**Ranking of the top three impediments to gender parity at the P-4 to D-2 levels of the United Nations system by entity, based on data from the Entity Survey**

Thirty entities of a total of 32 provided data on impediments to the achievement of gender balance at the P-4 to D-2 levels[[1]](#footnote-1). All responding entities noted that they continue to encounter obstacles in one or several of the eight categories of impediments, which, in order of importance, include[[2]](#footnote-2): an inadequate level of qualified female applicants; lack of accountability; lack of special measures; uncongenial organizational culture and lack of adequate outreach; inability to enforce gender policies and/or provisions; lack of FWAs and lack of a gender balance focal point system.

Crucially, the number one ranking of impediments corresponds to the previous reporting period, indicating that the same obstacles persist (A/65/334) and insufficient progress has been made. In addition, this report also includes “organizational culture” and “the inability to enforce gender policies and/or provisions” as additional impediments.

**Low number of qualified female applicants.** Sixteen of the 30 entities (53 per cent) cited a low number of qualified female applicants as the first or second most significant obstacle to gender parity, compared to 76 per cent in 2007. Fourteen ranked it as the most significant impediment, 2 and 4 respectively identified it as the second and third most significant. Equally noteworthy, however, is that a third of entities reported that it did not constitute one of the top three impediments to progress. This represents an increase in the number of entities who do not perceive this to be a significant issue, since 2007 and 2009.

**Lack of accountability.** Fifty per cent of the entities identified ‘lack of accountability’ as one of the top three impediments to attainment of parity, compared to 41 percent (11 entities) in 2009 and 44 percent in 2007. Of these, 7 entities ranked it as second or third in importance, indicating that a lack of accountability at a managerial level is real concern amongst entities. This points to the urgent need to establish a more effective system of checks and balances, and highlights the importance of the UN-SWAP and Manager’s Compacts.

**Lack of special measures.** A need for special measures for gender equality was identified by 13 entities as one of the top three impediments to the goal of attaining gender parity, an increase of 1 since 2009. The majority of these entities do not have any special measures in place, but the fact that a number of them do again speaks to the lack of clarity on what constitutes special measures. Three considered the lack of special measures to be the most important and 7 viewed it as the second most important. It was not mentioned as a top impediment by 17 entities, an increase from 14 compared to 2010; however, survey analysis suggests that many entities are unaware of the full range of special measures on offer.

**Organizational Culture.** Organizational culture constitutes a new dimension of the survey and refers to the ingrained attitudes and norms which impact on the promotion, retention and appointment of women. Organizational culture is critical to achieving parity, and can be a strong predictor of the proportion of women in higher-level positions. Six out of 30 entities cited organizational culture as either the first or second of their top 3 impediments to parity; however, 11 listed it as third in importance suggesting that it permeates consistently but perhaps more indirectly.

**Lack of outreach in recruitment.** The need for outreach in recruitment is closely related to the low number of qualified female applicants. It ranked as one of the top three impediments for 13 entities, the same number as the last reporting period but a smaller proportion than in 2007. Two entities ranked it as the most important obstacle, another 8 as the second most important and 3 as the third most significant impediment to gender parity. In broad terms, the lack of outreach in recruitment gained in significance as an impediment to progress, since 5 more entities rank it as the second most significant obstacle. In addition, of the 16 entities that ranked “low number of qualified women applicants” as their first or second impediment, 7 also listed lack of outreach in recruitment as one of their three main impediments. For the remaining 17 entities, or 52 per cent, lack of outreach in recruitment was not seen as one of the 3 major obstacles, up from 32 per cent in 2007. In light of these findings, it is useful to note the range of entities that are prioritizing outreach mechanisms as part of their strategies to improve gender balance in recruitment.

**Inability to enforce gender policies and/or provisions.** This variable constituted a new addition for this report and is linked to a lack of accountability, but specifically for enforcing and upholding gender balance mechanisms (A/65/334).Five of the 30 entities listed this as the first or second of their top 3 impediments. No agency listed it as third, and for 25 agencies the inability to enforce gender policies was not viewed as a major challenge.

