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**Gender equality at UNDP**

**Annual report of the Administrator on  
the implementation of the UNDP gender  
equality strategy in 2020**

*Summary*

This report presents the performance of UNDP in 2020 on implementing the gender equality strategy, 2018-2021. Chapter I of the report gives an overview; chapter II provides development results under each outcome of the Strategic Plan; chapter III shares institutional results to strengthen gender mainstreaming; and chapter IV summarizes lessons learned and indicates the way forward.



## I. Introduction

### A. The year 2020 in focus: A gender lens on the UNDP COVID-19 response

1. When the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic hit in early 2020, UNDP quickly shifted its focus to support countries to respond rapidly. As this annual report shows, UNDP effectively contributed to a more gender-equitable COVID-19 response as part of its work to build forward better from the crisis. Simultaneously, UNDP sustained strong overall progress towards implementing the gender equality strategy in 2020.

2. The COVID-19 crisis is threatening to reverse hard-won gender equality gains by exacerbating pre-existing gender inequalities and power imbalances. As the world marks one year of the pandemic, the disproportionate impacts on women and girls are increasingly apparent. They face greater economic insecurity, as their labour participation is often highly informal, without social protection, and many women are dealing with an increased burden of unpaid care work. The pandemic is also worsening the high prevalence of gender-based violence and threatens to push 47 million additional women into extreme poverty this year. All these challenges are reinforced in crisis-affected settings. Despite their front-and-centre role in the response, women have been systematically excluded from decision-making; men outnumber women three to one across COVID-19 government task forces around the world.

3. UNDP swiftly transformed itself into a new, digital working environment to respond to these challenges and to ensure its continued support to Governments. UNDP quickly introduced internal measures, including teleworking, psychosocial support, flexible leave and work arrangements and measures to support a family-friendly response.

4. As part of its support to countries, UNDP rapidly identified key priorities for addressing gender issues across its COVID-19 response. As the technical lead of the United Nations socioeconomic response to COVID-19, UNDP made vigorous efforts to ensure that gender equality was integrated across the response, co-leading United Nations working groups on gender and COVID-19 and including gender considerations in socioeconomic impact assessments.

#### Box 1. The UNDP and UN-Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker

To encourage Governments to integrate a gender lens into their COVID-19 responses, UNDP, together with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), co-created the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, which includes over 3,100 measures across 219 countries and territories. The tracker shows that the global COVID-19 policy response has largely been blind to gender equality, with only 24 per cent of the measures analysed supporting women's economic security and unpaid care work, and only eight countries having COVID-19 task forces with gender parity. The tracker serves as a global advocacy and accountability tool, ensuring evidence-based, gender-responsive policymaking and catalysing policy dialogues for gender equality, potentially reaching 90 million people.

### B. Highlights of progress on the gender equality strategy in 2020

5. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis, performance against the gender equality strategy, 2018-2021, and the Strategic Plan remains strong, including in the UNDP response to the pandemic. In 2020, 11 of 15 gender-responsive output indicators met or exceeded their targeted milestones. UNDP continued to be rated as one of the best-performing organizations in the United Nations system in 2020, meeting or exceeding requirements for 88 per cent (14 of 16) of the relevant indicators in the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. UNDP was also recognized as a very high-scoring organization in the 2020 Global Health 50/50 Gender and Health Index, in the top 5 per cent of 201 organizations included.

6. UNDP supported over 80 countries to adapt dedicated services and integrate a gender-based violence lens into COVID-19 interventions. There has been an exponential increase in gender-based violence

during the crisis because of pre-existing toxic social norms and gender inequalities, compounded by the economic and social stress caused by the pandemic and the restricted movement and social isolation measures. UNDP will continue to work to ensure that women live free from violence and that gender-based violence is integrated into its response and recovery actions.

7. UNDP turned around its performance on social protection at a crucial time, recognizing the centrality of care work. In 2020, 1.8 million people, of whom 69 per cent were women, directly benefited from UNDP cash transfer programmes. This essential support could not have come sooner, as women and girls faced disproportionate economic, health and social risks during the pandemic, including greater economic insecurity as their labour participation is often informal. UNDP is committed to calling for bold public policies in the global arena to boost social protection, such as temporary basic income.

8. Women's leadership remains a priority for UNDP, as governance continued to be its most transformative work. The pandemic highlighted how women's full and inclusive participation in public institutions is critical but still lacking. With UNDP support, 209 measures – from electoral quotas to gender-smart business policies – were put in place in 2020, up from 180 measures in 2019 and 134 in 2018. UNDP will sustain efforts to ensure that public institutions are inclusive and accountable to diverse public interests.

9. UNDP instituted a mandatory gender marker to rapidly fund gender-responsive projects. The COVID-19 Rapid Funding Facility applied the gender marker as a key criterion to fund 129 proposals in 2020. Overall, the gender marker data show a positive trend towards resource allocations to gender equality, steadily increasing from 55.4 to 63.8 per cent between 2018 and 2020, but there is still a funding gap for signature solution 6 on gender.

10. UNDP remains a partner of choice in advancing gender equality. In 2020, UNDP established 116 partnerships with Governments and other partners to address discriminatory gender and social norms, an increase from 74 in 2019 and doubling the 58 partnerships in 2018. According to the UNDP 2020 partnership survey, UNDP was ranked highest for its contribution to promoting gender equality, with 63 per cent of over 3,000 partners working with 140 country offices recognizing UNDP as doing a “great deal”. Much of UNDP work is done in partnership with UN-Women, with which UNDP collaborates in 101 countries. UNDP will enhance these efforts to ensure that it remains a trusted partner.

