

THE FIELD-SPECIFIC ENABLING ENVIRONMENT GUIDELINES

IN BRIEF

In Support of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity



Creating an enabling working environment across the United Nations System is essential to reflect the organization's founding principles of equality and to ensure that no one is left behind as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While each country and duty station has specific contexts and challenges, an enabling work environment should and can be created in every location where the UN operates. It is incumbent on leadership and all personnel to create working environments that embrace equality, eradicate bias and are inclusive of all.

[The Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines](#) provide tailored guidance for personnel in the field, especially in mission settings, with the goal to increase the representation of women and accelerate efforts to reach gender parity in the UN system by 2028. These Guidelines complement the [Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System](#) and its [Supplementary Guidance](#) (2019) in support of the [Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity](#) (2017).

The Guidelines are made by UN personnel for UN personnel. Within the six themes, recommendations are provided for the organization, managers and individuals, and accompanied with examples of good practices from across the UN system. The main message of the Guidelines is that everyone can make a difference to ensure an organizational culture of awareness and understanding of gender, diversity and inclusivity.

Together we can make parity a reality.

1. Professional and personal life integration

"In any region I have worked in, it's more work than life."

Supporting professional and personal life integration in the field through policies and initiatives that recognize diverse family configurations and go beyond care responsibilities is an effective way to recruit and retain the best talent. Such policies and initiatives include tailored flexible working arrangements, parental leave, support for spousal employment, and appropriate facilities for lactation and childcare.



Photo: UN Women/Benoît Almeras

2. Standards of conduct

“Don’t call women ‘fresh meat’. Let’s always have a professional relationship.”

All UN entities and personnel are expected to adhere to standards of conduct, which include principles to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse, misconduct, abuse of power, discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment. All personnel, in particular leadership, have the responsibility to contribute to the creation and maintenance of a respectful and healthy workplace culture, ensuring equality and non-discrimination and practicing zero-tolerance and a victim/survivor-centred approach.

3. Security and safety

“You want to know that when you work here, you are going to be looked after.”

Gender-based security and safety risks should be acknowledged and mitigated in all locations. Organizations should comply with existing United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS) gender-responsive security and safety policies. While entity leadership as well as security and safety personnel have a responsibility to implement security and safety planning and responses, it is incumbent on all personnel to practice UN values to create a safe, accessible and secure working environment for all.

4. Occupational safety, health and well-being

“A collective investment in health is needed.”

A healthy workforce is key for the UN to be able to deliver on its mandate. Availability, accessibility, effectiveness and awareness are key components to provide a healthy and safe working environment that promotes greater accountability, efficiency and commitment of its workforce. It is important to provide gender-responsive Occupational Safety and Health, well-being support and services that reflect the diversity of personnel within the organization and cater for the realities of field work.

5. Recruitment, talent management and retention

“New positions come, but every time you see a new man, a new man...”

Gender-sensitive recruitment and talent management maximize the organization’s ability to acquire and retain the best workforce reflecting the organization’s principles of diversity and equality. A comprehensive talent management strategy and opportunities to grow are critical to retain the best talent in the UN system. Regular monitoring and reporting remain crucial for assessing and reaching recruitment targets.

6. Leadership, accountability and implementation

“On paper, the plans are there; implementation is often the main challenge.”

Leadership has a special responsibility to set the right tone and put UN values into action by being responsive to gender parity commitments and promoting diversity and inclusion. The head of entity’s responsibility to achieve gender parity includes implementing robust accountability measures and appointing and collaborating with Gender Focal Points. Some interviewees proposed that these Guidelines be obligatory for all senior leaders and management.