

# Update on the implementation of General Assembly Resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations Development System

## UN-Women's Information Note

June 2020

### I. Introduction

1. UN-Women is pleased to provide its Executive Board with an update on the Entity's engagement in the repositioning of the UN Development System, supplementing earlier information notes presented to the Executive Board in February 2020 and earlier. UN-Women continues to make the necessary changes to fully align with UNDS reforms and leverage its comparative advantages in support of gender equality and women's empowerment. It does so in close coordination with the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General, and with the support of United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO).
2. UN-Women focused its engagement in UN reform processes in support of the following objectives:
  - Ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment figures centrally in new/revised frameworks, structures and processes in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.<sup>1</sup>
  - Ensuring that the UN system continues to support a strong normative agenda and promote the participation of key stakeholders including civil society in policy making and inter-governmental processes;
  - Ensuring that smaller UN entities, such as UN-Women, enhance their ability to make an impact in a cost-effective manner and that they benefit from harmonization and streamlining of business processes to unlock greater resources for programmes that improve the lives of women and girls, and, are responsive to their changing needs and demands.
3. In line with these emphases, in 2020, UN-Women focuses on:
  - Engagement in all relevant UNSDG working groups and processes to ensure a strong integration of gender perspectives, as well as with the UN Development Cooperation Office;

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<sup>1</sup>This includes the requisite participation in process to ensure mainstreaming of gender perspectives into strategic documents, such as the System-Wide Strategic Document and the [UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks \(UNSDCF\)](#), the [Companion Pieces to the Corporate Framework](#) as well as support to embed gender responsive dimensions into systems central to execution of the reform agenda. Examples include, among others, embedding the gender marker into ERP systems and the COVID-19 Fund, advocating for the establishment of a gender task team under the UNSDG, incorporation of gender relevant accountability indicators into the Information Management System into which the RCs must mandatorily report, and, concerted system-wide efforts in support of gender parity.

- Leveraging its membership in the Secretary General’s Executive Committee to bring attention to the gender dimensions of the key issues facing the UN system, including, most prominently, in the COVID-19 pandemic related streams of work;
  - Optimizing the Entity’s ability to deliver as part of a repositioned UNDS through its internal Change process, including the right-sizing of field presence and better leveraging UN Country Teams (UNCTs), particularly where UN-Women is nonresident.
4. This paper provides an update of key developments since February 2020 in UN-Women’s engagement in the various aspects related to UNDS repositioning.

## **II. Supporting the new UN Resident Coordinator System**

### **a. Management and Accountability Framework (MAF)**

5. In January 2020, UNDCO, and UN-Women Senior Leadership authored a joint letter to UN Resident Coordinators (RCs) and UN-Women Country Representatives requesting both to discuss the UNCT specific performance goal for the Personal Performance Management and Development (PMD) Plan for 2020 and to ensure that the respective RC provides inputs on this performance goal at the end of the year. Accordingly, and to ensure alignment with MAF requirements, UN-Women developed standard performance goal indicators on their UNCT related activities.
6. RCs have been part of assessments in the selection process of UN-Women Representatives and Regional Directors.

### **b. Support to the RC pool**

7. Given the strategic importance of being in the RC pool, UN Women both nominated candidates for assessment and presented candidates to RC positions for consideration. The results are still pending. Also, UN-Women has provided inputs to the evaluation/review of Resident Coordinator Assessment Centre (RCAC).

### **c. Funding: levy implementation, cost sharing**

8. UN-Women commenced collection of the 1 percent coordination levy from donors in the second quarter of 2019 on tightly earmarked contributions. Quarterly reports were submitted in a timely manner to UNDCO, with the following funds remitted:
- Q2 2019 - USD \$ 5,558
  - Q3 2019 - USD \$ 57,643
  - Q4 2019 - USD \$242,912
  - Q1 2020 – USD \$ 23,759

9. For the 1 percent coordination levy, on behalf of UNDCO, UN Women collected \$306,073. UN-Women's initial experience with the implementation of the levy appears to indicate that few donors offset this requirement with equivalent additional contributions.
10. As advised by the Deputy Secretary-General, UN-Women will complete an impact assessment of the 1 percent coordination levy on donor engagement, and also provide details of UN-Women's transaction costs associated with collection of the 1 percent levy by the second quarter of 2020, after a full year of implementation.

