

# Leaders are always gender transformative

**Gender transformative leadership at all levels – starting at the top – means we all act on the Clarion Call and accelerate, consistent and simultaneous effort to advance gender equality in our respective areas of work.**

It means:

- leading by example and never turning a blind eye to the lived experiences of women and girls,
- prioritizing, valuing and resourcing gender equality efforts,
- communicating consistently with conviction about women's and girl's rights,
- changing practices and procedures that are barriers to equality and well-being of all female personnel, and
- holding self and others to account is our commitment to deliver better for women and girls.

**PILLAR**

**2**

## 2.1

**We learn from and address the lived experiences of women and girls in all their diversity – i.e., the injustice, barriers, violence, the harmful norms, and stereotypes.**

## WHY

UN leaders must respond in a consistent and coherent way within the context of geo-political power dynamics, and clearly identify as someone who promotes and defends human rights **norms** and the values enshrined in the UN Charter. Failure to do so undermines the UN's credibility and legitimacy.

Gender-blind leadership limits the efficiency and impact of UN activities and public engagement. Senior level engagement on gender equality further enhances the understanding of all entity personnel that advancing gender equality is imperative to the entities mission and impact.

By requesting SRSG's, Special Envoys, RCs, HCs and other senior leaders to report on gender issues the SG, DSG and entity heads consistent leadership and concrete commitment to gender equality will be demonstrated.

## HOW

Senior leaders in all countries commission and ensure a rigorous intersectional gender power and conflict analysis is a mandatory component of all CCAs and directly informs the development of gender equality results into UNSDCF's and Humanitarian Response Plans. Intersectional gender, power and conflict analysis will be based on common standards developed by UN Women together with the UN System and will always be validated through consultations with local women's groups. Country Gender Equality Profiles will become a common, joint and standardized UN System product and will integrate all existing tools such as the UNCT SWAP and GEM.

**The UN will leverage normative agreements (CEDAW, UPR/HRC, CSW, etc.) to inform progress. Special focus:**

- on every stage of peacekeeping mission planning, mission workplans and staff evaluations
- humanitarian rapid assessments, needs overviews, budget requests
- internal and external reporting and briefings

SG, DSG and all entity heads consistently insist that women's and girls' rights, gender equality and SRHR are addressed in all SG reports and briefing. Briefings and reports will consider gendered early warnings on rise in gender-based violence, anti-women rhetoric and political marginalization of women.

Reports that do not address the state of gender equality and UN system measures to shift power and uphold a strong policy stance will be returned for improvement.

## WHO AND WHEN

The senior leadership of the UN in any given country:

- RCs / SRSGs where they exist
- UN senior leadership in global North contexts

**The leadership, teams and units of the EOSG will be particularly vigilant and ensure that women's and girls' rights, gender equality, SRHR etc. are always advanced through reports and briefings to UN intergovernmental bodies as well as in SG/DSG speeches.**

Similarly, other executive heads of all UN entities will be supported by leaders, personnel and structures in their executive teams and front offices with appropriate gender related expertise or training in order to achieve the desired consistency and coherence.

Regional Directors will play a stronger role on ensuring accountability for action at the country level.

It is important to know that the shift is a leadership responsibility – not a gender unit responsibility.

## 2.2

**All UN entity heads lead the adoption and announcement of entity plans to operationalize the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan.**

## WHY

### **Accountability for delivering for women and girls is foremost an entity-level responsibility.**

Most entities need to elevate the strategic significance of delivering for women and girls and traceably resource the efforts as no entity can fully achieve its mandate without it.

Most entities spend 5% or less of their budget on gender equality. This is not commensurate with the responsibility to serve all of humanity.

Only when entity planning and resourcing frameworks incorporate all elements of the Gender Equality Acceleration plan can it be fully realized. Shifting entity resources to deliver for all – including women and girls – is a significant measure of leaderships commitment the overall goals of the UN.

## HOW

The SG's annual Leadership Dialogue series will focus on "gender transformative UN" and will include the feminist-in-chief framing of gender equality, principles and expectations of UN leadership; and strengthening accountability for gender equality. Personnel across the entire UN system will be invited to attend.

No UN leader will speak on all male panels or participate in all male delegations.

UN-wide minimum standards based on UN norms and the Clarion Call will be developed for entity-specific strategic planning which must include how resources (human and financial) will be allocated to its implementation and specifically quantify investments in building and professionalizing their capacity on gender equality and delivering for women and girls.

### **The agency specific acceleration plan will be fully integrated but visible in the organization's overarching strategy and planning processes and mid-term reviews.**

At an appropriate time in their annual cycle of work entities will convene dialogues with peers and stakeholders. This will cover their plans to accelerate efforts and meet human rights and SDG commitments made to women and girls. It will also be an opportunity to inform strategy development and monitor progress made.

