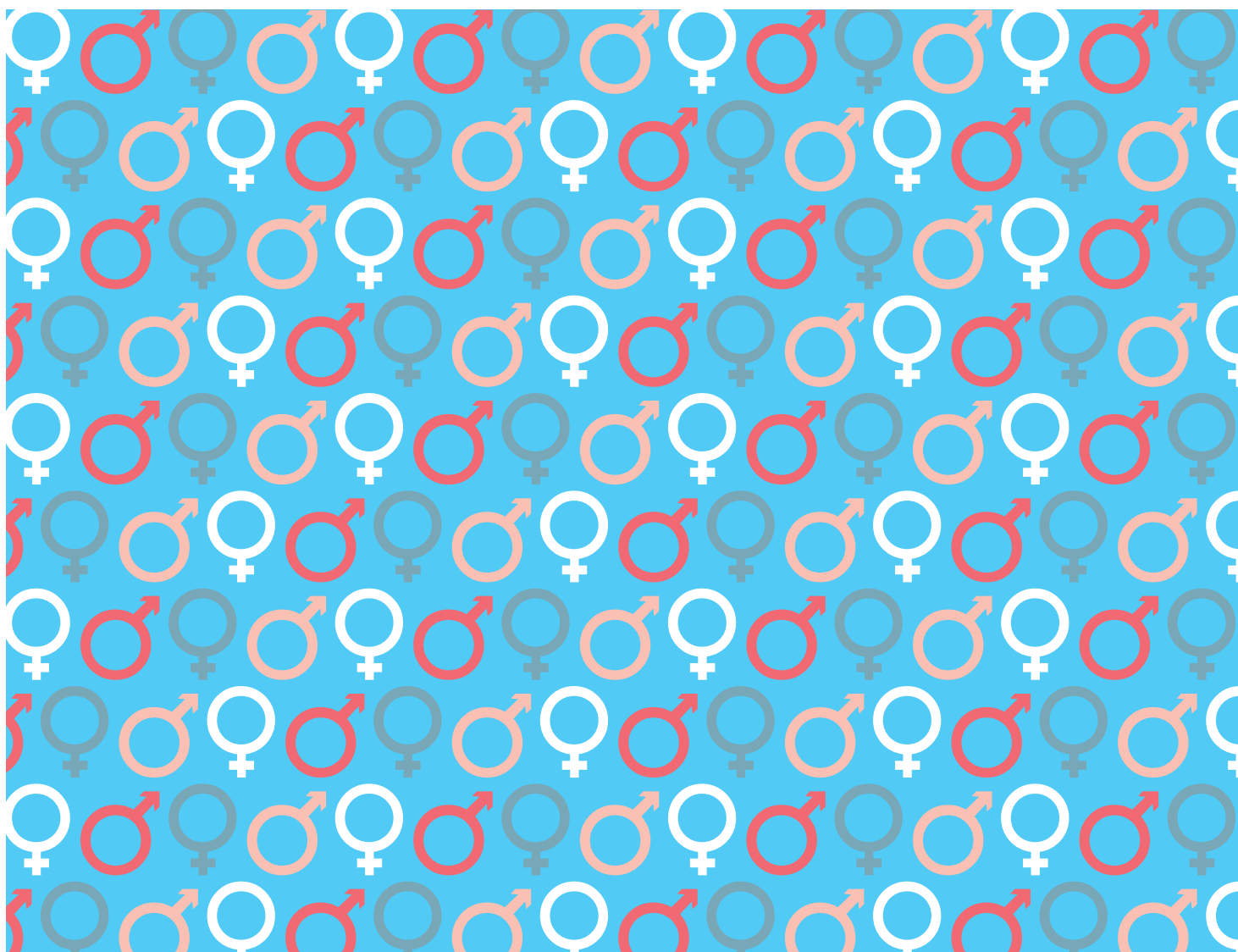


# UNAIDS

## Gender Action Plan 2018–2023

A framework for accountability





# Contents

Foreword	3
2018–2023 Gender Action Plan: targets, action areas and accountability framework	4
Gender equality: at the heart of health and sustainable development	5
Achieving a gender-equal workplace	5
Building on strong foundations: progress achieved under the 2013–2018 Gender Action Plan	7
Accelerating progress: 2018–2023 Gender Action Plan	9
<i>Target 1: 50:50 across all staff levels and categories</i>	9
<i>Target 2: 100% of staff at all levels set gender-sensitive work and learning objectives</i>	9
<i>Target 3: 100% of UNAIDS female staff eligible to participate in UNAIDS Women’s Leadership Programme, and 100% of UNAIDS staff eligible to participate in Mentoring Programme</i>	9
<i>Target 4: 100% compliance with UN-SWAP 2.0 framework</i>	10
<i>Action area 1: achieving gender parity</i>	10
<i>Action area 2: embedding gender across UNAIDS performance and learning</i>	11
<i>Action area 3: empowering staff</i>	12
<i>Action area 4: standard-setting</i>	13
References	16



## Foreword

Accelerating progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women is fundamental to ending the AIDS epidemic. And it starts within UNAIDS.

While we have achieved much in this regard, we can and must do better. Under the 2013–2018 UNAIDS Gender Action Plan, UNAIDS became the first United Nations entity to be fully compliant with the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP).

We have made significant progress towards gender parity in staffing, including going from 23% female country directors in 2013, to 49% in 2018. UNAIDS has strong initiatives to empower female staff across the Secretariat, including the Women’s Leadership Programme and the Mentoring Programme for Women.

All of this gives us a solid base to build upon. As we look forward, the UNAIDS Gender Action Plan 2018–2023 includes far-reaching and ambitious targets. These targets will help us achieve gender parity at all levels, and particularly across senior management. Advancing gender parity will help us strengthen our organizational culture.

In February I outlined a five-point plan to ensure that inappropriate behaviour—including sexual harassment—and abuse of authority are identified early on, that measures taken are documented properly, and that action to be taken follows due process and is swift and effective, with appropriate protection for both victims and whistle-blowers. Progress in implementing this five-point plan is moving forward across the UNAIDS Secretariat, including through the Gender Action Plan.

As Executive Director and as an International Gender Champion, I reaffirm my personal commitment to achieving the ambitious objectives of the Gender Action Plan, and to building an enabling, safe and rights-based workplace for women and men in all their diversity.

Leadership from the top is critical in propelling deep cultural change—yet change will happen only if we all move forward together. I count on each and every member of the UNAIDS family and our partners to work with us in our shared goal of ending AIDS.