11. UNDP is a prominent thought leader on gender equality, with data analytics as the foundation of its work. In 2020, UNDP was well recognized for helping to shape the public discourse and policy debates on gender equality, leading the way in the pandemic. UNDP launched two dashboards with gender-disaggregated data from 189 countries on gender inequality, human development and COVID-19, and partnered with UN-Women to co-create the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker. In 2020, UNDP received over 10,000 mentions in media related to gender equality.

12. UNDP will continue to focus strongly in the coming years on strengthening the enablers of gender equality: a more inclusive economic system, a more equal social contract and transforming gender norms. While evaluations have flagged that UNDP is not yet at full capacity to do this, UNDP is positively moving from numbers to a more transformative approach. UNDP will also concentrate efforts in crisis countries. In 2021, UNDP will launch a cutting-edge course for resident representatives to prepare UNDP leadership to implement the next generation of gender equality work.

## **II. Gender equality results by Strategic Plan outcome**

### **Outcome 1. Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions**

13. Under outcome 1, UNDP gender equality work in 2020 focused on addressing the COVID-19-induced feminization of poverty, including implementing the next-generation offer on poverty focused on strengthening gender equality in national planning, and addressing structural barriers to women's economic empowerment. UNDP expanded its response to prioritize gender-responsive social protection, including unpaid care work and addressing the rise in gender-based violence during the pandemic.

UNDP conducted an in-depth review of its portfolio on women's economic empowerment, highlighting critical entry points to focus on and the need to invest in internal institutional change.

### **Gender-responsive social protection**

14. UNDP prioritized gender-responsive social protection when it was most needed, supporting over 41 countries in 2020, over twice the number in 2019 (20 countries). Efforts focused on the development of national social protection strategies and action plans, women-targeted cash transfers and support to women-led businesses. In 2020, 1.8 million people benefited from UNDP cash transfer programmes, of whom 69 per cent were women.

15. The pandemic has demonstrated how societies can take women's free labour for social reproduction for granted. A time-use survey in Turkey supported by UNDP showed that women are doing four times as much unpaid care work as men during lockdowns. To support care, in 2020 UNDP worked on social norms transformation, grass-roots engagement and policy advice. For example, UNDP with the International Labour Organization (ILO) rolled out a care-system costing tool to support Governments across regions in expanding care systems. In Argentina, UNDP supported the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Care Policies, coordinated by the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity and composed of 14 agencies in the country's executive branch.

16. UNDP mobilized efforts to shift social norms and raise awareness about unpaid care work through media and online campaigns in over 15 countries. In Jordan and Lebanon, UNDP initiated the #EqualPartners campaign, leveraging social media to promote egalitarian care and household responsibilities.

17. In the context of the pandemic, UNDP put greater emphasis on the intersection between gender and health, supporting 71 countries in advancing gender equality and improving equal access to quality health care. For instance, in India, UNDP supported women's health sector jobs with the development of a mobile and cloud-based smart vaccine logistics system, with women, who make up 75 per cent of 12,000 government health workers, trained in its implementation.

### **Integrated responses to poverty**

18. COVID-19 has worsened poverty, which is multidimensional. UNDP continued to partner across government ministries in 2020 to ensure that integrated Sustainable Development Goal planning, implementation and reporting were gender-responsive. This included support for improved livelihoods, sex-disaggregated data collection and integration of gender analysis into socioeconomic plans. For example, in Malawi, UNDP helped improve public services using disaggregated data, issuing identity cards to 10 million citizens of whom 51 per cent were women.

### **Gender mainstreaming in national planning**

19. Throughout 2020, UNDP continued to support Governments in developing gender-responsive strategies, policies and plans in at least 16 countries. In the Republic of the Congo, for example, UNDP provided technical support to develop for the first time the local development plans incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals, including gender equality.

20. UNDP uses gender-responsive budgeting to promote equitable distribution of resources in national or subnational plans, as seen in its work in over 14 countries, which is often done in partnership with UN-Women. In Niger, for example, UNDP provided gender-responsive budgeting support to sectoral ministries and technical institutions to mainstream gender into planning of policies, plans and programmes.

### **Access to basic services, finance and assets**

21. Ensuring gender-equitable access to basic services is even more critical during the pandemic. In 2018-2020, UNDP enabled 43.4 million women to gain access to basic services such as health and education; financial services, including bank accounts and credit; and non-financial assets. In 2020,

UNDP began exploring how temporary basic income could be a tool to ensure women's economic security in times of shocks and enhance women's capacities to make choices about their lives.

22. UNDP will keep strengthening efforts to achieve the target on women's financial inclusion. While UNDP made progress in 2020 in increasing the number of women accessing financial services by over 1 million compared to 2019, it still lags behind the target. Country offices reported COVID-19-related challenges such as delays and closure of transactions, while highlighting broader contextual issues including political instability, discriminatory laws and policies and societal norms.

### **Access to clean energy**

23. Performance on gender equality in the UNDP energy sector portfolio has been improving, and requirements of environmental financing mechanisms ensure that vertical fund initiatives include specific gender actions in the project life cycle. In 2020, UNDP with partners continued to expand access to clean energy, with 2.6 million women-headed households accessing clean energy in 23 countries, nearly twice the number in 2019 (1.4 million) and nearly four times more than in 2018 (611,000). UNDP will integrate gender considerations more systematically into energy policy frameworks and foster relevant activities such as engaging women in productive use of energy.