### **III. Funding and Financing**

#### **a. Funding compact**

11. The Funding Compact seeks to provide the financial support required to align the UN development system with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Compact recognizes that significant changes in funding are required to achieve the 2030 Agenda. With the share of regular resources to total voluntary contributions falling from 39 percent in 2018 to 29 percent in 2019, UN-Women together with funding partners sought to reverse the downward trend by maintaining the Funding Compact threshold of 30 percent.
12. UN-Women integrated entity-specific Funding Compact tracking and reporting to the Executive Board with the Structured Dialogue on Financing in September 2019. It included a tracking matrix in the official report and undertook joint informal Executive Board sessions with New York-based UN Funds and Programmes on Funding Compact implementation in August 2019. The Entity also explored options to improve the structured dialogues in January 2020. UN-Women contributed to system-wide reporting to ECOSOC as part of the Secretary-General's Annual report on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review.

#### **b. Reporting on financial data**

13. UN-Women recognizes the importance of improving transparency of system-wide financial data and has actively engaged the UNSDG in the development of the financial data cube. UN-Women provided its 2018 financial statements data to the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), in accordance with UN data cube standards. UN-Women also expects to continue to update its Enterprise Resource Planning System and Reporting Tools to capture data requirements for Standard III Geographical Location, Standard IV Financing Instruments, Standard V Sustainable Development Goals and Standard VI Contributor Type. These will continue to be rolled out in Q2 of 2020.

### **c. High-Level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality**

14. In 2019, the High-level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality<sup>2</sup> concluded that financing for gender equality remains insufficient across the United Nations and that without investment in gender equality outcomes, results will remain elusive. The Task Force recommendations seek to practically address current gaps and strengthen the resource base for gender equality, including through the implementation of a Gender Equality Marker system at entity and at Country Team levels. In December 2019 the Secretary General endorsed the recommendations which UN entities are now implementing, to the extent possible with UN-Women support. The UN Secretariat, for instance, is embedding gender markers in UMOJA, the ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning systems) where planning, procurement, human resources and financial operations are registered and reported (Recommendation 3). In addition, UN-Women is supporting the integration of Gender Equality criteria in the design, selection, implementation and monitoring of pooled funds. UN-Women has created Guidance for the integration of gender markers and financial targets for gender equality and the empowerment of women in the recently created UN COVID-19 MPTF (Recommendation 6).
15. UN Women is also conducting a mapping and costing exercise of the human and financial gender architecture in the UN system to establish a baseline of existing investment in human resources dedicated to achieving the mandate-related objectives for gender equality and the empowerment of women in the entities of the UN system.

## **IV. Strengthening system-wide support to the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda**

### **a. Support to System-wide response to COVID-19**

16. UN-Women consistently engages in inter-agency mechanisms addressing the UN system's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, gender equality has emerged as a central tenet of the response, ranging from advocacy from the highest levels, to the inclusion of gender equality perspectives in any number of policy briefs, strategic messages and publications emanating from UN system entities to the mandatory inclusion of the gender equality marker in the call for proposals of the COVID-19 Fund.
17. In line with its UN system coordination mandate, UN-Women made systematic inter-agency efforts to drive policy coherence, especially with respect to mainstreaming gender perspectives, across the system. These included:
  - Participation in the weekly UN leadership meetings (i.e., Secretary-General's Executive Committee Meetings) where, *inter alia*, COVID-19 constitutes a standing item.

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<sup>2</sup> The High-Level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality established as a result of a June 2017 EC decision to review UN budgets/expenditures across the system.

- Membership in the Crisis Management Team led by World Health Organisation (WHO), also to ensure a seat at the table for discussions and opportunities related to funding.
- Substantive engagement with the Office of the Secretary-General for the development of COVID-19 related Secretary-General Policy Briefs on ‘The impact of COVID-19 on women’; ‘A Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19’; ‘COVID-19 and Human Rights’; and ‘The Impact of COVID-19 on older persons.’<sup>3</sup>
- Consistent engagement with the UNSDG, for the development of the ‘UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19’.
- Leveraging current Chairpersonship of UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD), UN-Women consistently promoted an intersectional approach for a system-wide disability inclusive response to COVID-19<sup>4</sup>, and, partnering with an inter-agency disability inclusion response to COVID-19.
- Membership as ex-officio member of the Advisory Committee of the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) on the COVID-19 response and recovery where UN-Women successfully advocated for the mandatory integration of the gender marker in the call for proposals.<sup>5</sup>
- Securing agreement through the MPTF Advisory Committee that UN-Women’s ‘Women Count data hub’<sup>6</sup> will be the common platform for gender-disaggregated data across UN agencies to facilitate gender-responsive proposals under the MPTF.
- Participation, at the regional and country levels, in inter-agency work on the COVID-19 responses including in socio-economic impact assessment exercises.
- Participation in the Inter-Agency Mental Health Strategy Implementation Board as well as its reference group on domestic abuse to develop and share awareness resources.<sup>7</sup>

18. UN-Women’s support to the system-wide response to COVID-19 in the Human Resources context remains swift and effective. In particular:

- The Human Resource Team engaged in inter-agency discussions to harmonize special measures in the CEB HR Network, the HR Network Standing Committee on Field Duty Stations (the Field Group), the HLCCM Taskforce on the Future of

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<sup>3</sup> All Policy Briefs and relevant documents are available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources>

<sup>4</sup> This included, among others, consultation with women leaders and human rights defenders of the organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) on Impact of COVID-19 on women with disabilities (April 2020).