The UN SWAP and its peer review mechanism will be updated in accordance with the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan and will capture actions taken by all entity heads to inform the work of the GSG.

## WHO AND WHEN

By end of Q2 2024, all UN entity heads will be in a position to communicate how their entity will pivot to meet the commitments of this Acceleration Plan.

UN Women will lead the development of minimum standards for entity specific strategic plans as part of SWAP 3.0 deliberations.

UN SWAP 3.0 will incorporate directions given by the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan.

The pivotal shifts will further be built into the entity's organisational strategy, plan and budget at the first coming review/revision.

Entities will also build on, and refresh their existing gender strategies, when available.

## 2.3

**We conduct internal power analysis of the systems, structures and hierarchies and formal and informal decision-making, and change those that constitute barriers to gender equality and equity.**

## WHY

UN organizational structures, culture and policies are still patriarchal and not yet conducive to the work of realizing gender equality, delivering for women and girls, or equal opportunities and access for female personnel.

Internal decision-making structures are hierarchical and often not fully inclusive.

Despite some notable improvements of late, UN practices, policies and procedures do not correct for gender bias.

Lack of parity leads to institutional conditions that are not conducive to gender equality outcomes.

**However** parity cannot stand alone and must be accompanied by reforms that model inclusion and actively prevent harmful bias and stereotypes in decision-making.

## HOW

Each entity will conduct an externally facilitated power analysis with the aim to identify and remove barriers to equal opportunities and access for female personnel and inclusive decision making.

Each entity will

- enable inclusive decision making, through revisiting structures, meetings, feedback loops etc.
- institute a series of behavioral science informed measures to reduce gendered bias and stereotypes in selection, recruitment and promotion.
- roll out bias training to all staff - starting with leadership.
- revisit policies that constrain job candidate's eligibility or interest in positions they are qualified for
- define staffing standards, training and deployment preparation needed for supporting the implementation of the entity's gender equality goals in relation to their headquarters, regional and country architecture.

The above measures will be submitted to the SG, through the EOSG and presented to the Gender Steering Group (3.1).

In addition, all entities will ensure that they update, report on, and meet their targets under the Gender Parity Strategy (GPS), including in UNCTs, missions, liaison offices etc. The EOSG will lead on an update of the GPS with a focus on missing areas and addressing the areas or entities in need of most accelerated effort.

## WHO AND WHEN

In 2024/25, all UN entity heads will be in a position to embed changes that address the results of the power analysis.

The pivotal shifts will further be built into the entity's organisational strategy, plan and budget at the first coming review/revision.

Entities will also build on and refresh their existing gender strategies (internally and externally facing, when available).

## 2.4

**We embed gender equality as a valued core competency for all personnel and adapt internal practices, procedures, and HR policies to reflect gender equality objectives.**



## WHY

Delivering for all, including women and girls, starts at the top with senior management's commitment and capacity to 'walk the talk'. Their experience advancing gender transformative behaviors can significantly lift each entities commitment to the rights of women and girls in all their diversity.

Most of the UN system's work on gender equality is today siloed into a few entities and teams, It is often not considered the responsibility or core work of those without "gender" in their title, even though delivering for all beneficiaries is the responsibility of all staff.

Too many UN programmes and other activities fail to harness the efficiency and impact gains which evidence shows can be had through effectively placing women and girls at the center. Valuing capacity to deliver for women and girls in all personnel allows for broader injection of gender lens and expertise across the UN's work.

## HOW

Minimum knowledge of gender equality will become a core competency within all staff and leaders' terms of reference, and relevant question/s asked on gender equality in all interviews including at the senior most level. All exceptions will be reported to the Gender Steering Group (3.1).

Integrate/mandate 'smart' gender equality, diversity, and inclusion actions and goals/objectives in all managers' terms of reference, workplans and performance evaluations. Leaders get feedback on their gender responsive leadership via recurring and confidential all-staff surveys and stronger 360-degree feedback mechanisms.

All new and existing UN leaders will receive gender responsive leadership (GRL) training. This will lay the foundation for moving from gender responsiveness to gender transformation at an appropriate stage. A phased plan for reaching all leaders by 2030 will be developed.

Senior appointments will include a requirement of a proven track record on gender equality as called for in the Executive Committee decision. This will be consistently applied and upheld by accountability.

Career advancement (at P4 and above levels and national equivalents) will depend on having delivered measurable gender equality results, whether in programme or in the workplace.

## WHO AND WHEN

Under the leadership of UN Women in collaboration with DMSPC/DOS, a small team of gender and HR personnel from across the UN system will draw on science and evidence, and best practice as well as on current expertise from within the UN system to review all HR practices through a gender lens. Revised plans procedure and performance evaluation metrics will be in place by the end of 2025.