Michel Sidibé  
UNAIDS Executive Director

# 2018–2023 Gender Action Plan: targets, action areas and accountability framework



## Gender equality: at the heart of health and sustainable development

Gender equality and non-discrimination are fundamental human rights and essential components of a healthy, peaceful and prosperous world. Gender equality is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as a goal in itself and as a critical enabler to progress across the entire agenda. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.5 aims to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

Gender equality has been on the global health agenda for decades, reflecting a growing appreciation of gender as one of the most important determinants of health. More than two decades before the adoption of the SDGs, the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing World Conference on Women achieved remarkable consensus among diverse countries. Increasing social, economic and political equality and promoting women's and girls' human rights were and remain the basis for individual well-being and sustainable development.

Gender inequality, however, continues to persist worldwide. Pervasive gender inequality and discrimination undermine progress in the AIDS response and deprive women and girls of basic rights and opportunities and their ability to prevent HIV and access the services they need. Gender norms negatively affect the health of men and boys as well, often discouraging them from having safer sex, taking an HIV test, or accessing and adhering to treatment. Furthermore, harmful gender norms hinder the autonomy and rights of people in all of their diversities, all of whom must be recognized and meaningfully engaged for AIDS responses to be effective and sustainable. Recognizing the central role of gender in the HIV epidemic and response, the *UNAIDS 2016–2021 strategy: on the Fast-Track to end AIDS* elevates human rights and gender equality as one of its three pillars, alongside HIV prevention and treatment, care and support.

Gender also has a clear impact on career stability and progression. Among leading global health organizations, only 3 out of 10 are led by women, and 2 of 10 boards chaired by women (1). Achieving the SDGs requires significant strengthening of the gender focus of health programmes and ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

## Achieving a gender-equal workplace

Gender equality in the workplace is a human right and critical to the performance and effectiveness of UNAIDS. Organizations with more equal representation of women at the senior management level considerably outperform their counterparts with a lower representation of women in senior positions (2). Gender-balanced teams have greater potential for creativity and innovation and contribute to better outcomes in decision-making (3). The centrality of advancing gender equality, including through the achievement

of gender parity, is increasingly being recognized, as signalled by the historic System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity, launched by the United Nations Secretary-General in 2017.

