



Young UN  
Agents for Change

## “Special Measures” and recommendations to achieve gender parity for the field

- 1. Create an enabling environment for gender parity**— instill a gendered perspective on incentives to work in the field. For instance, how can the rules and regulations better address issues such as home leave, R&R, family visits, non-family classification, grants for children's education, child care, etc.?
  - **Implement equal paternity and maternity entitlements** across the system and positive role models of men taking paternity/parental leave so that hiring managers are less likely to be biased against hiring women of child-bearing age (men would ideally be equally likely to take leave).
  - Reform the financial support provided by the UN to staff members with young children: Specifically, **provide financial support for childcare and pre-school education**, which at present is not provided. This could perhaps be delivered in exchange for reduced levels of financial support for university-level education.
  - **Flexibility in work arrangements** (for men & women), including a larger number of part-time fixed term positions, job sharing/swapping opportunities between field and HQ staff, flexible hours and working from home (some of this requires a culture shift for such practices to be accepted). A coherent approach should be taken across the UN system, drawing from existing good practice.
  - **Provide transport to/from the office** where public transport is limited or where it is difficult for women to use it; provide per diem for male chaperone (in contexts where this is required to enable women to work).
  - **Offer expanded options for R&R cycle windows:** In non-family duty stations – “I have witnessed many times how the working environment is not enabling for women with children, especially the R&R cycle windows. While seeing children on a 4-week R&R cycle was fine, but not ideal, for most male colleagues in the office, it did not work for female colleagues. And neither is this socially acceptable. For example, when working in the private sector, we went back home every weekend or every second weekend, most of the time on Thursday, with Fridays in the regional hub office. Options that the SG will explore need to address this aspect if we want to attract women going to non-family duty stations. Otherwise, we effectively shut out women with children from field work for about 18 years of their career”.
  - **Reward managers who develop others** and create an enabling environment for staff to thrive.
  - **Create a program of support for survivors of gender based violence:** Several UN agencies provide programmatic support to beneficiaries but offers little to nothing for UN staff internally who have experienced harassment or assault—we should offer the same support internally as we do externally (rule of law, medical support, psycho-social support) across the UN system. It would be a way to show we walk the talk and our environment is safe for women to thrive.
- 2. Create cross-agency career development programmes**—Provide coaching, mentoring and special assignments that allow staff to grow and develop the proper skills to take on future leadership roles in the organization.



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- Put much **more emphasis on informal on-the-job learning and development opportunities** across the system - e.g. to do stretch assignments in different entities/locations according to need (emergency roster of sorts), secondments, detail assignments or smaller-scale work shadowing opportunities (1 week per year per person or similar) - this would build a cross-UN spirit for employees and also improve competence and understanding of the UN as a whole. Even better if these opportunities could be broadened to NGOs & private sector partners so not so UN-centric.
- **Skill-based cross-UN talent pools** to expand career opportunities and increase the versatility of staff and managers who spend their whole career in one single organization.

### **3. Enforce a culture of accountability regarding SEA and publicize proof of adherence to zero tolerance policy:**

- **Fire people who abuse people** and hire an independent investigation team to reduce the backlog of cases and/or allow current staff with relevant experience to be seconded to help reduce backlog (as done for UMOJA project and DOCO staffing).
- There is a wide held belief that there is no point in reporting abuse in the UN as whistleblowers are often ostracized and victimized rather than perpetrators—the UN can change this perception by **publicizing when perpetrators are punished on a public website with the punishment received.**
- **Publicize all case numbers currently under investigation** including length of time under investigation and any days past due.
- Instill **strict deadlines for investigating cases** with clear consequences for not adhering to them (i.e. past due investigation fees paid to victims for every case that goes beyond the deadline and the perpetrator is found to be at fault).

### **4. Set specific hiring targets at ALL levels and hold hiring managers accountable**

- **Set gender targets for both national and international staff** - Field Missions claim gender parity but in practice, this is only in terms of international staff. Among national/ local staff, women are largely recruited in admin positions and rarely get selected for substantive jobs esp. in political affairs and civil affairs. As a result, local political actors often interact with foreign women representing the UN with respect, but see that the UN's interpreters and meetings assistants (the ones who set up meetings/ build political profiles/ enable outreach) are all local women. This needs to change if the UN wants to bring more local women into the political space, and want to change the way local male political actors (warlords, MPs, tribal chiefs, influential clerics) view women of their country. \*We note this is also recommended in the systemwide [gender parity strategy](#) (p.15).
- Make the [gender parity dashboard](#) available across all UN agencies rather than in silos.



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- **Remove time-in grade requirements** for field positions so that anyone meeting the minimum work experience requirements may be hired for senior level positions regardless of their current grade level (i.e. P2s may apply for P4 positions in the field).
- From a recruitment perspective, **gendered roster campaigns** (e.g. [Impactpool](#)) can be useful - and maybe could be extended to less senior levels (P4?) and also integrated into the current staff selection system. All of this could/should be conveyed through a communications campaign with concrete stories of women in the field, in order to dispel some fears - while still being honest about what it means to serve the UN in complex settings.

### 5. Build on good practice already existing within the UN system:

- UNHCR has made significant progress towards reaching gender parity among its staff thanks to a strong commitment and a **broad and ambitious gender equality strategy**. See here for policy and good practices: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/5aa13c0c7.pdf#zoom=95> and <http://www.unhcr.org/women.html>
- **UNAIDS Gender Action Plan** which includes a Mentoring Programme for Women launched in 2014 [http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2018/jc2925\\_unaids-gender-action-plan-2018-2023](http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2018/jc2925_unaids-gender-action-plan-2018-2023) - could a similar approach be used but with a cross-UN programme where junior women are paired with senior colleagues (men and women) from other organisations across the UN system?
- **UNFPA’s managing gender based violence programs**: <https://www.unfpa.org/gender-based-violence>
- **DFS Senior Women Talent Pipeline**: <https://www.impactpool.org/pools/un-peace-operations/swtp> - could a similar approach be used across the UN and for both mid-career and senior levels, and also integrated into the new staff selection system?
- **YPP mentorship programme** in the UN Secretariat (mixed results).

### 6. Draw inspiration from beyond the UN:

- **World Economic Forum Global Leadership Fellows Programme**: <https://www.weforum.org/communities/global-leadership-fellows> - a 3-year programme involving leadership training and individual and peer coaching and mentoring
- The **Global Gender Parity Initiative** <http://www.newamerica.org/better-life-lab/global-gender-parity-initiative/>.
- Example of Rwanda, which has the highest percentage of women in parliament in the world (there is **political accountability to gender equality in Rwanda**, as it is embedded in the constitution).
- **PWC’s HeForShe initiative with UN Women**: <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/about/diversity/he-for-she-make-your-commitment.html>