#### **Box 2. UNDP recognized as one of the world's most scalable low-carbon innovators for its women's entrepreneurship work in conflict-affected Yemen**

In 2020, the [Ashden Award for Humanitarian Energy](#) recognized the work of UNDP in helping boost women's entrepreneurship in Yemen, enabling communities to access affordable energy when there are no other viable solutions. As part of the enhanced rural resilience programme, UNDP, with the Food and Agricultural Organization, ILO and the World Food Programme, supported 700 women in Yemen to set up and manage solar microgrids, get jobs and participate in community decision-making. Connectivity to microgrids resulted in a 65 per cent reduction in energy costs, and improved access to clean energy for 10,000 people. Winning the award will enable UNDP to scale up local renewable energy solutions.

### **Gender-based violence**

24. UNDP ramped up efforts to address the surge in gender-based violence during the pandemic. This included providing immediate guidance to over 80 countries to adapt their ongoing gender-based violence programming to COVID-19-related restrictions, and to ensure that a gender-based violence "lens" was integrated into government interventions addressing the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic.

25. Many of the most successful interventions to address gender-based violence in times of COVID-19 were carried out jointly within the European Union/United Nations Spotlight Initiative. Spotlight benefited from the UNDP comparative advantage in improving women and girls' access to justice, and community-level prevention to mobilize men and boys as advocates for change. In Malawi, UNDP identified and fast-tracked the prosecution of sexual and gender-based violence cases through mobile courts in hard-to-reach areas in the Spotlight priority district of Mzimba. In Papua New Guinea, UNDP with partners held the first National GBV Summit, resulting in a resolution to establish a special parliamentary committee on gender-based violence. UNDP partnered with the Sunflower Centres in the Republic of Korea to promote one-stop service centres for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence during the pandemic, a practice that has been replicated in Albania and Indonesia.

26. The UNDP strategy to build innovative partnerships to end gender-based violence became crucial during the COVID-19 lockdowns as it improved the responsiveness of government services, particularly in the judicial branch. In Peru, with funding from the Republic of Korea, UNDP partnered with 52 companies as part of the #NoEstásSola campaign, disseminating key information on gender-based violence services in supermarkets and pharmacies. This approach also enabled community-led solutions. For example, in South Africa, UNDP, UN-Women and National Community Radio Forum launched a

radio campaign on gender-based violence and femicide to encourage bystanders to report on its occurrence.

27. Despite these efforts, UNDP country offices faced challenges, magnified by the pandemic, including unstable political contexts, lack of prioritization of gender-based violence and limited financial resources. The UNDP quick assessment survey in 2020 showed that only half of 51 country offices surveyed planned to work with non-governmental partners to send a strong message that violence will not be tolerated.

## **Outcome 2. Accelerating structural transformation for sustainable development**

28. Amid the pandemic, UNDP continued to amplify women's voices and reinforce its support to address structural barriers and gender-discriminatory practices. UNDP continued to work on: (a) enhancing women's political participation and decision-making; (b) mainstreaming gender in addressing the impacts of climate change and natural resource management; and (c) legal, policy and institutional reforms to remove structural barriers to women's empowerment.

### **Women's political participation and decision-making**

29. From decision makers and doctors to entrepreneurs and care providers, women have been on the front lines of the COVID-19 response, exemplifying new styles and models of leadership. Yet, as revealed by the UNDP—UN-Women gender tracker, women are still largely underrepresented in national COVID-19 task forces, which could further exacerbate unequal recovery from the pandemic. Recognizing this, UNDP stepped up its support in 2020 for women's leadership and participation in decision-making.

30. Despite the COVID-19 crisis, democratic governance continued to be the most transformative area of UNDP work in 2020, helping to build more gender-equal and resilient societies. UNDP, as one of the largest actors supporting women's political participation, worked in all regions of the world to advance women's participation and leadership in public institutions, parliaments, the judiciary and the private sector. With UNDP support, 209 measures – from electoral quotas to gender-smart business policies – were put in place in 2020, an increase from 180 measures in 2019 and 134 in 2018.

31. UNDP continued to enhance inclusive political processes. In line with the Secretary-General's report on women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls (E/CN.6/2021/3), UNDP supported temporary special measures, including quotas in Armenia, Benin, the Republic of the Congo, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Jordan, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Somalia and Ukraine. Since 2017, the percentage of all voters registered who are women increased from 47 to 50 per cent in 42 countries through UNDP electoral support. UNDP also strengthened women's capacities in public office through women's networks, caucuses and parliamentary committees.

### **Mainstreaming gender in climate change and natural resource management**

32. Key areas of notable growth in 2020 include gender-responsive climate action through support to countries participating in the UNDP Climate Promise and through strengthening women's adaptive livelihoods in the face of climate change. This work is part of UNDP efforts to remove structural barriers and strengthen women's capacities. In 2020, UNDP supported 81 countries to improve climate-adaptive and environmentally sustainable livelihoods for women through financing from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund. This includes women's participation in income-generation activities such as conservation, rehabilitation and restoration; more sustainable supply chains; clean technology and energy solutions; and entrepreneurship.

**Box 3. The UNDP Climate Promise: Gender-responsive climate action**

With UNDP technical support, 114 Climate Promise countries (97 per cent of total) committed to strengthening gender considerations in their nationally determined contributions. Of 26 such contributions submitted in January 2021, 24 included gender dimensions. In Kenya, the updated nationally determined contribution proposes measures to strengthen access to climate funds and credit for women and promote gender-responsive technology transfer to vulnerable populations. In Chile, participatory, gender-inclusive consultations conducted by the Ministry of Environment through the Climate Change and Gender Working Group resulted in the elevation of gender issues in its latest submission.

