

# UNAIDS Gender Action Plan

## First progress report

**I AM THE  
GENDER  
ACTION PLAN**



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## Foreword

Gender equality and non-discrimination are fundamental human rights and essential components of a healthy, peaceful and prosperous world. UNAIDS has long been a forceful advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment as it is fundamental to ending the AIDS epidemic. Today more than ever before, gender parity is an urgent priority and essential to UNAIDS' legitimacy and effectiveness.

The first year of UNAIDS Gender Action Plan 2018–2023 coincided with a time of global gender upheaval. People around the world, led by women and connected by social media and shared experience, are uniting against gender inequality. Across industries and countries, we see the power of collective action in toppling even the most entrenched and longstanding injustices.

At the same time, evidence is mounting that gender equality between women and men in all of their diversity is not only a good in itself, but serves and benefits all people. A more gender equal society is healthier and more productive. A more gender equal workforce is more effective and innovative and delivers bigger growth.

Our Gender Action Plan is a tool for transformative change with its targets and commitments paving the way towards a gender-equal workplace. I am proud to share that within just one year, we have made remarkable progress. We have put in motion nine and successfully accomplished eleven of the 30 commitments.

Yet, in the struggle for equality, there is no time for rest. We remain resolute in reaching gender parity at all levels of the organization by 2023.

As UNAIDS staff members, we contribute to a better future, not just through the work we do but also through the kind of workplace we build. I invite you to work together with me to ensure our workplace is a healthy, equitable and enabling one for each and every one of us at UNAIDS, fostering a culture with equal and active participation of women and men at all levels.

Gunilla Carlsson  
Executive Director, a.i.  
Deputy Executive Director Management and Governance

# UNAIDS Gender Action Plan

Gender equality is a human right and critical to the performance and effectiveness of UNAIDS. The importance of advancing gender equality, including through reaching gender parity, is increasingly being recognized.

The UNAIDS Gender Action Plan 2018–2023 was launched on 8 June 2018 and sets out four targets and 30 concrete actions to drive progress against the targets.

- Target 1** Women and men each should represent 50% of staff at each level across each category.
- Target 2** All staff at all levels should set gender-sensitive work and learning objectives.
- Target 3** All UNAIDS female staff will be eligible to participate in the UNAIDS Leadership Programme for Women and all UNAIDS staff will be eligible to participate in the UNAIDS Mentoring Programme.
- Target 4** There will be full compliance with the UN System-Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2.0 framework.

## Progress highlights in the first year

Out of the 30 actions identified to support achieving the four targets of the five-year Gender Action Plan, UNAIDS successfully advanced 20 in the first year. Eleven have been successfully implemented and nine are in progress.



- More than 30 UNAIDS women from all levels and categories participated in the UNAIDS Leadership Programme for Women, bringing the total since the first cohort in 2014 to 124.
- The UNAIDS Mentoring Programme now includes male mentees, 11 of whom, out of a total of 36 mentees, have joined the programme.
- To mitigate the negative impact of gender and other biases, all-staff learning sessions led by international experts increased the awareness of unconscious biases and presented strategies to disrupt biases in decision-making.
- In line with the United Nations Secretary-General's Gender Parity Strategy, UNAIDS introduced a single parental leave policy that extends adoption and paternity leave to 16–18 weeks, depending on the number of children, and introduced surrogacy leave of the same duration.
- For a third year in a row, UNAIDS can report full compliance with the 17 performance indicators of the UN-SWAP on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2.0 framework that address all areas of organizational practices, including strategic gender-related Sustainable Development Goals results, leadership, oversight, financial resource allocation and human resources matters.

## Priority actions ahead

Building on the progress made during the first year of the implementation of the Gender Action Plan, it will be important to keep up the momentum and ensure that the targets are continuously monitored in order to sustain achievements over time. The priorities for 2019 include the following:

- Ensuring that the *Management Action Plan for a healthy, equitable and enabling workplace for all UNAIDS staff* is gender-transformative and reviewing and updating the Gender Action Plan to be complementary to it.
- Initiating a revision of the UNAIDS Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

- Developing a set of interventions to accelerate progress towards, and maintain, gender parity and diversity at every level. This will involve, for example, reviewing UNAIDS' recruitment policy to include special measures for women and men at levels where they are underrepresented, including through active outreach, and consistently including a question in all the recruitment processes to assess the gender sensitivity of applicants.
- Ensuring the availability of and compliance with mandatory training for all staff on inclusion, diversity, gender-responsiveness, norms and behaviours, complemented by regular follow-up through dialogues at the departmental or office level.

