



IN BRIEF

ACHIEVING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AS THE NORM: IMPLEMENTING THE GUIDELINES

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND
11-12 OCTOBER 2018



Photo: UN Women/Philippe Woods

BACKGROUND

UN Women held **the global annual workshop for Gender Focal Points (GFPs) and Focal Points for Women (FPW)** in Geneva from 11 to 12 of October 2018. The previous workshop, held 16 November 2017, was the first phase in the process of developing *the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System*, a comprehensive document of good practices and wide-ranging concrete actions to assist United Nations entities in creating a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

This initiative emanated from a recommendation of the Secretary-General's *System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity*, promulgated in September 2017. Since its release, gender parity has risen as a priority across the system and ground-breaking strides have been made. For the first time in the UN's history, the Secretary-General's Senior Management Group is gender balanced, as are Resident Coordinators. While this progress should be celebrated, it is important to remember that sustainable change cannot happen without transforming institutional culture, the focus of this workshop.

The workshop was held in support of the Secretary-General's *System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity* through empowering GFPs/FPW with the tools and leadership skills to effectively implement the recommendations of the *Enabling Environment Guidelines*. The Secretary-General's *System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity* asserts that "changing the UN's culture towards a more enabling environment is a long-term process that will require leadership from all and measures to tackle 'institutional software' – attitudes, beliefs and behaviours within organizations."

In follow-up to the 2017 *Enabling Environment Guidelines* workshop, the complete draft was presented for final

consultation to Focal Points and moving forward with the implementation of the guidelines was the focus. The objectives of the workshop were to engage participants in a collaborative setting to discuss good practices for changing institutional culture; to identify challenges and solutions to the implementation of the *Enabling Environment Guidelines*; and to facilitate exercises to build tools for fostering an enabling environment in the participants' respective UN organizations. The workshop was opened by **UN Women's Senior Advisor and Focal Point for Women in the UN System, Ms. Katja Pehrman**.

FORMAT OF THE MEETING

The meeting was facilitated by diversity and inclusion specialists **Ms. Lisa Kepinski** and **Mr. Tomás Leal**, who engaged in open discussion with participants, Gender Focal Points and Focal Points for Women from across the UN system. Presenters included: **Ms. Mellener Coelho**, Vice President and Head of Diversity and Inclusion at Northern Trust India; **Mr. Dean Peacock**, Co-founder and Co-executive Director of Sonke Gender Justice; **Ms. Tina Tinde**, Gender and Diversity Coordinator at International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; and **Mr. Matt Wallaert**, Chief Behavioral Officer at Clover Health.

Sessions aimed to identify challenges, best practices, and lessons learned for driving institutional change. Panels, presentations and group exercises addressed the following topics: 1) useful techniques for driving culture change to create an enabling environment 2) identifying behavior shifts for creating an enabling environment 3) applying an intersectional approach to gender parity 3) moving forward with implementation of the Guidelines.

OVERVIEW OF KEY DISCUSSIONS

Participants identified the following needs for effectively implementing the Guidelines and achieving parity in their UN entities:

Needed <i>efforts</i> to achieve gender parity	Needed <i>resources</i> to achieve gender parity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gender should be inclusive of all genders in the organization, e.g. have more men speaking out about gender so that it is not seen as a female-led conversation• Senior management must take seriously the goal of gender parity and implement agreed action points• Deeper analysis of the actual situation, not just a focus on numbers• Introduce leadership and senior management sponsorship• Engage middle management with improved understanding of existing and persisting biases• Address unconscious bias in the selection process to support the selection of more women• Lead blind recruitment with external participation on panels to break-up male networks• Better sourcing strategies targeted to attract more women to field locations• If possible, recruit from a pool of only women where there is imbalance• Implementation of temporary special measures• Ensure diversity on interview panels and recommended lists, making selections in line with parity targets• Appoint more women across the board, starting at the top• Assess the bottlenecks of women's career advancement• Promote internal staff; Promote qualified female staff to senior management positions• Foster a more inclusive environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More human resources dedicated to gender equality• Help building gender capacity at top levels• Time – there is a limit to what can be done in addition to existing work• Dedicated budget for GP and mainstreaming• Improved reporting tools• Enhanced support from senior management and human resources

Participants also identified the following behaviors to demote and ideas to appreciate on the road to achieving gender parity:

Behaviors to demote	Ideas to appreciate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harassment and bullying; “Boys club behavior”• Excluding women from information, meetings, travel, missions, etc.• Practices and policies based on perception rather than on data and analysis• Questions asked or comments made to women that are not made to men• Assumptions about women with children and their career choices and development• Presumptions about family-related issues that may interfere with work/promotions/networking opportunities• Emails after working hours and on the weekends• Meetings scheduled with no regards for time differences• Rigidity/no flexibility in working hours and workplace• Continued promotion of the gender binary (M/F)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning and outreach, tools to evaluate gender empowerment and equality• Collaboration across departments in the UN with a view to enhancing parity• To influence and change the organizational culture; to see how attitudes around gender equality change (increased support)• To contribute to the positive change in the office environment and to see this change visibly• To be a part of a network that is trying to make the workplace more equitable• The possibility to make a difference and be a change agent• The honor and excitement of being a part of a movement that can be a true game changer• The support of the other GFPs, sharing best practices with the others in the organization and beyond• The opportunity to participate as an actor of change in the evolution of the organization• Shaping ideas going forward in the organization, expansion in gender thinking• Opportunity to contribute to change management• Dialogue that can be created across the organization and to meet like-minded people

Facilitators discussed the importance of using intersectionality as a lens for understanding the different experiences of others. Through motions of discrimination and acknowledging the struggle of differing groups, intersectionality aims to allow the inclusion of everyone. Furthermore, intersectionality is an analytical tool for the ways the multiple aspects of person’s social aspects collide, which can be useful in leveraging a situation and promoting change.

OUTCOMES AND NEXT STEPS

In line with the meeting’s objective, participants provided meaningful feedback and suggestions for the Enabling Environment Guidelines, which were then finalized and subsequently launched by **the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres in March 2019**, followed by launches in both Geneva and Vienna in April 2019.

Going forward, participants agreed to maintain an ongoing dialogue about the challenges and accomplishments of implementing an enabling environment within their UN organizations.