33. Recognizing women's collective organization as a powerful force to advance resilience at the time of COVID-19, UNDP supported women-led community-based associations in 55 countries in 2020 through its environment, climate and energy portfolio financed by global environmental and vertical funds. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, UNDP support for the civil society platform for the Sustainable Development Goals strengthened advocacy for better gender considerations in the National Development Plan 2021-2025.

**Box 4. New metrics to improve women's resilience**

In Cambodia, UNDP, with financing from the Least Developed Countries Fund, worked with Action Aid to create a Women's Resilience Index, which enables more gender-equitable policy development, advocacy and programming. During the outbreak, women were trained as disaster risk reduction "champions" and were able to provide COVID-19 awareness-raising training that reached over 4,000 households.

34. Women are important users and managers of natural resources and UNDP continued to promote women's participation and decision-making in environmental management. In 2020, 80 countries advanced women's leadership in natural resource management through the UNDP environment, climate and energy portfolio financed by global environmental and vertical funds. This was a decrease from 97 countries in 2019, largely due to COVID-19-related delays and lockdowns that affected project activities.

**Legal, policy and institutional reforms to remove structural barriers to women's empowerment**

35. In 2020, UNDP increased its support to countries in adopting legal, policy and institutional reforms to remove barriers to women's empowerment. In 2020, with UNDP support, 8.1 million women accessed justice in 35 countries, an increase from 3.7 million in 2019 and 1.6 million in 2018. Interventions included legal aid, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and more efficient justice services, which proved to be particularly important during the pandemic.

**Outcome 3. Building resilience to shocks and crises**

36. As seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, crises and shocks can create new opportunities to address the structural drivers of gender inequalities. Recognizing its unique experience with the humanitarian/development/peace nexus, in 2020 UNDP reported work on improved livelihood and employment opportunities; developing gender-responsive crisis response; preventing violent extremism; and improving women's resilience and participation in economic recovery.

37. However, 2020 was a year of reflection on how to improve the gender outcomes of UNDP crisis and recovery work. Results on women's leadership and participation for crisis prevention and recovery faltered in 2020. This affirms some findings of the evaluation of UNDP support to conflict-affected countries. To better understand gaps, UNDP conducted an internal review of its gender-responsiveness in crisis settings and an online consultation on the women, peace and security agenda (see box 5). In this context, UNDP made important decisions to overcome challenges flagged by the evaluation to ensure more transformative gender outcomes. The Crisis Bureau committed to substantially increase the

percentage of regular resources allocated to gender-dedicated activities and UNDP announced the launch of a new Gender and Crisis Engagement Facility. This one-stop-shop will provide knowledge and evidence, technical support capacities and seed funding for gender-transformative programming. In 2021, UNDP will share the initial results enabled by the facility.

### **Improving livelihood and income opportunities**

38. Economic empowerment is key to gender-transformative results. Increasing evidence shows that an inclusive economic recovery speeds up overall recovery and prevents new crises, and that economic opportunities should be tied to women's leadership. For example, in the Kyrgyz Republic, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, UNDP joined with women parliamentarians and community leaders to advance the economic components of the national and subnational action plans on women, peace and security, resulting in stronger legal accountability for gender-based violence and social and economic support packages for women hardest hit by COVID-19.

39. Women leaders at the local level can quickly build key social and economic 'infrastructure' in crisis-affected settings. In Lebanon, for example, UNDP worked with local women leaders to respond to the increase in gender-based violence cases since the onset of COVID-19 through the use of digital technologies to provide psychosocial support while building skills to increase the income of women, many of them Syrian refugees.

40. In 2020, UNDP worked in 25 countries to ensure that 1.3 million women gained access to jobs and improved livelihoods in crisis or post-crisis settings, a decline from 1.7 million in 2019 and slightly more than 1.2 million in 2018. Country offices attributed this decrease to COVID-19-related challenges such as compulsory isolation, national lockdowns, movement restrictions and government and key stakeholders prioritizing work on other impacts of COVID-19.

### **Gender-responsive crisis response plans**

41. UNDP continued to support Governments in improving gender considerations in their national disaster response and recovery policies and plans. For example, in Burundi, UNDP helped to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations to climate-change impacts, with a focus on social infrastructure such as schools. In Iraq, UNDP in cooperation with the Women's Empowerment Directorate of the Council of Ministries Secretariat supported the creation of the first gender-responsive crisis chamber to develop innovative solutions for gender-responsive policymaking.

42. Re-establishing the rule of law in conflict-affected countries remained central to UNDP work to promote gender equality and achieve sustainable peace. In 2020, the global programme on strengthening the rule of law and human rights continued to support over 40 conflict- and crisis-affected contexts, including through emergency COVID-19 funds. As a co-lead entity of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, UNDP supported national authorities to ensure accountability for perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence. In the Central African Republic, the team supported the Joint Rapid Response and Prevention Unit for Sexual Violence against Women and Children to address delays in the accountability for such crimes. In 2020, UNDP and UN-Women, through the Global Focal Point for the Rule of Law, began a partnership on gender justice to close the justice gap for women and girls through joint programming.

### **Preventing violent extremism**

43. Gender mainstreaming efforts in the prevention of violent extremism were strengthened. In 2020, UNDP supported a global digital consultation, "Voices and Perspectives of Civil Society on the Gendered Dimensions of Violent Extremism and Counter-Terrorism Responses" with 140 representatives from 43 countries. The consultation informed the 2021 review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and highlighted the importance of going beyond militarized approaches to more inclusive and democratic participation in designing and implementing responses to prevent and counter violent extremism.



44. Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) places the women, peace and security agenda as a central component of efforts to address global challenges like rising violent extremism, climate change and unprecedented numbers of displaced people. Bolstered by this new tool, the International Organization for Migration, UNDP, UN-Women and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime supported women-led organizations to take a lead role in countering violent extremism in countries ranging from Libya to Sri Lanka to Sudan.

#### **Women's participation in economic recovery**

45. At a time when women in crisis and fragile settings were hit hardest by COVID-19, UNDP continued to secure gender-balanced representation among those supported by its recovery work. Women accounted for 55 per cent of beneficiaries, compared to 50 per cent in 2019 and 54 per cent in 2018. UNDP is committed to make a consistent effort to put women at the centre of recovery efforts in crisis and post-crisis settings. A sectoral strategy on women's economic empowerment will be developed and piloted in 2021, following the evaluation recommendation.

#### **Promoting women's leadership**

46. Women leaders demonstrated that they can be effective in addressing a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic while having a different style of leadership. A key insight of the UNDP 2020 online consultation on women, peace and security is the need to acknowledge that women “do peace differently”. In Ukraine, for instance, UNDP and UN-Women supported the creation of 130 local self-help groups and 48 community security platforms. Led by women, these groups help citizens to participate in decision-making processes and provide support to the most vulnerable in the face of conflict and the pandemic.

#### **Box 5. Promoting women's leadership in crisis and post-crisis settings**

In 2020, UNDP, with UN-Women, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the International Civil Society Action Network, launched a global online discussion, “Engaging women in post-conflict political and economic decision-making, including lessons for COVID-19”. This attracted more than 32,000 visitors from over 173 countries, and their contributions were used to elaborate nine key insights through a sense-making exercise. One of the insights was that women build a decentralized social service infrastructure and network with untapped potential, creating the foundations for rebuilding societies. UNDP will leverage these findings and lessons to improve its work.

47. In 2020, UNDP continued to leverage the work around the women, peace and security agenda to recognize women's leadership, at both national and local levels. For example, in Kenya, UNDP supported the second National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security to include a comprehensive plan to prevent violent extremism, working both at national and local levels, with a focus on local peacebuilders. At the local level, the N-Peace Network (“Engage for Equality, Access, Community and Empowerment”) initiative in Asia supported over 43 women-led civil society organizations, with 53,000 beneficiaries between 2019 and 2020.

48. Advancing women's leadership in crisis settings remains a persistent challenge, especially in these times of the pandemic. In 2020, the share of women holding leadership positions in social dialogue and reconciliation mechanisms in 16 countries reached 33 per cent, a slight increase from 30 per cent in 2019, whereas the number of women in leadership positions within prevention and recovery mechanisms in 2018-2020 is consistently low.

#### **Partnerships**

49. In times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, strong partnerships are even more essential to ensuring progress towards gender equality. In 2020, UNDP expanded its collaborations with United Nations organizations, regional organizations, the private sector, international financial institutions, civil society, women's organizations and academia.

50. At the global level, UNDP is a co-leader of the Feminist Action for Climate Justice Coalition, one of six action coalitions formed as part of the UN-Women Generation Equality Forum. Through the coalition, UNDP is working with partners to scale up work to address gender gaps and inequalities in climate, energy and environment work. UNDP co-led working groups of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality on gender and COVID-19, and on gender mainstreaming in the United Nations development system COVID-19 response for the United Nations Sustainable Development Group task team on gender equality.

51. UNDP serves as a leading member of the GEF Gender Partnership, ensuring that this work is gender-responsive. To support the integration of gender considerations into multilateral environmental agreements, in 2020 UNDP supported the development of the gender plan of action for the Convention on Biological Diversity for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

52. At the regional level, UNDP strengthened the capacity of the African Union to promote young women's leadership and participation in governance and peacebuilding processes. UNDP also enabled the African Union Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security to roll out, monitor and report on the implementation of the Continental Results Framework for Reporting and Monitoring on the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa (2018-2028) by Member States.

53. At the country level, the Gender Equality Seal for Public and Private Enterprises has supported more than 1,000 companies in 16 countries, impacting over 1.7 million workers across industries. In response to COVID-19, there were increased actions to prevent gender-based violence in remote working environments.

54. Under the principle of leaving no one behind, UNDP continues to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. In 2020, for example, UNDP worked with the East Timor Blind Union to implement a Braille literacy training programme for people with visual impairments and provide capacity-building for women leaders from political parties, village councils and municipalities.

### **Academia**

55. UNDP worked with United Nations partners, academia and think tanks across the world to produce evidence-based research and policy guidance on gender equality. It continued its partnership with the University of Pittsburgh on the Gender Equality in Public Administration initiative, developing the Gender Parity in Civil Service Dataset on women's participation and decision-making in public administration with data from 171 countries between 1951 and 2020. This work helps tracking sex-disaggregated data for indicators for 16 Sustainable Development Goal indicators.

56. UNDP partnered with the United Nations University International Institute for Global Health, UN-Women, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Health Organization and others to launch a gender and health hub to support the 13 global health organizations coordinating their policies and programmes to promote gender equality through the Global Action Plan on Healthy Lives and Well-being for All (Sustainable Development Goal 3 gender action plan).

### **Innovation**

57. To maintain progress towards gender equality amidst the pandemic, UNDP turned the crisis into an opportunity by offering innovative gender-responsive solutions to Governments in at least 35 countries. These approaches ranged from behavioural science interventions to digital campaigns and creative ways to adapt to new working conditions, thereby breaking traditional patriarchal supply chains of information, resources and power at the time of the pandemic.