<sup>5</sup> UN-Women, through the COVID-19 Fund Secretariat, prepared and circulated a Guidance Note to support applicant entities, established a dedicated help desk, and reviewed the 55 proposals submitted in the first call of the Fund.

<sup>6</sup> <https://data.unwomen.org/women-count>

<sup>7</sup> These, among others, enabled UN-Women to respond to the need of support from UN Gender Focal Points, personnel and managers by periodically providing tailored guidance with practical and context-specific recommendations for advancing an enabling environment for all in the UN common system.

the UN workforce (in particular on deliverable 4 Work life balance) and other informal HR networks across the UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes.

- UN-Women liaised closely with UNDP on COVID-19 related special measures and exceptions administered by UNDP and which govern global payroll, benefits, and entitlements services
- Although UN-Women country offices are guided by CEB HR Network Administrative Guidelines for Offices on the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and decisions made by the UNCT (such as harmonized measure on salary advances, medevac, etc.), UN-Women HQ adapted relevant guidance for UN-Women headquarters and for affiliate workforce categories (consultants, Service Contractors, UNVs, interns) not covered by the CEB HR Network Guidance. On affiliate workforce measures UN-Women aligned its special measures closely with UNDP and UNFPA.

#### **b. Strengthening system-wide analysis, planning and reporting through UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs)**

19. UN-Women contributed to the development of the Guidance to support UNRCOs and stakeholders to translate Common Country Assessment (CCA) into an actionable Cooperation framework including tools on Prioritization, Theory of Change, and Development of Results Frameworks.
20. UN-Women has ensured that gender equality and women's empowerment are centrally positioned in new and revised structures and processes supporting the 2030 Agenda. These encompass UNSDCF guidance documents, UNSDCF companion pieces<sup>8</sup>, gender equality markers and gender mainstreaming tools, as well as efforts towards gender parity. The Entity also developed training manual for effective integration of gender equality principles in the UNSDCF.

#### **c. Capacity development**

21. UN-Women provided inputs into the design and update of the RC induction process. This included the design and content, development of training materials and definition of methodologies for the induction workshop as well as including key gender issues and perspectives therein.
22. Through its Training Centre, UN Women supported capacity development efforts for the UN System, with the objective of strengthening the incorporation of gender perspectives into programmes and projects corresponding to the multiple sectors and mandates represented by the system and its diverse stakeholders. In addition, it contributed to organizational culture reform by raising awareness, developing skills and knowledge through trainings directed at positive behavioral/organizational change and by supporting the fostering of common goals with harmonized standards.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://unwomen.sharepoint.com/Policy-Programming/ProgrammeDivision/CF/Pages/Guidance-Documents.aspx>

Staff from 65 UN agencies comprised 45% of the trainees and participants in UN-Women specialised courses.

23. At the UNCT level, UN-Women had been requested to facilitate trainings on human rights and gender equality. However, given the COVID-19 context, such in person trainings are currently on hold.

**d. Tracking system-wide results at corporate and country level**

24. Based on lessons learned from the 2019 Strategic Notes (SNs) drafting process, UN-Women is currently revising its guidance for Strategic Notes so as to integrate the UNSDCF principles and guidelines into the design of the Strategic Notes and to ensure effective contribution to the implementation of UNSDCF through its SNs. The revised guidance aims to target those country offices expecting to draft a new Strategic Note this year for implementation in 2021. In this manner UN-Women expects to contribute to overall preparations for system wide tracking of results both at the corporate and country level.
25. As an integral part of the Secretary General's initiative for the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS), UN-Women expects to report on progress on the implementation of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy with a focus on gender responsive and intersectional approaches.
26. UN-Women continues to provide capacity development and technical support for the implementation of the UN-SWAP 2.0 and its country-level equivalent, the UNCT-SWAP. In 2019, 68 UN entities and 33 UNCTs submitted UN-SWAP/UNCT-SWAP reports. These accountability frameworks continue to contribute to strengthened partnerships, facilitated knowledge sharing and systematic monitoring of progress or gaps across a range of indicators at both the corporate and UNCT levels. 2019 analysis of SDG related gender results revealed *inter alia* that the United Nations system contributes primarily to gender-related Goals in socio-economic and human rights areas, leaving gaps in important areas such as infrastructure or energy.
27. Through technical support provided by its coordination staff at headquarters, regional and country levels, as well as its global UNCT-SWAP helpdesk, UN-Women continued to support UNCTs to undertake UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard (UNCT-SWAP) assessments. In 2019, 17 UNCTs prepared a comprehensive periodic UNCT-SWAP report and 16 UNCTs prepared an annual progress report. This represented the first time that UNCTs prepared annual UNCT-SWAP reports. To support this pilot, UN-Women co-organized an online training with UNDCO on the UNCT-SWAP annual reporting methodology.