## Gender Action Plan Challenge Group

For enhanced accountability and engagement, a Gender Action Plan Challenge Group is guiding implementation of the Gender Action Plan. Led by the UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director, Management and Governance, the Gender Action Plan Challenge Group represents the diversity of the UNAIDS workforce and monitors progress towards the full achievement of the Gender Action Plan targets and the related action areas, and raises critical voices and challenges to senior management, so as to urge the Secretariat to further accelerate progress.

In 2018, more than 300 colleagues voted for the 11 representatives of the Gender Action Plan Challenge Group. The elected representatives represent the diversity of staff across gender, expertise and locations.

The Gender Action Plan Challenge Group convenes monthly. The members have identified four priority actions:

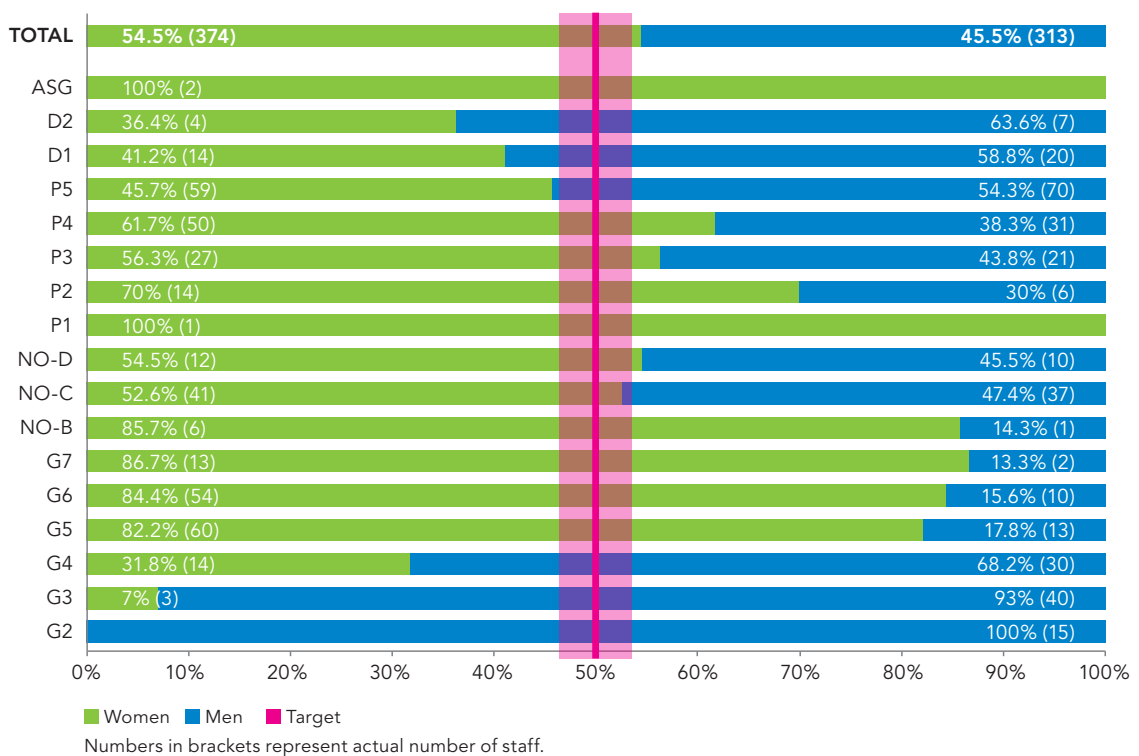
- The provision of input and guidance on policy reforms, such as those proposed in the Management Action Plan, to ensure that organizational change enables and promotes the objectives of the Gender Action Plan.
- The development of a mechanism to recognize the efforts of staff who contribute to gender equality and diversity in an exemplary way.
- The exploration of initiatives to broaden the understanding of gender beyond the binary and to see this implemented in the hiring and advancement of staff through policy change and the promotion of staff learning and development initiatives.
- Seeking the input of and potential collaboration with Dignity at Work Advisers to enhance coordination across organizational reform efforts.

