

Implementation Guidelines

for the Gender-Responsive Procurement Model Policy Framework (GRP-MPF) for UN System Organizations

1. Introduction

The Gender-Responsive Procurement Model Policy Framework (GRP-MPF) Implementation Guidelines aim to support UN System Organizations in aligning their gender-responsive procurement (GRP) practices, taking into consideration their unique governance frameworks, mandates, and operational context.

The GRP-MPF provides policy recommendations to further develop new or existing practices within UN System Organizations, while allowing for flexibility to accommodate their diverse regulatory frameworks. The development of the GRP-MPF involved a collaborative consultation process with various stakeholders, led by a consulting team, which conducted interviews and surveys to identify gender-responsive procurement best practices, and incorporating effective gender-responsive strategies from other global organizations.

2. MPF Implementation Model

UN System Organizations are encouraged to adopt the GRP-MPF in a manner that aligns with their specific mandates, priorities, and capacities. The implementation process should strive for a comprehensive integration of these policies within the organization's existing regulatory frameworks. The goal is to embed, to the extent possible, gender-responsiveness into the procurement process as a standard practice.

The MPF provides a flexible implementation model that enables UN System Organizations to adopt or modify it to suit their specific mandates and operational requirements. The MPF Implementation Model aims to assist in the development and establishment of adaptable and robust systems, empowering Organizations across the UN System to make informed decisions guided by this framework. Therefore, the MPF is designed to be a dynamic document, evolving within an initial framework to continuously meet the changing needs of UN System Organizations.

The Implementation Guidelines, any supplementary documents and additional resources such as templates and guidance notes are intended to aid Organizations in adopting the GRP-MPF as supportive background information and are not integral components of the GRP-MPF itself. Their purpose is not to replace or be a substitute to the GRP-MPF, but to facilitate its implementation with the following caveats:

- Implementation Guidelines, any supplementary documents and additional resources provide Organizations with a recommended checklist of elements. However, these should not be seen as mandates dictating how they must implement their GRP framework.
- The use of templates and guidance notes or parts or elements thereof by Organizations is optional.
- Interested Organizations are encouraged to share the modifications and improvements they incorporate to supplementary documents with HLCM-PN Secretariat.

3. MPF Guiding Principles

The guiding principles outlined below provide direction for the ongoing development, application, and implementation of the recommended GRP-MPF policies by each Organization. They serve as a foundation for harmonizing approaches across the UN System and are designed to guide without imposing significant obligations on Organizations.

Organization Ownership: By adopting the GRP-MPF policies, Organizations seek uniformity in GRP practices, promoting a consistent approach. This strategic alignment underscores the commitment to embed gender-responsive procurement principles within procurement practices. It ensures that procedures are considered from a standardized model and tailored to reinforce gender inclusivity across all organizational activities.

Flexibility in Implementation: Considering their existing regulatory frameworks, Organizations will review the recommendations of the GRP-MPF to ensure cohesion with the overarching framework and reflective of the GRP-MPF's intent.

Consistency across the UN System: Organizations will strive for consistency in expected outcomes and outputs so that all participating Organizations can leverage and benefit from the cumulative impact generated by others. This coordinated approach facilitates a unified effort, ensuring that the collective impact is maximized across the board.

Gender-Responsive Procurement Model Policy Framework for UN System Organizations

1. Preamble

[*Organization*] **recognizes** that its procurement and supply chain management practices can be further optimized and strategically positioned towards the protection and promotion of human rights and sustainability, with a specific focus on gender equality.

[*Organization*] **recognizes** that Gender-Responsive Procurement (GRP) -as defined below-can have a transformative impact on gender equality through conducting procurement in a way that tackles the root causes of systemic gender inequality and discrimination and addresses the unbalanced power dynamics and gender relations in supply chains, markets and societies.

[*Organization*] **recognizes** that GRP is one of the mechanisms by which the UN System Organizations seek to realize women's rights and contribute to women's empowerment. Implementing GRP can drive change in gender norms and relations and generate equality for disadvantaged individuals and groups in societies, leading to public benefit of inclusive socio-economic development and social justice for all. Implementing GRP can also increase the participation of gender-responsive suppliers and women-owned businesses and widen the pool for a fulfilling effective competition in UN tenders.