Manager and staff TORs for new recruitment will be amended without delay to include gender expertise as a valued competence.

Working with skilled external GRL facilitators and a common UN GRL training framework, entities will resource GRL training for their leaders.

All entities will track and report on the level and presence of gender equality competencies in new hires beginning Q1 2025.

# 2.5

**We work with other UN leaders to elevate and systematise specialised UN expertise on gender equality.**

## WHY

To strengthen the system's capacity to deliver for women and girls in all our work, a strong cadre of dedicated expertise is needed.

Gender units are often siloed, underfunded and have limited access to senior decision making. A strong gender unit working in a systemwide partnership can support senior level engagement and dedicate capacity and expertise to deliver on Entity's plan and the Acceleration Plan.

In addition to entity-specific management and staff capacity on gender, there is a need for a system-wide approach to sharing gender capacity and learnings.

A pooled capacity approach reduces fragmentation and allows smaller entities in particular to overcome resource constraints and improves the system's agility on gender particularly in humanitarian settings.

**Evaluations show us that access to gender expertise is a key factor for the gender responsiveness of an intervention or program. All large-scale programmes should therefore embed specialized gender expertise.**

## HOW

**Each UN entity will create a gender unit responsible for advancing dedicated work on gender equality and supporting gender mainstreaming across the work of the organization. Ensure at minimum compliance with the UN SWAP 3.0 standard on a resourced gender unit, with senior level staff, and ensuring it has direct access to senior leadership.**

Develop a UN-wide competency framework for gender equality, including a core set of transferable gender capacities and competencies by all entities in all settings. Develop ToRs and framework for cadre/roster to have training, mentoring, community of practice. Leverage and extend the iSeek infrastructure and other centralized knowledge management structures to record and share key gender equality practice.

A UN system 'gender capacity roster' and surge mechanism is developed and placed with UN Women to enable sustainable capacity and convening power on gender equality in all contexts.

Build demand for system-wide gender expertise including through agreeing on an appropriate standard and ratio of expertise needs in large scale programmes, humanitarian responses women peace and security and climate resilience, and missions.

Reserving a part of training budgets to support the transformation envisaged in the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan, especially for gender responsive leadership training. Emphasize the seniority of gender experts and leverage the gender pathway to senior leadership career such as HC/RC pool and representative positions.

## WHO AND WHEN

All entities who do not have a gender unit or a core team close to the senior leadership with strong gender expertise take immediate steps to do so. This includes, but is not limited to, the EOSG.

A small team of gender and HR personnel from across the UN system will develop key deliverables by the end of 2026.

HR Director, Directors of planning and budget etc. will carve out a ringfenced part of the budget for development of the gender framework, capacity development across the system including gender training starting from the entities next budget cycle.

## 2.6

**We have no tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and put the rights and dignity of victims and survivors at the forefront of all prevention and response.**

## WHY

The UN System needs to repair trust and accelerates progress towards the zero-tolerance policy.

The **Victims' Rights Statement**, which sets out 10 rights of all victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations or related personnel was endorsed by the Secretary-General's High-Level Steering Group (HLSG) on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in May 2023 and needs to be actively disseminated by all leaders.

Many leaders express fear that they are not in a position to detect sexual exploitation and abuse early enough due to limited trust in formal complaint systems.

## HOW

Actively and regularly communicate to all staff, partners, programme participants and citizens interacting with the UN the UN Victim Rights Statement.

Actively hold self and others to account for rooting out sexual harassment and everyday sexism in the workplace.

Explore what each entity can do to ensure that victim rights are consistently upheld and implement actions required, with a special emphasis on making sure their personnel, partners and programme participants can access support in all locations.

**Make multiple safe technological options available to all staff to raise concerns, inquire about rights, raise red flags etc.**

- UNDP's pilot vault app could allow all staff to engage with HQ informally on issues.
- an option to use simple SMS (number concealed) to express concern about behavior. The geo-coordinates get recorded centrally to produce real time heat maps which can be used to prioritize investigations.
- and more

Provide finance for PSEA within the UN system to ensure that outreach, referral and support of victims is more effective. Disseminate information about ClearCheck and monitor its use. Highlight the all-women team of investigators at the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services.

## WHO AND WHEN

**Working closely with the UN Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate, all leaders in every entity of the UN system will begin dissemination Q4 2023.**

An action plan for supporting victims rights adopted by all entities by Q2 2024.

UN entities to agree on resourcing of PSEA at country level. UN Women to work with RCs/HCs to provide oversight of this PSEA mechanism and ensure it is implemented with victims' rights at the centre.

A small group working on technological solutions will be established under HLCM.

All leaders will stay vigilant and take action against sexual harassment and everyday sexism.