## Target 1: achieving gender parity

Achieving gender parity in staffing is a first step in achieving gender equality and diversity and is often the most visible indicator. With UNAIDS' staff comprising 388 women and 315 men, UNAIDS has strived over the past six years to close the parity gap. Within the United Nations system, the P4 and P5 levels of senior professional staff are generally understood to be the "glass ceiling"; UNAIDS has focused on improving parity at those levels, which together represent about 30% of the overall workforce. UNAIDS country directors are important connectors of civil society, governments and United Nations partners—they are the face of UNAIDS on the ground. Having achieved gender parity among UNAIDS country directors is therefore a key achievement and one that is important to be maintained.

Equally, UNAIDS is committed to ensuring that women and men each represent 50% of the Senior Management Team—which is composed of directors at headquarters and in the regional support teams and liaison offices—and of other decision-making bodies.

### Gender parity at UNAIDS



### UNAIDS country directors



### UNAIDS Senior Management Team



## Progress in the first year

A standard question to assess the gender sensitivity of applicants was included in the pilot exercise for the assessment centre for UNAIDS country director positions. The question is now routinely included in all recruitment processes.

A pilot initiative on short-term development opportunities (stretch assignments) has been introduced at UNAIDS for fixed-term staff in order to give them an opportunity to grow professionally and to allow the organization to promptly deploy motivated staff to meet urgent, time-bound needs. A policy on stretch assignments was developed, and will be evaluated after a year, and one staff member has started an assignment.

The UNAIDS Insight dashboard tracks overall gender parity for the Secretariat, by region, country office and department.

UNAIDS posts gender equality-related commitments, targets and initiatives on its newly launched Gender Equality and Diversity page on the UNAIDS website ([https://www.unaids.org/en/whoweare/gender\\_diversity](https://www.unaids.org/en/whoweare/gender_diversity)). This first annual progress report has been shared internally and externally. Quarterly progress updates, including on gender parity for each grade, are also made available internally to all staff.

## Ongoing actions

- Standard question to assess the gender sensitivity of applicants will be consistently included in all recruitment processes.
- An internal talent-sourcing database that maps post requirements and staff skills will be developed to support the roll-out of stretch assignments. Stretch assignments will be extended to include temporary assignments, including through remote working.
- The Insight dashboard will be enhanced to also monitor and display sex-disaggregated staffing data by grade and category.

## Next steps

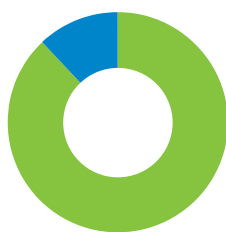
- Job profiles will be reviewed in order to address bias and gendered language.
- The commitment to gender equality in vacancy announcements, which will specifically note any gender underrepresentation and encourage people to apply accordingly, will be highlighted.
- UNAIDS' recruitment policies will be reviewed in order to include special measures for women and men at levels in which they are underrepresented, including through active outreach.
- Standard clauses related to gender sensitivity for inclusion in non-staff contracts will be developed.



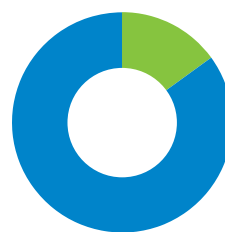
## Target 2: embedding gender considerations in performance management and learning

Action for gender equality and diversity is critical in the AIDS response. All UNAIDS staff need to incorporate gender considerations in their work in order to better respond to the rights of women and girls and ensure their equal participation.

Equally, to create a workplace in which all staff can thrive, staff need to be aware of how to mitigate their biases and combat discrimination in the workplace. To promote gender equality and diversity in their day-to-day work, staff need the skills and capacities to facilitate gender-responsive planning and decision-making.



88%  
of staff set a gender-  
related learning  
objective



15%  
of work  
objectives are  
gender-sensitive

### Progress in the first year

A pilot upward feedback exercise on managerial competencies was carried out for all regional directors and five department directors during the annual performance review. This included elements on demonstrating gender-sensitive behaviour and incentivizing gender-responsive programming. Twenty-eight UNAIDS country directors and eight departmental directors were assigned a 360-degree review that included feedback on inclusive leadership and an integrity indicator.

