DG/DDG)
	A committee/board that includes staff representatives
	Other (please specify)
	None of the above

21. Have any of the following stakeholders provided feedback and/or guidance on your entity's gender parity plan/initiatives? (Check all that apply)

	EOSG
	DMSPC
	OHRM
	UN Women Office of the Focal Point for Women
	Gender Focal Point
	Gender Adviser
	None of the above
	Other (please specify)

22. Which of the following facilitative policies does your entity have in place?

		Senior staff	All staff	Entry-level staff	N/A
	Induction processes				
	Leadership development initiatives				
	Talent management initiatives/ pipelines				
	Unconscious bias training for hiring managers				
	Formal mentoring programmes				
	Informal mentoring initiatives				
	Succession planning that is targeted towards women and diverse employees (identification of high-potential staff by function/role)				
	Young professional programmes				
	Employee affinity groups, such as resource groups for women				
	Other (please specify)				

Talent development and management

23. Does your entity implement workforce planning procedures?

	Yes	No	Not sure	N/A
Do these planning procedures include separation packages for early retirement?				
Do these planning procedures include individual employment development plans?				
Do these include tracking staff attrition by grade and job categories?				

24. If your entity implements workforce planning procedures, does it address a potential gendered impact on staff?

25. Does your entity have a staff mobility policy in place?

Yes	No	Not sure

Recruitment

26. Which of the following recruitment measures does your entity employ? (check all that apply)

	Outreach initiatives targeted towards female candidates
	Temporary Special Measures in recruitment
	Women-only rosters
	A recruitment drive for creating a talent pipeline of women for senior leadership roles
	Other (please specify). Please elaborate if possible.
	None of the above

27. If TSMs are employed, how are they monitored and reported? If more than once, has your entity tracked justifications for exception requests?

28. Has your entity submitted exception requests to the EOSG to recruit a man over an equally qualified woman?

Only once	More than once	Never	Not sure

29. How does your entity address unconscious bias in selection processes? If yes, please elaborate if possible.

	Yes	No	Not sure	N/A
By removing personal identifiers in recruitment				
By using external assessment tools and mechanisms to remove potential biases from the selection process				
By not sharing P11s with the hiring managers				
By ensuring gender balance within interview panels				
By maintaining gender balance at every stage of the selection process				

30. Has your entity reviewed or implemented any of the following elements in job descriptions? (check all that apply)

	Restrictive recruitment criteria, such as military experience, a specific number of years of experience, field experience, etc.
	Inclusive language (per the UN Guidelines for Inclusive Language)
	Lateral move requirements, time-in-post requirements, etc.
	None of the above

31. Has your entity developed any plans for mutual recognition of selection processes across entities?

	Yes
	No
	Not sure
	If yes, please elaborate.

32. Is your entity employing rosters? (check all that apply)

	Yes
	Yes, and the roster has been reviewed for potential built-in male bias
	Yes, and our entity has developed plans for mutual recognition of rosters
	Our entity does not employ rosters

People analytics

33. Does your entity have a dedicated cloud-based workforce/HR analytics solution that is able to extract/analyze real-time data on gender parity?

Yes	No	Not sure

34. Do you use the HR analytics data to challenge assumptions for hiring and retaining women talent/staff for your entity?

Yes	No	Not sure

35. Do you have a gender parity dashboard? (Check all that apply)

Yes, it is accessible to the public
Yes, it is accessible to staff (excluding contractual staff)
Yes, it is accessible to all personnel (including contractual staff)
Yes, it is accessible to hiring managers
Yes, it is accessible to HR
Yes, it is accessible to senior managers
We do not have a gender parity dashboard
Other (please specify)

If so, do they address gendered aspects of leaving (e.g., care responsibilities, better career opportunities elsewhere)?

36. Does your entity systematically use exit interviews?

Yes	No	Not sure

37. Does your entity conduct staff engagement surveys? (Check all that apply)

Yes, it includes employee satisfaction (morale/engagement)
Yes, it includes employees' perception of the effectiveness and/or relevance of the Gender Parity Strategy
Yes, it includes employee perception of inclusion
Yes, it includes grievances relevant to the GPS (as in perceived reduced opportunities for career advancement, questioning women's career advancements, etc.)
Yes, it includes sexual harassment
Yes, it includes abuse of authority
Yes, but none of the above elements are included
Our entity does not conduct staff engagement surveys
Other (please specify)

Staff retention and management policies

38. Please indicate if the following flexible/inclusive work allowances are in place in your entity:

	Yes	No	Not sure	N/A
Is your entity reviewing flexible work arrangements in the COVID-19 context?				
Has your entity clearly communicated that the default response to requests for flexible work arrangements should be positive?				
Do vacancy announcements include provisions for flexible work arrangements?				
Is there analysis in your entity of the impact of working-from-home arrangements on men and women?				
Does your entity provide 6 months of additional leave in field settings?				
Are there arrangements for backstopping parental leave in your entity?				
Is parental leave provided for all parents regardless of their gender?				
Is parental leave extended to all contractual modalities?				
Is there crèche availability in your entity or coverage of crèche costs?				
Are same-sex partnerships recognized as equal in your entity?				
Has your entity reviewed accommodations on spousal employment?				
Has your entity developed a new sexual harassment policy or amended an existing one in line with the model UN policy?				