Global Health 50/50, an initiative that monitors the gender-responsiveness of 140 influential global organizations working in or influencing global health, identified UNAIDS as among the 9 highest-scoring organizations in its inaugural report (1). The report provides important evidence that UNAIDS' commitment to advancing gender equality is reflected in its policies—both programmatic and workplace—and that valuable progress has been achieved.

Yet it is clear that there is still a way to go in achieving gender equality at UNAIDS. A critical component of creating a gender-equal workplace is the elimination of harassment, including sexual harassment, and ensuring zero discrimination. In February 2018 UNAIDS announced its five-point plan to prevent and address all forms of harassment for greater accountability and transparency within UNAIDS. The Gender Action Plan 2018–2023 plays a core role in creating the organizational culture called for by the five-point plan.

UNAIDS is resolute in leading by example and fostering an enabling environment for all staff to work with respect, dignity and integrity. The UNAIDS Gender Action Plan envisions a workplace with equal and active participation of women and men at all levels—a workplace that not only mitigates gender bias but also maximizes the positive power of equality and diversity, where women and men are empowered to pursue a fulfilling career with the flexibility to meet their diverse responsibilities outside of the workplace, free of discrimination and harassment.

To accelerate progress towards this vision, the UNAIDS Gender Action Plan sets four targets, which focus on achieving gender parity and enhancing organizational culture across all levels of the organization:

- Target 1: 50 : 50 across all staff levels and categories.
- Target 2: 100% of staff at all levels set a work and learning objective on gender.
- Target 3: 100% of UNAIDS female staff eligible to participate in UNAIDS Women's Leadership Programme, and 100% of UNAIDS staff eligible to participate in Mentoring Programme.
- Target 4: 100% compliance with the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) 2.0 framework.

To reach these targets, the Gender Action Plan identifies four action areas that address the complexity of gender-responsive change and cover a wide range of interventions to provoke a shift in policies, mindsets, attitudes and behaviours. Concerted effort in these areas will guide the Secretariat over the tipping point to truly transform organizational culture and ways of working.

The Gender Action Plan seeks to guide action on embedding gender equality into organizational culture and ensuring an inclusive, gender-responsive workforce. To do so, UNAIDS is committed to attracting, retaining, developing and motivating staff—women and men in all of their diversity—and creating an enabling environment for everyone



to contribute to their full potential. This will entail more positive use of flexible working arrangements, expanding leadership development programmes, and supporting staff in balancing personal, family and professional commitments. This will further include a range of initiatives to foster a workforce that effectively champions gender equality in all areas of UNAIDS' work, at every level of the organization.

A key objective of the Gender Action Plan is to increase the recruitment, retention and advancement of women—in particular in senior management positions, where gender-related hurdles intensify and disparities in representation widen.

By setting concrete targets, identifying special measures, and holding all staff accountable for its implementation, the Gender Action Plan will guide the Secretariat's progress towards achieving its vision of a workplace that is equally enabling for women and men.

## Building on strong foundations: progress achieved under the 2013–2018 Gender Action Plan

In 2013 the UNAIDS Secretariat launched its first Gender Action Plan, a comprehensive framework to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women within the organization. The first Gender Action Plan has inspired other United Nations entities to follow a similar path.

The 2013–2018 Gender Action Plan relied on a comprehensive, rigorous approach to integrating gender-responsive action in all aspects of UNAIDS' work. The Gender Action Plan set concrete targets, identified focus areas for strategic action, and put accountability measures in place. A central aim of the Gender Action Plan was to reach gender parity at the UNAIDS Secretariat and to nurture a supportive organizational culture for all staff.