28. Approximately 60 UNCTs are currently piloting UN INFO<sup>9</sup>, a central reporting system for all UNCTs, and which includes mandatory reporting on resources allocated collectively under the UNSDCF cycle to support national gender equality priorities (the ‘UNCT Gender Equality Marker’). As of end-March 2020, UNCTs had scored roughly 4,200 key activities against the UNCT Gender Equality Marker. To support this work, UN-Women established a UNCT Gender Equality Marker Helpdesk in April 2020.

#### **e. Improving the production and use of gender data for SDG monitoring and implementation**

29. Together with UN partner agencies, UN-Women continues to support members of the Inter-Agency and Experts Group on SDGs (IAGE-SDGs) to ensure the incorporation of gender perspectives in the global monitoring and reporting on SDGs. As member of the Inter-Agency and Experts Group on SDGs (IAEG-SDGs) and through its technical guidance to the data disaggregation workstream of the IAEG-SDGs, UN-Women strongly advocated for multi-dimensional disaggregation of SDG indicators from a gender perspective. UN-Women continues to expand partnerships with diverse data providers, across the UN system and beyond to ensure SDG areas and related areas are monitored from a gender perspective.

#### **f. Engagement in coordination bodies**

30. UN-Women contributed to key UNDS repositioning processes through its engagement in the UNSDG Core Group and other UNSDG Working Groups, with staff deployed to task teams and working groups at global, regional, and country levels.
31. The UN-Women Executive Board Secretariat represents UN-Women as the lead agency this year for all joint activities of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP. In this regard, UN-Women played a key role in coordinating and promoting the concept of ‘harmonization of the horizontal governance’ of the operational agencies. Accordingly, the UN Women Executive Board Secretariat is coordinating the production of the background paper on the “Working Methods of the Executive Boards” expected to be before the Executive Boards at their June sessions. As well, the Secretariat, supports and organizes frequent and regular meetings among the Presidents of the Executive Boards; and among the Executive Board Secretariats.

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<sup>9</sup> UN INFO<[www.uninfo.org](http://www.uninfo.org)> is a planning, monitoring and reporting system to track how the UN system at the country level supports governments to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda.



## **V. Advancing shared business operations and common premises**

### **a. Efficiencies from Business Operations Strategy (BOS)**

32. UN-Women continued its active engagement in the Business Innovation Group (BIG), which is leading system-wide efforts to identify efficiency gains in the area of common business operations through its different workstreams. It engaged in agency specific briefings on Business Operations Strategy (BOS) with the UN DCO team to review a recommended action plan for 2020 for UN-Women to engage further in the BOS.<sup>10</sup> The Entity also noted the outcomes of the ‘UN Marketplace Survey’ for Global Shared Service Centers, which aimed to map existing service needs and potential offerings to and from different UN entities. The survey demonstrated UN-Women’s strong commitment to utilizing shared services with UN-Women being in the top 5 agencies requesting shared services. This survey will be further refined in late 2020.

### **b. Moving toward common premises**

33. UN-Women continued its active participation in the Inter-Agency Task Team on Common Premises supporting six pilots now completed. Working closely with DCO, UN-Women is supporting the development of the strategy to establish UN Common premises worldwide. UN-Women will continue to promulgate the consolidation of options and strategies within UN-Women locations with the immediate focus on consolidation through government-provided and leased premises. Construction of new premises will be reserved only for a limited number of capital city projects. The entity’s goal is to maintain the achieved results of 84% Common premises worldwide.