39. Has your department provided any of the following in a field mission setting? (Check all that apply)

Ablution facilities
Women-only safe spaces (e.g., gym hours)
Health services (e.g., gynaecologists)
Breastfeeding room
Crèche
N/A
Other (please specify)

Overall

40. Please briefly describe any of the initiatives above that have been instrumental in advancing gender parity in your entity.

41. What do you think is still missing or remains an obstacle to progress?

42. Can we contact you for a follow-up interview?

Yes	No

If yes, please provide your email address here.

Thank you!

ANNEX 3

Selected comments and reactions from two consultations held on 1 and 8 November 2021 with senior women leaders in the United Nations system, in which the report's findings were presented briefly.

Observations on uneven progress in reaching parity

- The findings are in completely in line with what we are finding as well. The narrative that is getting repeated more often these days, "white males are disadvantaged in the system"; this is worrying.

- The data was depressing — most of the progress is not sustainable. We are far away from real change.

- In terms of monitoring progress, how about we focus on new recruitments since the strategy started, rather than overall percentages of gender parity within an entity?

- Gender parity at senior leadership is because of D1 and not D2 levels.

- We have to speak to power, hold senior leadership accountable, and the Senior Compacts are a powerful way of doing so.

Comments on structural constraints to women's mobility, promotion and retention

- Is there data around the correlation between mandatory rotation and women's retention?

- Problems are so deep-rooted, such as harassment; there has been some window-dressing, but it has not really changed anything fundamentally.

- Over-reliance on external hires is a problem; we have to focus on retention of those who are already there.

- We need greater transparency in senior appointments/recruitment.

- How do we address hostility that senior women leaders face from the host government?

- There is no silver bullet — structural changes need to happen. We just need something to shock the system. COVID has shown how a workplace can work for women. Let's hold onto it.

Comments on implementing systems

- What was particularly shocking was the point about GFPs, that it has been close to 30 years [since I joined], and GFPs are still working voluntarily.

- The problem comes with the voluntary nature of implementing the Gender Parity Action Plan, because we do not see the proactive push in implementation, accountability.

- For us to achieve fully the targets intended, we need to keep many pieces coming together.

Comments on informal power systems

- We need to look at more and more about the mentoring element. How can senior women take the lead? I believe Secretariat has a mentoring programme, but I don't know much about it.

- I have never seen the enabling environment guidelines — I will google it now and see what we can find.

- We can't change behaviour through issuing guidelines.

- We are very aware of being women, not being a homogenous group. Some people from particular nationalities with more networks make it in their career. How can we focus on the affirmative action where it is most needed?

- We see informal women's groups (e.g., internal networking and affinity groups) as a way to compensate for formal support systems.

Parting thoughts

- We need to disseminate — we need to push the data — we need to make it known, otherwise we will be in the same space in 20 years' time.

- The presentation resonates with me; the language you used in the presentation is clear and courageous, because it takes away some of the euphemism. For example, I have witnessed the overwhelming male negativity when I speak in town hall meetings in my position.

ANNEX 4: ENTITIES WITH PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN BELOW 47% AT P5, D1 OR D2 LEVELS

Entity	D2	D1	P5
	% of women staff	% of women staff	% of women staff
ITC -ILO	0	0	18.8
UPU	0	0	20
UNICC	0	0	38.5
UNJSPF	0	37.5	38.1
WIPO	10	39.3	29
UNIDO	16.7	13.6	27.9
ICAO	18.8	26.2	29.3
FAO	19.35	28.9	31.2
IMO	20	30	35.3
IAEA	20	40.4	28.6
UNRWA	25	33.3	45.2
UNAIDS	30	44.7	45.2
WMO	33.3	7.69	30.8
ITU	33.3	21.1	32.4
PAHO	33.3	27.8	40
UNESCO	35.3	46.9	39.7
WHO	35.4	36.8	35.2
UN Secretariat	39.3	42.8	41.6
IOM	40	32.6	41.1
UNHCR	43.2	42.7	46.8
ILO	44	35.7	38.1

Sources: UN System-wide Dashboard on Gender Parity (accessed 21 April 2022); Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system, A/76/115, 1 July 2021, p. 22.