**Lack of flexible work arrangements (FWA); lack of a gender balance focal point system.** Four entities identified lack of flexible work arrangements as one of their top 3 impediments; one entity ranked it second and 3 ranked it third. The ranking of this impediment has thus declined since 2007, when 10 entities listed it as one of their top 3 impediments. With regard to the lack of a gender balance focal point system, 3 out of the 30 entities listed it as 1 of their top 3 impediments, compared to 5 from since 2009 and 7 since 2007. This decline can be attributed to the increase in the number of entities that have a focal point in place.

It should be noted that whilst the number of entities with FWAs and Focal Points has increased, there remain a number of issues in terms of their effective promulgation. For example, whilst 18 entities reported having focal points, 61 per cent also noted that their focal points are allocated less than 10 per cent of time for focal point duties. Similarly, whilst all entities have some form of FWA in place, usage remains disconcertingly low.

Table 16.1

**Major Impediments to achieving gender parity at the P-4 to D-2 levels**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Organization** | **Low numbers of qualified female applicants** | **Lack of accountability** | **Lack of special measures for gender equality** | **Organizational culture** | **Lack of outreach** | **Inability to enforce gender policies and/or provisions** | **Lack of flexible work arrangements** | **Lack of gender balance focal point system** |
| FAO | 1 |  | 2 | 3 |  |  |  |  |
| IAEA | 1 | 3 |  | 2 |  |  |  |  |
| ICAO | 1 |  | 2 |  | 3 |  |  |  |
| ICJ |  | 1 | 2 |  |  |  |  | 3 |
| ICSC |  | 1 |  | 3 | 2 |  |  |  |
| IFAD | 1 | 2 |  |  |  |  | 3 |  |
| ILO | 3 |  | 1 |  |  | 2 |  |  |
| IMO | 3 |  | 2 | 1 |  |  |  |  |
| ITC |  | 1 |  | 2 | 3 |  |  |  |
| ITC-ILO |  | 2 | 3 |  | 1 |  |  |  |
| ITU | 1 |  | 2 |  | 3 |  |  |  |
| PAHO |  | 1 | 2 | 3 |  |  |  |  |
| UN Secretariat | 2 | 3 |  |  | 1 |  |  |  |
| UN Women |  |  |  | 3 |  | 1 | 2 |  |
| UNAIDS |  | 2 | 1 | 3 |  |  |  |  |
| UNDP | 3 | 1 |  | 2 |  |  |  |  |
| UNESCO | 2 |  |  | 1 |  |  | 3 |  |
| UNHCR |  | 1 |  |  |  | 2 |  | 3 |
| UNICEF | 1 |  | 3 |  | 2 |  |  |  |
| UNIDO | 3 | 1 |  |  |  |  |  | 2 |
| UNITAR | 1 |  |  | 3 | 2 |  |  |  |
| UNJSPF |  | 3 | 1 |  | 2 |  |  |  |
| UNOPS | 1 |  |  | 3 |  | 2 |  |  |
| UNRWA | 1 |  |  | 3 | 2 |  |  |  |
| UNU | 1 |  | 3 |  | 2 |  |  |  |
| UPU | 1 |  |  | 3 |  | 2 |  |  |
| WFP |  | 1 | 2 | 3 |  |  |  |  |
| WHO | 1 |  |  |  | 2 |  | 3 |  |
| WIPO | 1 | 3 |  | 2 |  |  |  |  |
| WMO | 1 |  |  | 3 | 2 |  |  |  |
| **Number of 1s** | **14** | **8** | **3** | **2** | **2** | **1** | **0** | **0** |
| **Number of 2s** | **2** | **3** | **7** | **4** | **8** | **4** | **1** | **1** |
| **Number of 3s** | **4** | **4** | **3** | **11** | **3** | **0** | **3** | **2** |
| **Total** | 20 | 15 | 13 | 17 | 13 | 5 | 4 | 3 |

*Sources:* Entity Survey (2012).

1. Excluding UNWTO and UNFPA, who did not consider impediments relevant given their high proportion of women. UNW responded from the perspective of its overview of the UN system. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Based on the total number of entities identifying each impediment as the number one obstacle to progress towards gender parity. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)