**Box 6. Targeting men, transforming masculinities**

This innovative initiative works with men to challenge expressions of patriarchal power at individual and institutional levels. Instead of defining a corporate framework beforehand, as done in previous attempts by UNDP to address masculinities, it applies a bottom-up approach by working directly with country offices to first understand existing work with men and the needs for further support. Seven UNDP country offices applied this approach to their programming, from youth participation in Ukraine to improving mental health in Thailand. The UNDP accelerator lab in Jordan, with support from Nudge Lebanon, a non-governmental organization, analysed 2,200 tweets and conducted a behavioural analysis to design a social media campaign on men's involvement in unpaid care work.

58. UNDP country offices leveraged new technologies in supporting countries to address the COVID-19 pandemic. In Uganda, UNDP launched an e-commerce platform to sustain supply chains that prioritized women-owned businesses, which is part of a holistic approach to supporting trade development, food security, local livelihoods and digital inclusion. In the Maldives, UNDP provided digital equipment for a government “Care Portal” that offered social services to survivors of gender-based violence, persons with disabilities and the elderly.

59. Innovative gender-responsive e-governance has ensured services in the context of the pandemic. In Mauritius, the National Assembly is establishing a gender information system through the Parliamentary Gender Caucus and e-learning for the integration of gendered policies in socioeconomic recovery plans. In Viet Nam, the provision of e-reporting on gender-sensitive social assistance helped to enhance national capacities to monitor and evaluate the social protection system's contribution to gender equality.

60. With increased online violence against women exacerbated by COVID-19, in Pakistan, UNDP conducted cutting-edge research on hypermasculinity and hate speech against women in social and digital media, informing campaigns to promote safe online spaces for women.

**Thought leadership to promote gender equality and women's empowerment**

61. UNDP has emerged as a prominent thought leader on gender equality, with data analytics as the foundation of its work. The work of UNDP is well recognized for helping to shape the public discourse and policy debates on gender equality, leading the way in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.

62. Globally, a UNDP Human Development report, *Tackling Social Norms: a game changer for gender inequality*, which includes the Gender Social Norms Index, revealed the urgent need to transform harmful social norms. UNDP also launched two dashboards on gender equality, human development and COVID-19, with data for 189 countries. Other COVID-19-related global publications include *Gender-based violence and COVID-19*; *Women Peace and Human Security: A Guidance Note on Parliamentary Engagement During and Post-Covid-19*; and the *Guide: How to Integrate Gender into Socio-Economic Assessments*. UNDP also partnered with UN-Women, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the United Nations Environment Programme to produce *Gender, Climate and Security: Sustaining inclusive peace on the frontlines of climate change*.

63. Regionally, UNDP sought to unpack gender dynamics in violent extremism in a joint report with UN-Women, *Conflicting Identities: The Nexus between Masculinities, Femininities and Violent Extremism in Asia*, with recommendations being translated into programming at the country level. UNDP in Latin America and the Caribbean produced a briefing note, *The Economic Impacts of COVID-19 and Gender Equality: Recommendations for Policymakers*. With the University of Pittsburgh, UNDP produced an update of data presented in *Gender Equality in Public Administration: Snapshot of Eastern Europe and Central Asia*. The new Equal Future platform provided evidence on women's participation in parliaments in Europe and Central Asia.

64. Country offices developed numerous valuable knowledge products with new data and practical implications. UNDP Turkey published research on gender gaps in the care economy during the pandemic, based on the results of a time-use survey.

### III. Institutional results

65. This chapter focuses on UNDP progress in strengthening its institutional framework to enhance gender equality development results. This includes leadership; gender-responsive policy, planning and programming; accountability and oversight; gender capacities and gender architecture; inclusive and safe working environments; and gender parity.

66. UNDP continued to be rated as one of the best-performing United Nations agencies against the United Nations System-wide Action Plan 2.0, meeting or exceeding requirements for 88 per cent (14 of 16) of relevant indicators. There has been notable progress in indicators on gender-responsive evaluation and audit.

67. Since assuming the leadership of UNDP in 2017, the Administrator has strongly and successfully championed gender equality, including by chairing biannual meetings of the Gender Steering and Implementation Committee, and ensuring that UNDP reaches gender parity in senior management ahead of the required United Nations timeline. The Executive Group, comprising Assistant Secretaries-General, has over 50 per cent women members, and there is gender parity among resident representatives and deputy resident representatives. The Administrator acted firmly to place gender equality at the centre of the COVID-19 response, including through the COVID-19 Rapid Response Facility and socioeconomic assessments. In 2020, 60 per cent of public speeches and statements made by the Administrator advocated for gender equality.

68. UNDP continued to integrate gender equality into all of its policies, planning and programming. For instance, the share of country offices with a gender equality strategy and action plan has risen substantially to 69 per cent in 2020, from 66 per cent in 2019 and 58 per cent in 2018. Of the 19 approved country programme documents that underwent quality assurance processes in 2020, 95 per cent had integrated a satisfactory gender analysis. Despite this progress, evaluations indicated a need to ensure that gender analysis is thorough, and UNDP implemented portfolio reviews to address this challenge.

#### **Box 7. Enhanced gender analysis through programme portfolio reviews**

Programme portfolio reviews are an excellent established tool to fine-tune strategies, address gender gaps, document innovations and showcase the impacts of interventions for gender equality. Since 2017, the Latin America and Caribbean region has implemented successful portfolio reviews in 12 countries, covering more than 200 projects. Offices indicated that programme portfolio reviews were one of the central actions for a transformative leap towards gender equality development results. This methodology has been expanded and implemented in other regions.