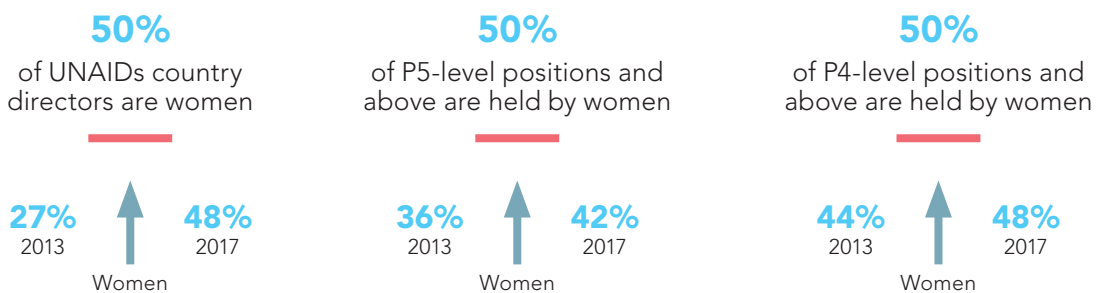
The Gender Action Plan was developed in the context of UN-SWAP. Through implementation of the Gender Action Plan, UNAIDS met or exceeded all 15 UN-SWAP performance indicators a year ahead of the deadline established by the Chief Executive Board.

The Gender Action Plan established organization-wide initiatives and drove concrete progress, including:

- Progress towards parity: the number of women country directors rose from 27% in 2013 to 49% in 2019, and the number of women in P4 positions and above increased from 44% to 48% during the same period.
- Staff development initiatives: in 2014 UNAIDS launched its Leadership Programme for Women, which has inspired the United Nations System Staff College's Inter-Agency Leadership Course for Women. The innovative UNAIDS Mentoring Programme for Women was launched the same year, with the aim to increase job satisfaction and facilitate the professional development of mentees across all categories of staff. The

Mentoring Programme has been presented at common system meetings as a best practice for growing internal talent and encouraged a number of United Nations entities to pursue similar programmes.

- Work–life balance initiatives: a contemporary flexible working arrangements policy was adopted that supports staff and supervisors in optimizing productivity while enabling staff to successfully balance professional and personal commitments. The maternity leave policy was revised to provide women who have had a baby with an additional eight weeks of special leave with full pay.
- Accountable gender-mainstreaming: gender equality has been mainstreamed through the performance management process, with staff required to set gender-sensitive work and learning objectives. A gender equality marker was implemented against all 2016–2017 workplans, and a financial benchmark was set with a target that 15% of expenditure by the UNAIDS Secretariat be in support of actions that address gender equality and women’s empowerment as a principal objective.
- Gender equality in governance: in 2017, recognizing that governing bodies are central to embedding gender equality in organizations, the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board called for equal representation of women and men in all its delegations.



# Accelerating progress: 2018–2023 Gender Action Plan

The progress made under the 2013–2018 Gender Action Plan evidenced not only what can be achieved, but also where more needs to be done. The 2018–2023 Gender Action Plan builds on the lessons learned and sets far-reaching targets that address not only issues of gender parity but also performance, learning, empowerment and accountability. The 2018–2023 Gender Action Plan puts particular emphasis on empowering all staff to play their part in organizational change and strengthening key aspects of managerial accountability.

The 2018–2023 Gender Action Plan was developed through a rigorous, evidence-informed and consultative process to ensure an effective, tailor-made plan for UNAIDS, while increasing ownership and commitment among all staff members. An all-staff survey helped obtain valuable feedback and insights to further improve and expand the Gender Action Plan.

## Targets for 2023

The UNAIDS Secretariat is committed to achieving the four targets set by the Gender Action Plan. Targets and action areas will be monitored regularly with annual reporting to the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board. A comprehensive progress update will be published each year on International Women’s Day.

### **Target 1: 50:50 across all staff levels and categories**

- Women and men each represent 50% of staff at each level across each category: G2, G3, G4, G5, G6, G7, NOA, NOB, NOC, NOD, P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, D1, D2 and Assistant Secretary-General.
- Women and men each represent 50% of the senior management team, which is composed of directors at headquarters, regional support teams and liaison offices.
- Women and men each represent 50% of UNAIDS country directors and UNAIDS country managers.

### **Target 2: 100% of staff at all levels set gender-sensitive work and learning objectives**

- As part of the annual performance review process, staff at all levels across the organization set a work objective and a learning objective that serves to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women.

