

UN-SWAP 2.0

UN STRATEGIC PLANNING AND GENDER EQUALITY
AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN: GUIDANCE

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UN strategic planning and gender equality and the empowerment of women: Guidance

Why you should use this guidance

Everyone agrees gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEEW) is central to the UN's rights-based mandate. Determining the extent to which GEEW should be included in strategic plans can be challenging, but also offers opportunities. This Guidance supports strategic planners and gender focal points in reflecting gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEEW) in the most appropriate way and includes examples that can be drawn upon.

What is the mandate?

The [Beijing Platform for Action](#) endorsed a dual mainstreaming and targeted approach to achieving GEEW. The rationale is while the overall goal of Member States and the UN is to promote gender equality through mainstreaming, specific disadvantages faced by women, men, girls and boys need to be dealt with by direct or targeted action.

The [Sustainable Development Goals outcome document](#) retains this twin-track approach by mainstreaming gender across all SDGs and including targeted measures through SDG 5.

The [2016 QCPR](#) calls for full implementation of the System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on GEEW. The [UN-SWAP](#), endorsed by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), requires that entity main strategic planning documents include and achieve at least one high level result on GEEW, tied to the SDGs – see below.

[ECOSOC in 2019](#) called on the UN system to ensure that corporate and country-level strategic documents mainstream a gender perspective through a dedicated gender equality outcome as well as the integration of GEEW across all other SDG-related outcome areas.

The twin track approach is the UN system's official strategy for achieving transformative change. It incorporates both **gender-targeted interventions** to support gender equality and women's empowerment in specific social groups, specific organizations and/or processes as well as **gender-integrated efforts** to ensure that gender equality is integrated across the substantive work of all sectors.¹

Why mainstreaming alone is not enough, and why we need a twin-track approach

Gender-related inequalities can only be overcome by changing their structural causes, as agreed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Gender-based inequality remains one of the most pervasive forms of inequality, found in all societies, and affecting a larger proportion of the world's population than any other form of inequality.

While some inequalities can be attributed to uneven development, gender-based discrimination is an injustice that pervades all societies and which poverty reduction and growth alone cannot remedy – hence dedicated action is needed. **The SDG principle of reaching the furthest behind**

¹ UNDG (2018) "Resource Book for Mainstreaming Gender in Common Programming at the Country Level." New York: UN Development Group.

first requires a dedicated focus on GEEW. None of the SDGs will be met unless gender equality is achieved.

Significant research demonstrates that women’s empowerment and gender equality have a catalytic effect on the achievement of human development, good governance, sustained peace, and harmonious dynamics between the environment and human populations – all at the core of the SDGs. Yet while gender equality can contribute to poverty reduction, economic growth, and effective governance, the reverse – rising incomes, democratic political participation, and peace – do not necessarily enhance women’s rights and empowerment. For this reason, the collective responsibility for achieving GEEW requires dedicated policy attention.²

There is also widespread agreement, in a large number of reviews and evaluations over the last decade, that mainstreaming gender aspects alone does not adequately support agencies achieving their gender equality mandate.³ A synthesis of 25 evaluations found: “Individual evaluations have shown that mainstreaming has not succeeded in making gender everyone’s business, and that gender equality results have been fragmented and not scaled up.”⁴ This is primarily because **without a dedicated outcome GEEW becomes everyone’s, and no one’s, business, and there is more often than not inadequate senior manager leadership and allocation of resources.** And as we know, where there is limited leadership for gender equality, there is little action and a lack of corporate accountability.

UN-SWAP 2.0 requirements

Developed through intensive consultation with over 50 UN entities, including the UN Strategic Planning Network and an inter-agency Working Group on Results, **the UN-SWAP has established agreed standards for strategic planning and GEEW for the entire UN system.** Sixty-eight UN entities reported in 2019 on performance against the UN-SWAP Performance Indicators. The Secretary-General then reports on UN-SWAP aggregate results to the ECOSOC, including performance against the indicators below.⁵

The UN-SWAP 2.0 requirements for planning for and achieving GEEW related results are:

² UN Women (2013) *A Transformative Stand-alone Goal on Achieving Gender Equality, Women’s Rights and Women’s Empowerment: Imperatives and Key Components*. New York: UN Women.

³ See among many other reviews: UN Women, Expert Group Meeting, *Gender Mainstreaming Approaches in Development Programming: Being Strategic and Achieving Results in an Evolving Development Context*. Santa Domingo. 2013. Other important syntheses are: Moser, C., and A. Moser. "Gender Mainstreaming since Beijing: A Review of Success and Limitations in International Institutions." *Gender & Development* 13.2 (2005): 11-22; Lyle-Gonga, M. "A Critical Analysis of Gender Mainstreaming." *Politics & Gender* 9.2 (2013): 209-13; Caglar, G. "Gender Mainstreaming." *Politics & Gender* 9.3 (2013): 336-44.