69. In terms of financing for gender equality, UNDP invests in gender equality on average more than other development actors, and the gender marker data show a positive trend towards resource allocations to gender equality. Investments in programming where gender equality was a principal or significant objective increased steadily from 55.4 to 63.8 per cent between 2018 and 2020. While GEN3 did not increase in 2020, accounting for 7.4 per cent, GEN2 improved from 50 per cent in 2019 to 56.4 per cent in 2020. UNDP leveraged the gender marker as a main criterion to assess funding allocations from multi-partner trust fund pooled funds. However, gender equality programming continues to be heavily underresourced, with the funding gap for signature solution 6 being the highest among the signature solutions. In 2020, UNDP conducted a review of financial flows to gender equality to improve the gender marker for more accurate tracking and mobilizing resources in 2021.

70. UNDP cultivated a culture of accountability for gender equality at the highest level. The Gender Steering and Implementation Committee chaired by the Administrator continued to meet twice annually to discuss gender equality and gender parity performance. For the first time, following the evaluation of UNDP support to conflict-affected countries, the committee dedicated a full session to gender equality work in crisis countries in 2020. The committee agreed to use a common framework of actions to engage with resident representatives; develop a template on strategic proactive investments for 2021; re-energize

the memorandum of understanding with UN-Women; and enhance resources and capacities in crisis contexts.

71. With one of the strongest institutional results reporting and monitoring systems in the United Nations system, UNDP continues to sharpen its focus on gender-responsive results. In 2020, UNDP introduced the COVID-19-specific integrated results and resources framework, in which 10 of 14 indicators integrated gender considerations. It reinforces the 15 gender-responsive output indicators in the main results framework of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 while complementing the qualitative results-oriented annual reporting with a dedicated section on gender equality.

72. The Office of Audit and Investigations assessed the UNDP gender performance in 2020, rating it as satisfactory in view of its strong governance arrangements, risk management practices and mechanisms that enable UNDP to deliver on its mandate and effectively mainstream gender into programming. The Independent Evaluation Office fully incorporated the Evaluation Performance Indicator of the System-wide Action Plan into its online quality assurance system in 2020 and all decentralized evaluations will be quality-assessed against gender equality standards as developed by the United Nations Evaluation Group.

### **Gender capacities**

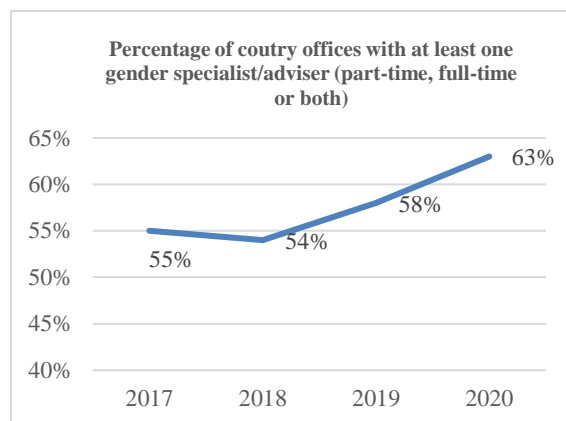
73. The gender team, part of the Global Policy Network, remained the backbone of the UNDP gender architecture. The composition of the team expanded in 2020 with 21 full-time International Professional staff. To achieve better results, the gender architecture needs to be strengthened with more dedicated capacities across regions, with a focus on crisis settings.

### Number of full-time International Professional staff in the gender team of the Global Policy Network

Location	Staff
Addis Ababa	3
Amman	2
Bangkok	1
Istanbul	2
New York	9
Panama	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>

74. Gender focal teams continue to be an effective mechanism to improve vertical and horizontal coordination. This approach has proven to advance co-ownership of the gender equality agenda. In 2020, 70 per cent of country offices reported having a multidisciplinary gender focal team led by a senior manager, and 81 country offices (63 per cent) reported having gender advisers and/or gender specialists.

75. The flagship Gender Seal builds capacities and supports transformational gender equality results. In 2020, 31 country offices were certified with a Gender Seal after two years of intensive work, with seven gold, 17 silver and seven bronze awards, making it the most successful round of the Gender Equality Seal thus far. In 2021, the Gender Seal will expand to provide a specialized track for country offices in the Europe and Central Asia and the Asia-Pacific regions, and a targeted intervention for offices in crisis contexts.



#### Box 8. The Gender Seal: Transformational results for gender equality

Examples of countries that have a gold seal include: UNDP Panama for its role in granting women access to land ownership titles along the Panama Canal, which opened doors to credit and job training; UNDP Guinea for its support for the adoption of a parity law and new civil code stating that women must make up 50 per cent of listed candidates for elective positions; and UNDP Indonesia for its work to bring gender equality to non-traditional areas, such as promoting women as change agents in the work on preventing violent extremism, developing gender-responsive policies for the fisheries sector and providing women with new roles as forest rangers.

76. External engagement and knowledge-sharing flourished in 2020. As of December 2020, UNDP had a total social media audience of 5.99 million followers from global English, Spanish and French channels, an increase of 700,000 users from 2019. UNDP tweets about gender were potentially seen 958 million times across all languages on the newsfeeds of 73.4 million Twitter subscribers. From the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, the website “America Latina Genera”, dedicated to gender equality in the region, garnered 2.5 million website visits, an increase from 1.8 million visits in 2019.

77. In a time where the needs for collaboration and reflection were more essential than ever, as countries and entities responded to COVID-19, UNDP continued to invest in strengthening knowledge-sharing on gender equality within the wider development community. The Global Policy Network communities of practice introduced SparkBlue for public engagement in e-consultations. Internally, the gender community of practice has seen an increase since 2019 to 1,763 UNDP personnel (from approximately 1,000 in 2019) and increased knowledge-sharing through organizing 11 webinars, four consultations and eight virtual missions, bringing 1,333 participants online (double the amount in 2019).

