

UN-Women's Roadmap to the next Strategic Plan 2022-2025 Background Document

1. Background

At the 2020 Annual Session of UN-Women's Executive Board, in paragraph 4, decision 2020/3, the Board requested that "...UN-Women in accordance with its mandate, start preparations early for the next strategic plan, 2022-2025, in full consultation with the Executive Board, taking into account the lessons learned from the midterm review, the joint report on the evaluability assessment of the common chapter dated 30 March 2020, the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/RES/71/243), the outcome of the 2020 QCPR, and further requests that UN-Women present a roadmap at the second regular session 2020 for consultations planned in the preparation of the next strategic plan, 2022-2025".

This background paper presents the main elements of a Roadmap to UN-Women's next Strategic Plan 2022-2025 – the global context in which it is being developed, key design principles, findings and lessons learned, and the timeline for the Plan's development.

2. Challenges and opportunities in the wake of a changing development context

2020 is a pivotal year for gender equality and the empowerment of women. As the world commemorates a number of important milestones, such as the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and the 10th anniversary of UN-Women, gender equality advocates around the world are mobilizing to demand accelerated action to deliver for women and girls. Five years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and at the dawn of the Decade of Action launched by the United Nations Secretary-General to accelerate action on the SDGs, 2020 is also an opportune time for reflection on how to further embed gender equality within the broader development agenda, including in the context of the ambitious UNDS reform process.

The Beijing+25 assessment and review process reiterated many persistent and emerging challenges to the full realization of women's rights, including remaining structural barriers to gender equality, discriminatory norms and practices, and the feminisation of poverty. Regressive legal and policy reforms, the hollowing out of key institutions mandated to advance gender equality, and shrinking civic space for women's rights organizations have threaten to stall or reverse hard-won gains, with women and girls experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination particularly affected. Furthermore, new challenges have emerged, including those

related to climate change, unprecedented numbers of displaced people and the expansion of new technologies.¹

Against this backdrop, the wide-ranging and increasing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic threaten to further reverse development gains and deepen inequalities within and amongst countries, with particular implications for women's rights. It is currently estimated that the Global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) could shrink by 5-8% in 2020 and push 70-100 million people into extreme poverty.² According to a recent analysis by the World Bank, while the global poverty rate was projected to go down, "due to COVID19, [it] is now projected to increase to 8.8 percent". It is expected that women may represent a disproportionate share of the "new poor", given that the "impacts are likely to be larger for those employed in the urban service sector, informal sector in both manufacturing and services, women, and specific regions within countries".³ As the global COVID-19 crisis shakes societies to their core, across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the effects of the pandemic are exacerbated for women and girls in every corner of the world.

UN-Women has unequivocally demonstrated that the impact of COVID-19 is compounded when viewed through a gender lens.⁴ The world's formal economies and the maintenance of our daily lives are built on the systematically under-valued and largely invisible and unpaid labor of women and girls. Women's unpaid contributions to healthcare alone equate to 2.35% of global GDP or the equivalent of US\$1.488 trillion.⁵ The global crisis triggered by the pandemic threatens to exacerbate long-standing barriers to the full enjoyment of women's human rights, including loss of livelihoods and job security, further increases in the unequal burden of care, and dramatic surges in cases of gender-based violence reported in many countries as millions of women have been locked down with their abusers.⁶

In light of these and other gendered impacts of the pandemic, there is a clear and urgent need to combine public health measures to contain the virus with gender-responsive fiscal stimulus packages and plans for economic recovery and resilience that place women's and girls' rights front and centre.⁷ It is estimated that taking action now to advance gender equality could add US\$13 trillion to the global Gross Domestic Product in 2030.⁸ Overcoming the pandemic can and must lead to building back a better and more equal, inclusive and sustainable world. UN-Women

¹ Annual Report of the Under Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on progress made on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, including the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2020

² Economic Outlook, World Bank, June 2020

³ Profiles of the new poor due to the COVID-19 pandemic, World Bank, August 2020

⁴ Background Paper Update on UN-Women's Response to COVID-19 UN-Women Executive Board Annual Session 2020

⁵ COVID and the Care Economy: Immediate Action and Structural Transformation for a Gender-responsive Recovery, Policy Brief No. 16, UN-Women, 2020

⁶ COVID and Violence Against Women and Girls: Addressing the Shadow Pandemic, Policy Brief No. 17, UN-Women, 2020

⁷ Addressing the Economic Fallout of COVID-19: Pathways and Policy Options for a Gender-Responsive Recovery, Policy Brief No. 15, UN-Women, 2020

⁸ COVID-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects, McKinsey Global Institute, July 2020

stands fully committed in solidarity to reach this vision as it engages in redefining its strategic priorities and working model as part of the next Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

3. Purpose and Design Principles

UN-Women will develop a new Strategic Plan 2022-2025 that clearly defines WHAT changes in the lives of women and girls UN-Women can catalyze in the coming years, and WHY, WHERE and HOW it will contribute to these changes most effectively, with a strong emphasis on strategic partnerships and joint action.

In terms of the WHAT, UN-Women will work to refine its programmatic focus, revisit Theories of Change and develop Theories of Action, and more systematically explore how UN-Women's contributions are enabling the aspirations of the United Nations to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With regard to the WHERE, while considering the organization's universal mandate, it is envisioned that UN-Women will consider areas both of great needs and of great change, place additional emphasis on fragile and conflict-affected states, and finetune its model in countries where it provides support as a non-resident agency. UN-Women will continue to look at HOW it delivers results in the most optimal way, building on ongoing change management efforts and scrutinizing its business model, as well as investing in its ability to influence other development actors for maximum impact and better capture the results of these efforts. UN-Women will also seek to validate the WHY, particularly with regards to the organization's vision and role in effecting transformative changes to the lives of women and girls.