Staff are being sensitized on unconscious bias and on how to mitigate it in their work. Two training sessions on unconscious bias, led by internationally renowned experts, have been offered to all staff in Geneva. In addition, a number of teams across UNAIDS have organized group discussions based on the LeanIn card-based activity that highlights 50 examples of gender bias in the workplace, encourages groups to devise solutions together and offers recommendations on how to respond to gender bias.

### Ongoing actions

- Job aids and guidance are being updated to support staff in setting personal gender-sensitive work and learning objectives.
- Building on the work of the Gender Action Plan Challenge Group, ways to showcase commitment and reward progress related to gender equality and diversity are being explored.

## Next steps

- Guidance notes will be developed so that every headquarters division and field office will have knowledge of how to hold discussions on how teams and individuals can contribute to the Gender Action Plan.
- Training for all staff on inclusion, diversity, gender-responsiveness, norms and behaviours will be made available and uptake monitored. This will be complemented by regular follow-up through dialogue in departments and offices.
- Training on unconscious bias for supervisors, recruitment panel members, members of the Mobility and Reassignment Committee and members of the Human Resources Advisory Committee will be developed.



Participants at the UNAIDS Leadership Programme for Women, October 2018.

## Target 3: empowering staff

The UNAIDS Leadership Programme for Women and the UNAIDS Mentoring Programme have not only benefitted more than half of the women working at UNAIDS but have also inspired the development of similar programmes across the United Nations system.

Programmes supporting staff in developing and pursuing individual career goals help to improve job satisfaction while increasing the pool of qualified women and men. In addition, fundamental links between staff empowerment and work–life balance are addressed, enabling staff to effectively balance personal, family and professional commitments, which leads to more engagement and higher productivity and efficiency.

### Progress in the first year

The UNAIDS Leadership Programme for Women is now open to women across all grades. The fourth cohort was trained in October 2018, with 34 women from the three categories of staff participating.

The UNAIDS Mentoring Programme has been expanded to include male mentees, with 11 men enrolling. The participants are supported to build knowledge and skills to promote a sound and inclusive leadership culture in UNAIDS.

In 2018, UNAIDS introduced a single parental leave policy that extends adoption and paternity to 16–18 weeks, depending on the number of children, and introduced surrogacy leave of the same duration.

The Integrity Hotline serves as an ongoing confidential reporting system for staff. It ensures that all claims—and the people who voice them—are treated with seriousness, urgency, confidentiality and respect. Dignity at Work Advisers are trained peers who have knowledge to direct colleagues who approach them to the various support mechanisms available.

The mandatory course on Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority that sets the standard for respectful behaviour at work and promotes a harassment-free workplace continues to be rolled out. Compliance is ensured through the Human Resources Management Department.