## **VI. Optimizing UN-Women to deliver in a repositioned UNDS**

34. With the dual objectives of optimizing the Entity’s institutional capacity to deliver in the context of a repositioned UNDS while also addressing the issues identified in evaluations and assessments including the 2018 Multilateral Organizational Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) report, UN-Women is continuing to advance its ambitions for a more invigorated and mature development organization, driving for impact with a stronger, inter-connected field and more efficient HQ, that can deliver as part of a reformed UN Development System. The intention is to enable a stronger field presence, more efficient processes and better governance to support an effective and mature development organization.

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<sup>10</sup> UN-Women had several personnel that were trained in BOS 2.0 advanced level training.

#### **a. Optimizing UN-Women's field presence**

35. UN Women strives to ensure that it is present where it is most needed, most effective and optimally capacitated to deliver on its mandate, prioritizing areas of highest needs and capitalizing on opportunities created at country level. To bring consistency across UN-Women presences worldwide, whilst allowing flexibility to adapt presences to country context and national priorities, UN-Women is developing, clarifying and refining the functional setup and 'menu of services' for each office type. It is also expected that this approach will allow for growth whilst maintaining consistency and as well as a rapid programmatic and organizational pivot in response to COVID-19.
36. To provide support to countries where UN-Women does not maintain a full-fledged presence, UN-Women has been piloting several modalities of support to UNCTs and governments. The encouraging initial findings of this pilot signal that:
- UN-Women can respond to the requirements of the Executive Board and beneficiaries to implement activities in locations in which it is not present.
  - UN-Women can ensure adequate monitoring and oversight arrangements through neighbouring offices.
  - UN-Women maintains a presence in the UNCT and credibility with the government, which it can further leverage to embed its normative and coordination work.
  - Support costs from donor contributions do not have to be diverted towards establishing and maintaining a country presence.
  - Such modalities could allow further joint programming and resource mobilization opportunities.
37. The Entity expects to continue to pilot these modalities in 2020 with the aim of developing a set typology for non-resident modalities to be standardized across the entity. An early finding appears to indicate that a clearly defined 'menu of services' for each level of presence, including where non-resident, constitutes a crucial success factor for these modalities. This finding serves to further motivate UN Women to clarify such "menus of services" across all office types, Resident or Non-resident.

#### **b. Improving and streamlining business processes and workflows**

38. Since the last update and as part of UN-Women's work to bring greater focus and quality to its work, the organization successfully completed the pilot phase for quarterly portfolio review. Drawing on the lessons learned, UN-Women is revising the methodology to be rolled out to other regions. Upon completion of the portfolio reviews for all programmes and projects, UN-Women expects to utilize the baseline data to set informed targets and indicators to track and monitor performance through Quarterly Business Reviews.

39. Following the 2019 Risk Management Maturity Assessment by the Independent Evaluation and Audit Service, UN-Women is implementing the action plan to address the findings and recommendations aimed at propelling the organization to a higher level of maturity which then also strengthens its accountability and governance frameworks. As a first step, UN-Women is currently revising its risk management framework and related policy and guidance documents. Also, this action plan seeks to assist management to embed and strengthen its ability to plan, monitor, and report on its performance, ultimately enhancing its ability to achieve its strategic and operational objectives.
40. In addition, UN-Women is pleased to report on its participation in the inter-agency High Level Committee Task Force on Risk Management the terms of reference of which include, *inter alia*, the need for UN organizations to better collaborate and share best practice on best approaches for embedding risk management frameworks as well as building sustainable and pragmatic mechanisms for risk information sharing for better decision making.

## **VII. Conclusion**

41. The focus of UNDS reform shifts now from conceptualization to implementation. Accordingly, UN-Women expects to continue both to proactively engage in system-wide processes to ensure that their outcomes support the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment, and promote the implementation of system-wide commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women amongst partners in the UNDS. This includes UN-Women leadership at the country level through the UNSDCF engagement, mobilizing simultaneously a range of partners including civil society and private sector, both of which support to amplify implementation of normative commitments. In addition, UN-Women expects to continue to contribute to acceleration of progress through the decade of action for the SDGs, including through the priority accorded to support COVID-19 responses globally.
42. Looking ahead, UN-Women will engage closely with key elements of the reform still underway, including the finalization of the Funding Compact, and the global and regional level chapters of the MAF. UN-Women believes that the visibility of results and a strong link between results and resources remain essential to enhance the financing of the Entity.
43. UN-Women will capitalize on the Mid-Term Review of its current Strategic Plan in 2020 to optimally deploy its triple mandate and further advance the UNDS reform agenda, validating its reform responsiveness while consolidating rapid organizational pivot in response to COVID-19. The Entity, as part of the broader UN development

system, will continue to support countries to respond to the COVID-19 response and accelerate SDG implementation with a renewed focus on the principle of 'Leaving No One Behind (LNOB)'.