#### **Inclusive, diverse and safe environment for all**

78. To support the transition to a new and safe working environment in the context of COVID-19, UNDP introduced special measures in 2020 related to teleworking/telecommuting, provision of tele-health and psychosocial support services and greater flexibility with annual leave days. To take lessons from the pandemic forward, UNDP will review its policy on flexible work arrangements and continue to support flexibility in the workplace across the organization.

79. Extra effort was put into tackling sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse as well as domestic violence, which increased during lockdown, as was highlighted by the Administrator in all-staff town hall meeting and addressed via resources made available on the UNDP internal COVID-19 intranet site. Key actions included: creation and implementation of bureau action plans on the prevention of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse; an analysis of victim support services in select country offices; rolling out the Respectful Workplace Facilitator Programme; finalizing the sexual exploitation and abuse risk assessment tool; and increasing psychosocial support services for UNDP personnel.

80. UNDP is on track to reach gender parity commitments. As of December 2020, 50 per cent of all UNDP staff were women and 50 per cent were men. While at many levels there is parity or close to parity, challenges persist at higher levels of P-4, P-5 and D-2. Women hold 43 per cent of P-4 posts, 42 per cent of P-5 posts, 48 per cent of D-1 posts and 39 per cent of D-2 posts. This is a slight increase from 2019, except at D-2 level (42 per cent in 2019). UNDP continues to build a strong pipeline of women candidates for future leadership roles, including through the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific and Regional Bureau for Arab States mentoring programmes; the African Young Women Leaders Fellowship Programme, implemented jointly by UNDP (Regional Bureau for Africa) and the African Union Commission; the SPARK career development programme; and leadership development interventions.

81. Building on the progress achieved, UNDP will continue its internal efforts to advance gender equality in the workplace and prevent all forms of discrimination, including a gender divide observed in the Global Staff Survey that remains significant for issues such as career development. Even though the divide has started to shrink, closing that divide continues to be a priority.

#### **Box 9. EDGE Certification**

In 2020, UNDP launched the Economic Dividends for Gender Equality (EDGE) certification. The analysis has highlighted strong efforts by UNDP to build a gender-equal workplace, with many of the policies and practices meeting the EDGE standards. UNDP is developing an organization-wide action plan based on the results of the assessment to enhance progress.

## **IV. Lessons learned and the way forward**

82. Crisis response and recovery cannot be gender-neutral. In 2020, UNDP learned the importance once again of protecting women's rights and intentionally addressing gender inequalities when dealing with a crisis, both during the response and, equally as important, during the recovery. The speed and scale of a pandemic response can increase the risks of leaving women behind, but crisis also brings opportunities.

The pandemic helped UNDP to move into different ways of thinking, working and reasserting its gender equality priorities.

83. Data and analytics are the first step to closing the gender gap. The COVID-19 crisis has further shown how the gender data gap hampers understanding of the depth, nature and evolution of gender inequalities, and the impact of the crisis on women and girls. There is still too little internationally comparable data available. UNDP will continue to push for and collect better gender-disaggregated data through initiatives like the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker.

84. Scaling-up gender equality work in the governance portfolio is a priority to ensure gender-responsive laws, norms, policies and institutions. UNDP and UN-Women have monitored responses by Governments worldwide to tackle the pandemic and highlighted those that have integrated a gender lens. For example, despite the enormous contributions by women to mitigate the impacts of the crisis, only 12 per cent of the fiscal and economic measures are gender-sensitive. Investing in scaling-up in key portfolios like governance is a priority. The next-generation UNDP offer on governance will invest heavily in strengthening public institutions to ensure public policies that deliver for all.

85. Addressing discriminatory social gender norms across UNDP development work is a game changer for gender equality. The unprecedented impact of the Gender Social Norms Index and the related global media campaign #CheckYourBias provided strong insights into the relevance of tackling discriminatory norms, biases and perceptions through UNDP portfolios. For instance, the index found that 40 per cent of those surveyed believe that men make better business executives and have more of a right to a job when jobs are scarce. UNDP will invigorate efforts to support a new generation of policies addressing biases, norms and power structures.

86. UNDP will continue investing in its gender architecture to provide agile and multidisciplinary responses. Gender integration into critical areas like health or social protection has become more important than ever. UNDP learned in 2020 about the benefits of creating spaces for meaningful conversations across teams, of integrating gender experts across other areas and of the exchange of expert knowledge. For instance, bringing academic experts on unpaid care work and the care economy together with the UNDP network of economists led to successful results and integrated responses.

87. UNDP made bold decisions to ensure that gender equality is central to its response in contexts of crisis and fragility. In 2020, evaluations revealed that UNDP needs to invest in enhancing its capacities to ensure that gender equality is addressed systematically in crisis and post-crisis contexts, and that Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) is fully implemented. UNDP developed a road map to accelerate changes, and during the upcoming years will ensure more gender-transformative outcomes, including promoting a more in-depth understanding of gender in crisis and conflict and a clear increase in budget allocations.

88. The COVID-19 crisis made clear the centrality of partnerships. New and innovative approaches, including gender-sensitive digital solutions, were developed during the pandemic between Governments, United Nations agencies and non-State partners such as non-profit organizations and the private sector. UNDP also learned of the importance of pre-existing networks and relationships as well as the benefit of its extensive capacity to respond to COVID-19 through local action. Looking ahead, UNDP will continue nurturing its relationships with Governments, and establishing deeper relationships with civil society, including grass-roots women's organizations, and with a range of new think tanks to build national, regional and global platforms for policy and social change.