### **Target 3: 100% of UNAIDS female staff eligible to participate in UNAIDS Women’s Leadership Programme, and 100% of UNAIDS staff eligible to participate in Mentoring Programme**

- The Women’s Leadership Programme is revised and expanded to be made relevant and accessible to all UNAIDS female staff.

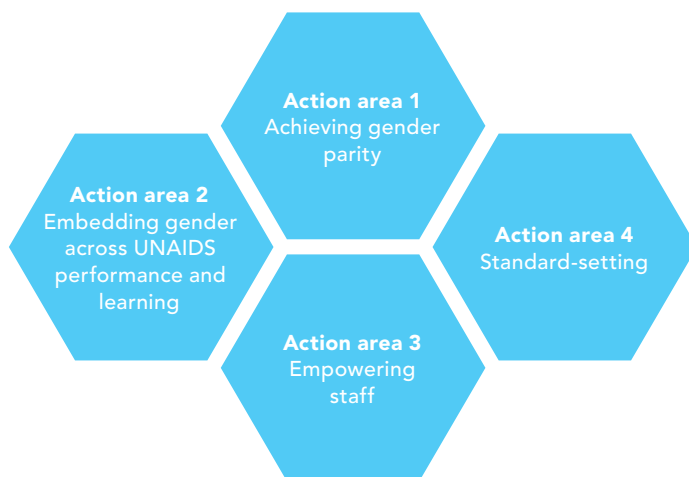
- The Mentoring Programme—previously exclusively for female mentees—is revised and expanded to be made relevant and accessible to both female and male UNAIDS staff across levels.

#### **Target 4: 100% compliance with UN-SWAP 2.0 framework**

- Meet or exceed all performance indicators of the UN-SWAP 2.0 Framework, demonstrating progress over time. The UN-SWAP performance indicators pertain to a range of issues, including human resources and management, budgets and finances, communications, programmes and policies, organizational culture and leadership.

### **Action areas**

The action areas seek to address the complexity of gender-responsive change through a range of interventions to shift policies, attitudes, mindsets and behaviours. The action areas relate to each of the targets set out in the plan, distilling concrete actions that will be taken to achieve them.



#### **Action area 1: achieving gender parity**

This action area encompasses specific measures to accelerate progress towards the achievement of gender parity across all levels of UNAIDS Secretariat staff. Bias, discrimination and inequality must be addressed at each step in the career pathway—from job design and vacancy announcements, to recruitment and hiring approaches, to mobility and promotion practices. This action area aims to ensure that UNAIDS’ processes for recruitment, selection and reassignment are transparent and mitigate bias to the greatest extent possible.

- Mitigating bias in job design: job profiles will be reviewed to address bias and gendered language. UNAIDS’ commitment to gender equality will be highlighted in vacancy announcements, which will specifically note any gender underrepresentation and encourage people to apply accordingly.

- Developing more inclusive recruitment policies: UNAIDS' recruitment policies will include special measures for women and men at levels where they are underrepresented, including through active outreach. Applicants' gender sensitivity will be reviewed during the recruitment process. Standard clauses related to gender-sensitivity will be developed for inclusion in non-staff contracts.
- Facilitating gender-equitable temporary assignments: an internal talent-sourcing database that maps post requirements and staff skills will be introduced where staff can express interest in temporary assignments, including through remote working.
- Live monitoring of progress: a real-time dashboard will be developed that monitors and displays sex-disaggregated staffing data by department, region, grade and category.
- Transparency of progress: quarterly updates of progress will be made available to all staff. UNAIDS will post gender equality-related commitments, targets and initiatives undertaken on its website, as well as annual progress reports.

### **Action area 2: embedding gender across UNAIDS performance and learning**

All staff members require information, training and resources to continuously mitigate bias and promote gender equality in their day-to-day work. This action area covers measures to help staff understand how to mitigate bias and combat discrimination in the workplace, facilitate gender-responsive planning, decision-making and behaviour, and recognize and incentivize progress.