[*Organization*] **recognizes** that mainstreaming gender equality and ensuring gender diversity within procurement practices and activities accompanies the realization of GRP. The strategic incorporation of the Common Approach to Environmental and Social Standards for UN Programming, as developed by the inter-agency Consultative Process on Advancing the Environmental and Social Sustainability in the UN System under the UN Environment Management Group, holds the potential to significantly augment the screening level during the implementation of GRP.

[*Organization*] **recognizes** that, within the scope of its mandate, purchasing power presents an opportunity to further advance GRP, which can contribute to building equitable and just societies, and will further the realization of the principle of Leaving No One Behind, which is foundational to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to benefit from the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular SDG #5 ("Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls"), the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the international labour standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO), and other international human and labour rights instruments.

To this end, [*Organization*] **pledges** commitment to promote GRP, in harmony with the aforementioned frameworks and principles. Through a coherent and unified approach to GRP, [*Organization*] shall diligently work to enhance opportunities for women and girls, guided by the principles of non-discrimination and equality.

2. Applicability/Scope

[*Organization's*] offices and units [*are encouraged to/shall/commit to*] progressively apply this policy to the extent possible, in line with their respective mandate, priorities and capacities, and to embed the policy within their regulatory frameworks.

3. Definitions

Definitions contained herein are meant to apply to the Gender-Responsive Procurement Model Policy Framework (GRP-MPF) context.

3.1. Gender

Whereas sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define humans as female or male, gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men, girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/ time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in people of different genders. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age.ⁱ

3.2. Gender Equality

This term refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether an individual was born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development.ⁱⁱ

3.3. Gender-Responsive-Procurement (GRP)

GRP is the sustainable selection of goods, services and works that considers the impact on gender equality that goes beyond cost management. GRP involves leveraging purchasing and sourcing opportunities to promote gender equality and support social and economic progress through gender-responsive measures at all stages and tiers of procurement and the supply chain. GRP involves due diligence approaches to identify and mitigate risks to gender equality including women's rights and non-discrimination, as well as to identify opportunities to advance gender-mainstreaming in the supply chain.ⁱⁱⁱ

3.4. UN System Organizations / Organizations

This includes all entities in the UN System, covering: i) UN Secretariat, Funds and Programmes, ii) UN Specialized Agencies, iii) Other Entities and Bodies, and iv) Related Organizations.^{iv}

3.5. Gender-responsive suppliers (GRSs)

A gender-responsive supplier would meet rigorous criteria for integrating gender equality and women's empowerment principles in policies and practices in the workplace, marketplace and community to create systemic impacts. As a starting point, working towards gender balance in terms

of employees, senior management and board members; closing the gender pay gap; incorporating gender equality in recruitment, promotion and career opportunities; retaining both women and men full-time employees who take parental leave; and establishing a confidential grievance, resolution, reporting and non-retaliation mechanism and procedure to address and respond to incidents of violence and harassment.

To be recognized as a gender-responsive supplier, a supplier must demonstrate comprehensive compliance with international labour standards of the ILO, including the Core Labour Standards, and actively embrace the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs). This commitment must be evident not only in policy but also in everyday practice, reflecting a genuine dedication to fostering an environment that promotes gender equality, respects human rights, and encourages equal participation of women at all levels of the supplier's organization.^v

3.6. Women-owned businesses (WOBs)

A women-owned business (WOB) is commonly defined in the UN system as a legal entity in any field that is at least 51 percent owned, managed and controlled by one or more women and independent from non-women-owned businesses.^{vi}

4. Policy

[*Organization's*] offices and units [*are encouraged to/shall/commit to*] apply relevant frameworks and principles -including the UN's Gender Dimensions of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the Guidance for UN personnel to support the implementation of GRP and the Women's Empowerment Principles- throughout the procurement processes, to address the structural gender discrimination that underpins workplaces, markets, and communities globally. The following steps are recommended to effectively implement the policy:

4.1. Procurement strategy and planning

Where applicable, [*Organization's*] offices and units [*are encouraged to/shall/commit to*] factor in gender-responsive considerations as early as possible in procurement strategy development and/or procurement planning. Any decision to incorporate gender-responsive considerations should be informed by an adequate market analysis to ascertain the market readiness for GRP. This includes paying special attention to the gender-related needs of stakeholders at all levels, analysis of risks and opportunities related to gender equality -in terms of the relevant goods, services and works, the wider industry, and the suppliers themselves- and the availability of eligible GRSs that can supply the required needs.