Four key principles will guide the design of UN-Women's next Strategic Plan:

- 1) **Relevant** – in the new Strategic Plan, UN-Women will optimize alignment with the findings of the Beijing+25 review and appraisal, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other relevant intergovernmental normative frameworks and human rights conventions, as well as the forthcoming Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review resolution.
- 2) **Evidence-based** – the design of UN-Women's next Strategic Plan will take into full consideration the recommendations and findings from the Mid-Term Review of UN-Women's current Strategic Plan, complementary evaluations and assessments (including the upcoming assessment of UN-Women's Flagship Programme Initiatives and thematic priorities of the Strategic Plan) as well as key socio-economic trends, data and analysis.
- 3) **Highly consultative** – the development of the next Strategic plan will be based on extensive internal and external consultations at global, regional and country levels with key stakeholders. The Executive Board will be engaged through different modalities, including: 1) survey; 2) informal briefing sessions; 3) formal sessions; 4) workshops; and 5) joint consultations with UNDP, UNFPA and UNCIEF, the agencies working on the common chapter of the current Strategic Plan.
- 4) **Coordinated** – building on previous joint efforts and in line with the spirit of the UNDS reform process, the entity is working in close collaboration with UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP to harmonize processes and development approaches, as well as to identify common

or complementary measurements for key joint results. In this context, the four agencies plan to have quarterly joint consultations with their Executive Boards in the lead-up to the approval of their respective Strategic Plans for the period 2022-2025. UN-Women will also continue to advance joint efforts with other UN partners.

4. Findings and lessons learned from the Mid-Term Review of UN-Women's current Strategic Plan 2018-2021

At the mid-point of its current Strategic Plan, UN-Women conducted a Mid-Term Review in 2019 and early 2020, which will inform the development of the new Strategic Plan. The Mid-Term Review considered, inter alia, the results to-date, the repositioning of the UN development system, the Beijing+25 review and appraisal and findings, as well as findings and recommendations from independent evaluations and assessments, including the 2018 MOPAN, to arrive at the following findings/lessons learned:

- UN-Women's Strategic Plan remains relevant in the context of Beijing+25 and Decade of Action to deliver SDGs. Going forward, a greater focus on *leaving no one behind* and addressing cross-cutting issues (e.g. social norms change) should be ensured.
- UN reforms have yielded opportunities for UN-Women to secure system-wide results on gender equality and women's rights. There is scope to further leverage pooled funding in this regard.
- There is a need for UN-Women to enhance its programmatic focus through more systematic approaches and better measurement and the development of standardised products and services.
- UN-Women can achieve greater impact through optimized structure, presence and processes and transforming into a nimble, globally networked and matrixed development organization.
- Regular resources must be enhanced and funding sources diversified, including through shared-value partnerships with the private sector and by further leveraging National Committees.

In particular, as presented at the annual session in June, UN-Women will address the following in the next Strategic Plan:

- Strategic recalibration of programmatic focus which responds to priorities arising from wider changes in the global context, including increased fragility, growing importance of enhancing resilience to economic and environmental shocks, rise in inequalities, the value and risks associated to the use of new technologies, etc.
- Continue to evolve as a knowledge-based organization, recognized as the go-to institution on gender equality, built on stronger Headquarters-field links, and by creating a matrixed and networked organization.
- Delivering standardized knowledge products and services to enhance quality and coherence of the portfolio of UN-Women across all countries.

Finally, the Strategic Plan process will integrate and inform other important ongoing strategic and change initiatives, such as the Integrated Budget (IB), the Portfolio Reviews, and the implementation of country typology and decentralization process, in order to build a UN-Women 2.0 driving for impact, a networked and matrixed knowledge organization, enabled by a stronger field, a nimble and effective HQ, more efficient processes, and enhanced governance.

5. Timeline for development

The Roadmap for the next Strategic Plan will be presented to the Executive Board at an informal session on 25 August 2020, marking the first step in this year-long process of consultation and development. There will be an emphasis on achieving heightened harmonization between the Strategic Plans of UN-Women, UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, demonstrated through a series of joint informals with the respective Executive Boards, with the goal of supporting a repositioned UN development system, working together to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. All of this work will culminate in the endorsement of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 by the Executive Board in September 2021.

Date	Planned Work/Event	Content
July 2020	Kickoff	Strategic Plan Roadmap preparation, internal dialogue and consultation with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF
August 2020	Informal with Executive Board	Strategic Plan Roadmap and Common Chapter update
September 2020	Second Regular Session	Strategic Plan Roadmap and Common Chapter update
During the 4th quarter of 2020 (date TBD)	Joint informal with the Executive Board (along with UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA)	Presentation of draft Strategic Plan content
During the first quarter of 2021 (date TBD)	Joint informal with the Executive Board (along with UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA)	Dialogue on concept notes, Theories of Change and overall results framework
February 2021	Informal and First Regular Session	Update on Strategic Plan development
March / April 2021	Informal with Executive Board	Presentation of draft Strategic Plan narrative
During the 2nd quarter of 2021 (date TBD)	Joint informal with the Executive Board (along with UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA)	First draft of Strategic Plan narratives and draft Integrated Results and Resources Frameworks
June 2021	Informal and Annual Session	Presentation of Strategic Plan

September 2021	Second Regular Session	Review and endorsement of Strategic Plan by the Executive Board
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