- Integrating gender equality into work planning and performance evaluation: every headquarters division and field office will be responsible for holding discussions on how teams and individuals can contribute to the Gender Action Plan.
- Individual performance and learning: all staff will be responsible for setting personal gender-sensitive work and learning objectives. As of March 2018, 23% of staff had done this, revealing that to achieve the target of 100%, an increase of 15% per annum will be required.
- Performance evaluation: staff gender-responsiveness will be assessed through performance evaluation reports. A developmental 360-degree feedback tool for managers will be implemented, which will include elements on demonstrating gender-sensitive behaviours and incentivizing gender-responsive programming.
- Equipping staff with the right skills: all staff will undergo mandatory training on inclusion, diversity, gender-responsiveness, norms and behaviours complemented by regular follow-up through dialogue forums at the departmental or office level. Staff will be sensitized to unconscious bias and how to mitigate it in their daily work, including through checklists and peer feedback.
- Training for leaders: specific training modules will be required for supervisors, recruitment panel members, members of the Mobility and Reassignment Committee, and members of the Human Resources Advisory Committee.
- Showcasing commitment and rewarding progress: staff members' pledges and commitments to gender parity will be showcased in all-staff communications and web stories.

---

### The Panel Parity Pledge

Leadership and expert panels convey a great deal. They communicate not only evidence and insight, but also whose voices carry authority and merit esteem. Across health and development, women are regularly underrepresented on such panels. This needs to change. That is why, as part of the Gender Action Plan, every staff member will take the Panel Parity Pledge and commit to ensuring parity in every mission, event and meeting they organize.

---

### Action area 3: empowering staff

UNAIDS has identified the need to strengthen programmes to support staff in developing and pursuing individual career goals. These efforts help to improve job satisfaction while increasing the pool of qualified women and men. In addition, Action area 3 seeks to address the fundamental links between staff empowerment and work–life balance.

Sufficient flexibility and other mechanisms that enable staff to take care of their personal lives are critical to attracting and retaining the best and brightest at UNAIDS. Staff members who manage to effectively balance personal, family and professional commitments are more engaged, more productive and efficient, and less absent (4).

Creating an enabling work environment also entails ensuring that policies and practices are in place that make UNAIDS a safe and respectful space for women and men. It is about finding ways for all staff to prevent and address harassment without fear of retaliation, and ensuring systems are in place for swift remedial action.

Specific actions will include:

- Full inclusion: the UNAIDS Diversity and Inclusion Policy will be revised to address new developments and identify good practices within and beyond the United Nations system to ensure greater diversity among staff, including gender identity and expression. This will help strengthen special measures to foster diverse groups of talent and carry forward activities complementary to those of the Gender Action Plan.
- Developing protocols to respond to harassment: the Prevention of Harassment Policy emphasizes that there is zero tolerance for harassment, sexual harassment or abuse of authority and lays down a process for responding to claims of harassment. Additional protocols will be developed, including a first-responder system to ensure all claims—and the people who voice them—are treated with seriousness, urgency, confidentiality and respect.
- Sensitizing staff on workplace harassment: all staff are required to take a mandatory course that sets the standard for respectful behaviour at work and promotes a harassment-free workplace. In addition to this training, a range of awareness-raising tools and activities will be launched under the framework of the UNAIDS five-point plan. These tools and activities aim to sensitize staff to ethical standards and attitudes and behaviours that can be perceived as subtle and nuanced sexism and microaggressions, and how they can be addressed by those involved or bystanders.

- Expanding leadership and mentoring programmes: the UNAIDS Mentoring Programme will be expanded to engage all staff, managed through a portal to match mentors and mentees. A leadership programme for mid-level professional and senior general service women will also be launched (P3, P2, NO-C, NO-B, G7, G6), complemented by mentoring by senior male and female staff members.
- Putting family-friendly policies and programmes in place: the introduction of a single parental leave policy will be pursued to apply equally to all staff, irrespective of gender identity and mode of becoming a parent, which additionally provides pre- and post-delivery leave for the birth parent. Additional efforts will continue around advocacy at interagency level for coverage of preschool costs, consideration of childcare facilities and support for staff, and additional flexible working arrangements to accommodate family care responsibilities, including for sick or ageing family members. To encourage staff to take full advantage of such policies, briefing notes on key provisions of facilitative policies will be developed for managers and staff.

#### **Action area 4: standard-setting**

**UN-SWAP** is a unique framework within the United Nations system that, for the first time, assigns common performance standards for the gender-related work of all United Nations entities, ensuring greater coherence and accountability. UN-SWAP 2.0 constitutes an update of the existing framework, on which entities will be required to report fully for the first time in January 2019.