4.2. Defining Requirements and Evaluation Criteria

[*Organization's*] offices and units [*are encouraged to/shall/commit to*] make every effort to include gender-responsive requirements for procurement of goods, services and works that promote gender equality, as well as broader requirements for suppliers to address gender inequality in their operations and supply chains, as appropriate and applicable. During analysis, [*Organization's*] offices and units will assess the maturity of the market for gender-responsiveness and identify suitable gender evaluation criteria in addition to price and quality-related evaluation factors.

[*Organization's*] offices and units [*are encouraged to/shall/commit to*] establish minimum standards for gender-responsive procurement in accordance with their applicable policies and

procedures. *[Organization's]* offices and units *[are encouraged to/shall/commit to]* exclude suppliers who have engaged in gender-related abuses, such as gender-based violence and harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse, or discrimination.

[Organization's] offices and units *[are encouraged to/shall/commit to]* carefully consider how gender-related criteria will be evaluated to ensure that they are meaningful and effective. This may involve adopting a mandatory pass/fail approach, a weighted scoring system, or a combination of both, depending on the type of solicitation method used.

4.3. Solicitation & Sourcing

[Organization's] offices and units *[are encouraged to/shall/commit to]* make the utmost effort to disseminate information about procurement opportunities through means easily accessible to GRSs and WOBs, such as through relevant business associations, networks, or platforms. Furthermore, solicitation documents should be carefully constructed to ensure that they are both gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory. This entails the use of language that respects and promotes gender equality, without bias, to create a fair and inclusive procurement process that aligns with the principles of GRP. Where possible, efforts should be made to proactively establish lists of eligible rosters for GRSs and WOBs for future procurements.

4.4. Contract administration and management

[Organization's] offices and units *[are encouraged to/shall/commit to]* review if gender-related provisions in their solicitation documents are included in resulting contracts. Such contractual clauses should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) and accompanied by clear benchmarks or performance criteria to monitor progress towards meeting the specified gender-related objectives of the relevant contract.

[Organization's] offices and units *[are encouraged to/shall/commit to]* design and implement an effective supplier tracking system, enabling them to comprehensively monitor and assess the extent of GRS' involvement and implementation within their supply chain.

4.5. Collaboration and Cooperation

[Organization] recognizes the need to support relevant stakeholders in the implementation of GRP. These stakeholders may include GRSs, WOBs, governmental bodies, business associations, and other entities involved in UN procurement processes. Such collaborations would aim to expand the pool of GRSs to promote fulfilling effective competition in the procurement opportunities provided by UN System Organizations.

To this end, *[Organization's]* offices and units *[are encouraged to/shall/commit to]* continue engaging with relevant stakeholders to provide guidance and support on GRP implementation, as well as to promote awareness and understanding of the benefits of gender-responsive procurement.

[Organization's] offices and units *[are encouraged to/shall/commit to]* collaborate and cooperate in implementing GRP to increase leverage, share resources, reduce administrative burdens, realize the economy of scale, share good practices, to ensure suppliers receive consistent and fair treatment from UN System Organizations, and to promote the effective implementation of GRP.

4.6 Reporting and Continuous Improvement

[*Organization's*] offices and units [*are encouraged to/shall/commit to*] accelerate efforts to achieve their commitments to GRP.

To support this commitment, [*Organization's*] offices and units [*are encouraged to/shall/commit to*] collect measurable, disaggregated data to track progress in implementing GRP.

[*Organization's*] offices and units [*are encouraged to/shall/commit to*] leverage existing tools and platforms, such as its internal systems and tools, the UNGM portal, the WEPs portal, and any other available tools and systems for tracking GRS's involvement and implementation within their supply chain. This approach encourages comprehensive monitoring and assessment of GRSs and WOBs involvement, while allowing flexibility in the methods used. Any collected data could be used to inform periodic reporting on progress towards gender-related objectives, including through the UN Annual Statistical Report.

ⁱ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.ungm.org/Shared/KnowledgeCenter/Pages/PT_GRP

^{iv} https://www.ungm.org/Shared/KnowledgeCenter/Pages/VBS_UNSystem

^v This definition has been elaborated by a consulting process in the Gender-Responsive Task Force, considering various sources: UN Women and the ILO, 2021. "Rethinking Gender-Responsive Procurement: Enabling an Ecosystem for Women's Economic Empowerment." New York and Geneva; Women's Empowerment Principles Guidance Note on Principle 5 about Gender-Responsive Procurement; <https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/procurement/gender-responsive-procurement> .

^{vi} https://www.ungm.org/Shared/KnowledgeCenter/Pages/PT_GRP