⁴ African Development Bank (2012) *Mainstreaming Gender Equality: A Road to Results or a Road to Nowhere?* Tunis: African Development Bank Group

⁵ For the ECOSOC report see: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/major-resolutions/economic-and-social-council>

Approaches requirements	Meets requirements	Exceeds requirements
Main strategic planning document includes at least one high-level result on gender equality and the empowerment of women which will contribute to meeting SDG targets, and reference to SDG 5 targets	<p>Main strategic planning document includes at least one high-level result on gender equality and the empowerment of women which will contribute to meeting SDG targets, and reference to SDG 5 targets</p> <p>and</p> <p>Entity has achieved or is on track to achieve the high-level result on gender equality and the empowerment of women</p>	<p>Main strategic planning document includes at least one high-level transformative result on gender equality and the empowerment of women which will contribute to meeting SDG targets, and reference to SDG 5 targets</p> <p>and</p> <p>Entity has achieved or is on track to achieve the high-level transformative result on gender equality and the empowerment of women</p>

UN entities are therefore required to both include a high-level result on GEEW, linked to the SDGs, but also demonstrate that they are achieving the result. This requirement is in place so entities can demonstrate that they are achieving their gender mandates and supporting Member States in reaching the SDGs. More detailed guidance on this indicator and two companion indicators on strategic planning can be found [here](#).

Please note that, to meet UN-SWAP requirements, the high-level result – at the outcome or higher level - needs to be in the main strategic planning document itself, and not only in an accompanying document such as a gender policy. And the result needs to have a specific focus on GEEW. A dedicated high-level result should also be accompanied by integration of gender perspectives throughout all other high-level results as appropriate to the entity’s mandate and context. It is also important to ensure that the high-level result and the integrated results are connected and coherent.

The high-level GEEW result should be accompanied by indicators to track results.⁶ This is of particular importance as entities are required to demonstrate that they have achieved or are on track to achieve the high level result(s) in their main strategic planning document. In addition these documents should include gender-sensitive indicators to track gender mainstreamed results. There are two main types of gender-sensitive indicators: quantitative oriented indicators such as changes in educational or health status of women, men, boys and girls; and qualitative oriented indicators which are usually more effective at tracking changes in social relations and norms over time, and hence structural changes to gender inequality, such as women and men’s participation and control over resources, and changes in cultural norms These two types of indicators are ideally used in combination to provide a full picture of how GEEW is being promoted.

⁶ As per the recommendations of the High-Level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality.(July 2019).

One reason for including a high-level result on GEEW is to ensure that adequate resources are dedicated to GEEW, dependent on entity mandate.⁷ The UN-SWAP includes two Performance Indicators on resource tracking and allocation so that entities can systematically track their allocations to GEEW and establish a minimum level of resources required for achieving both targeted and mainstreamed results.⁸ This Performance Indicator on strategic planning therefore goes hand in hand with the Performance Indicators on resource tracking and allocation, and more details can be found in the [UN-SWAP Technical Notes](#).

Why transformative results?

The SDGs are at their heart transformative. The SDG Outcome Document⁹ defines transformative results as follows:

We envisage a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity. A world which invests in its children and in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation. A world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed. A just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met.

This is why to exceed UN-SWAP requirements entities' main strategic planning documents need to include at least one high level transformative result on GEEW. Guidance on what constitutes a transformative GEEW result can be found [here](#) (scroll down to UN-SWAP 2.0 Framework and technical guidance, pages 39-40), and see below for examples.

Transformative results contribute to changes in social norms, cultural values, power structures and the root causes of gender inequalities and discrimination.

Mapping the UN's work on GEEW¹⁰

The Secretary-General's report to ECOSOC on gender mainstreaming includes an annual update on GEEW and strategic planning, focusing on: the extent to which the UN is achieving its high level gender related results; which SDGs are most and least covered across the UN in terms of promotion of GEEW; and on which thematic areas the UN is focusing. This annual analysis will support your decision making about how to include GEEW in your strategic plan, for example coordinating with other agencies and filling gaps.

⁷ Ibid, and as required by numerous General Assembly Resolutions.

⁸ There is no set figure for allocation of resources, however entities that have allocated specific resources for GEEW have done so in the 15-25% range of total entity budget. The actual figure however will vary from entity to entity.

⁹ *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1, para 8.

¹⁰ In response to the [2016 QCPR resolution](#) requesting the UN to map its support to the SDGs.

I am working on the strategic plan. What questions should I ask?