UNAIDS is the only United Nations entity to have achieved full compliance with all UN-SWAP performance indicators, achieving this merit a year ahead of the deadline set by the Chief Executive Board. Looking forward, UNAIDS is committed not only to sustaining this achievement but also to progressing beyond the UN-SWAP targets, leading the way for other United Nations agencies. Specific actions include:

- Shaping the way forward: active participation in UN-SWAP technical working groups in order to contribute to further shaping and refining the quality and coherence of UN-SWAP.
- Enhanced reporting and quality assurance: UNAIDS will continue to prepare its UN-SWAP reporting through an interdisciplinary, cross-organizational team. It will also establish an internal quality assurance process with a group of peers to test and review the reporting data before submission.
- Concerted progress: each year UNAIDS will identify at least one performance indicator on which to progress from “meets requirements” to “exceeds requirements”, as per the definitions of the UN-SWAP framework.
- Transparency in information: UNAIDS will make its UN-SWAP reporting available to all staff and post it on its website.

## Enhanced accountability and engagement

A Gender Action Plan Challenge Group will be set up to guide the implementation of the Gender Action Plan. Led by UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director, management and governance, the Challenge Group will be composed of staff members representing the diversity of the UNAIDS workforce.

The Challenge Group will be responsible for monitoring progress towards the full achievement of the Gender Action Plan targets and the related action areas, and for raising critical voices and challenges to senior management, so as to urge the Secretariat to further accelerate progress. It will convene twice a year.

While the Challenge Group will play a central role, the Gender Action Plan will be successful only if every UNAIDS staff member gets involved. Everyone has a role, and everyone is accountable for playing their role in achieving gender equality at UNAIDS.



### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CABINET**

The Executive Director sponsors the Gender Action Plan through leadership, external advocacy and the Geneva chapter of the International Gender Champions.

The Cabinet ensures that the executive leadership of UNAIDS is fully engaged in the Gender Action Plan including ongoing monitoring of results and high-level support to its activities.

### **SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM (SMT)**

The SMT ensures that the Gender Action Plan is implemented across all levels of UNAIDS. Progress is reviewed as part of regular staffing updates, and its included on the agenda of SMT meetings and retreats.

### **EVERY STAFF MEMBER**

Every UNAIDS staff member includes gender considerations in their work and learning objectives as part of the performance management process. Staff are expected to actively contribute to the Action Areas, such as the Panel Parity Pledge and taking action against harassment.

### **DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANagements (HRM)**

HRM coordinates the implementation of the Gender Action Plan, including monitoring and reporting.

### **MANAGERS**

Heads of Country Offices and HQ Divisions identify concrete ways for the Action Plan to be implemented in their offices, taking into account the specific context of their teams.

### **GENDER ACTION PLAN CHALLENGE GROUP**

The Challenge Group will guide implementation of the Gender Action Plan, and include up to 10 staff members representing the diversity of the UNAIDS workforce.

## References

1. The Global Health 50/50 report: how gender-responsive are the world's most influential global health organisations? London: Global Health 50/50; 2018.
2. Ready-now leaders: cultivating women in leadership to meet tomorrow's business challenges global leadership forecast 2014–2015. Pittsburgh: Development Dimensions International; 2015 ([https://www.ddiworld.com/DDI/media/trend-research/global-leadership-forecast-2014-gender-subreport\\_tr\\_ddi.pdf?ext=.pdf](https://www.ddiworld.com/DDI/media/trend-research/global-leadership-forecast-2014-gender-subreport_tr_ddi.pdf?ext=.pdf)).
3. Díaz-García C, González-Moreno A, Sáez-Martínez FJ. Gender diversity within R&D teams: its impact on radicalness of innovation. *Innovation: Organization and Management*. 2013;15(2):149–160.
4. The effects of working time on productivity and firm performance: a research synthesis paper. Geneva: International Labour Office; 2012.





**UNAIDS**  
**Joint United Nations**  
**Programme on HIV/AIDS**

20 Avenue Appia  
1211 Geneva 27  
Switzerland

+41 22 791 3666

[unaids.org](http://unaids.org)

JC2925/E