## Ongoing actions

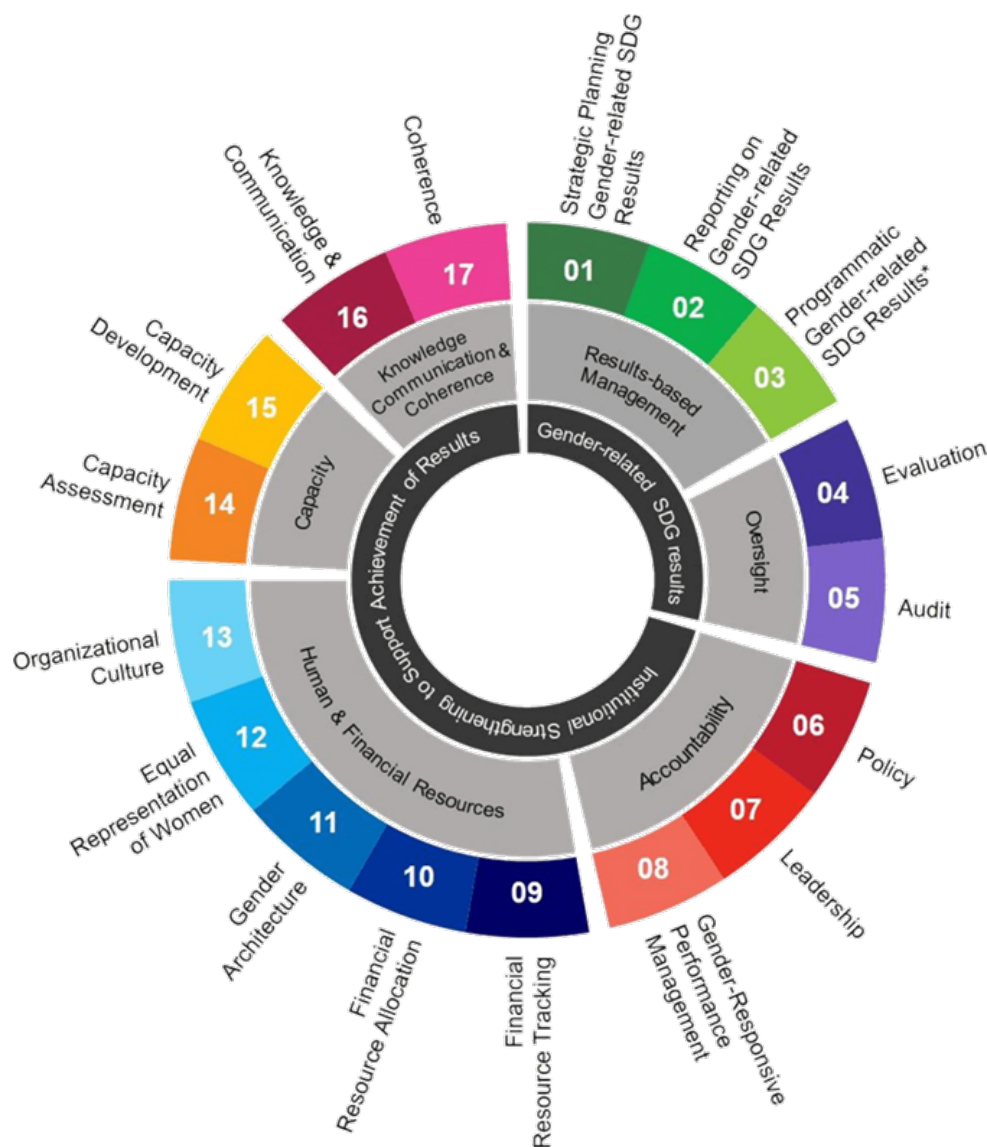
- Short and clear infographics are being developed on key provisions of the flexible working arrangements policies, which will encourage staff to take up the provisions most suited to them.

## Next steps

- The Diversity and Inclusion Policy will be revised in order to address new developments and identify good practices within and beyond the United Nations system.
- There will be advocacy at the interagency level for the coverage of preschool costs, the consideration of childcare facilities and support for staff.

## Target 4: full compliance with the UN-SWAP on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2.0 framework<sup>1</sup>

The UN-SWAP on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women is a unique framework within the United Nations system that defines common performance standards for the gender-related work of all United Nations entities, ensuring greater coherence and accountability. Among the more than 60 United Nations entities reporting against the 17 performance indicators of the second iteration of the UN-SWAP, UNAIDS was the first and remains to date the only entity that is fully compliant.



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/how%20we%20work/unsystemcoordination/un-swap/un-swap-2-framework-and-technical-guidance-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406>.

UNAIDS further remains committed not only to sustaining this achievement but also to progressing beyond the UN-SWAP targets, leading the way for other United Nations entities.

## Progress in the first year

UNAIDS hosted more than 100 gender focal points at the 2018 UN-SWAP annual meeting, was among the eight entities developing and piloting the UN-SWAP 2.0 Performance Indicator Framework and actively participated in the design of the theory of change that ties the UN-SWAP to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In order to enhance quality assurance, UNAIDS is currently undertaking a peer review with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees of its UN-SWAP reporting, which will be completed in June 2019.

## Ongoing actions

- UNAIDS will advocate for equal representation of women by requiring gender parity on committees and advisory bodies, which will allow for the highest rating of “exceeds requirements” against performance indicator 12, on equal representation of women. In addition, UNAIDS will support at least one other entity in implementing action to improve its rating of a performance indicator. This will enable UNAIDS to exceed the requirement of performance indicator 17, on coherence.
- UNAIDS will make its UN-SWAP reporting available to all staff and will publish it on the UNAIDS website as soon as it is formally validated by UN Women.





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