- Is the gender result at a sufficiently high level – outcome or equivalent?
- Does the high-level result focus mainly on GEEW?
- Does the strategic plan detail how your entity will support implementation of SDG 5?
- How and where does the strategic plan theory of change consider GEEW?
- How will meeting the entity gender equality mandate contribute to meeting the overall entity mandate?
- What levels of resources and budgetary commitments are required to achieve the entity's GEEW mandate?
- What kind of gender results and targets are we developing in the strategic plan vis-à-vis GEEW (see Box 1)?

Box 1: Different kinds of GEEW results

Gender blind results: do not recognize gender differences. *For example: Increased availability of HIV/AIDS services.*

Gender-targeted results: focus on addressing women and/or men in the context of their gender norms, roles and relations. *For example: Increased promotion of women's access to HIV/AIDS services.*

Gender-sensitive results: address the differential needs of and inequalities experienced by women, men, girls and boys. *For example: Land reforms concede equal rights of access and ownership to women and men.*

Gender transformative results: focus on promoting measurable change in structures, norms and behaviours. *For example: Equal levels of decision making by women and men in peace negotiations.*

Adapted from: UNDG (2018) "Resource Book for Mainstreaming Gender in Common Programming at the Country Level." New York: UN Development Group.

Are there any examples I can use?

Transformative gender-related results – exceeding requirements

The following are examples of high-level transformative results from entity main strategic planning documents. All of the statements, including in the narrative that supports them, focus on gender inequalities and how to change and transform the structures that cause these. They take a rights-based approach and take on board the need for changing norms, power structures and discrimination. If you are developing your strategic plan you can review these examples and determine if something similar could be included.

ESCWA's 2018-2019 Strategic Framework includes an overall ultimate transformative objective that is "reducing gender imbalances and improving the empowerment of women in line with international

conventions and conferences". Three related results are (1) "Strengthened institutional and legal frameworks of member States to promote gender equality and gender justice, including the elimination of violence against women"; (2) "Increased gender mainstreaming in national policies"; and (3) "Increase in monitoring and evaluation by member States of regional and institutional obligations on gender equality".

OHCHR Office Management Plan 2018-21: "International, regional and national justice systems respond more effectively and without discrimination to gender-related crimes"

UNAIDS Strategy 2016-2021: "90% of women and girls live free from gender inequality and gender-based violence to mitigate risk and impact of HIV"

UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-21: "Strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls: Significant gender inequalities persist in every region of the world, manifest as the unequal distribution of care work, lack of equitable access to decision-making and unequal access to basic services, assets and finance. Addressing these inequalities and their structural causes, and discriminatory practices that perpetuate them, requires sustained, multisectoral interventions."

UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018-2021: "Gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls, and reproductive rights are advanced in development and humanitarian settings."

UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021: "Girls and boys, especially those that are marginalized and those living in humanitarian conditions, have access to high-impact health, nutrition, HIV and early childhood development (ECD) interventions from pregnancy to adolescence."

Meeting requirements

The following results statements were all included in the main entity strategic planning document at a high level. Remember the high-level result needs to be included in your entity programme budget, strategic plan/framework or equivalent, that is the main document that directs the work of your entity. Including a high-level result in the gender policy or equivalent does not meet requirements. And there needs to be a result statement that is specific to GEEW – including gender-sensitive indicators or disaggregating data by sex is also not adequate.

DESA Programme Budget 2018-2019: "Enhanced implementation of sustainable development strategies by developing countries, including small island developing States, to formulate and implement strategies, policies, frameworks and programmes in support of sustainable development, with a special focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women and new partnerships."

ECA Programme Budget 2018-2019: "Enhanced capacity of member States and regional economic communities to design, implement and monitor policies that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls."

ECE Programme Budget 2018-2019: "Enhanced national formulation and implementation of evidence-based policies on population ageing and intergenerational and gender relations."

ECLAC Programme Budget 2018-2019: "Strengthened capacity of countries in the region to implement gender equality policies in line with the regional consensus, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international agreements."

ESCAP Programme Budget 2018-2019: "Enhanced national evidence-based policies to promote gender equality and women's empowerment towards the achievement of sustainable development."

UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018-2030: "Local people, especially women and youth, are empowered and

participate in decision-making processes in combating DLDD”

FAO Results Framework 2018-2019: “Quality services and coherent approaches to work on gender equality and women’s empowerment that result in strengthened country capacity to formulate, implement and monitor policies and programmes that provide equal opportunities for men and women.”

ILO Programme and Budget 2020-21: “Gender equality and equal opportunities and treatment for all in the world of work”

UNESCO Programme and Budget 2018-2021: “UNESCO positioned as a visible actor at the international, regional and country levels in promoting gender equality in all its fields of competence, including through advocacy, networking and innovative partnerships.”

WHO Programme Budget 2018-19: “Improved capacities in WHO, the health sector and across all government departments and agencies (whole-of-government) for addressing social determinants, gender inequalities and human rights in health, and producing equitable outcomes across the Sustainable Development Goals.”