ANNEX X:

Implementation of the *System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity* &

Impediments to Achieving Gender Parity

Implementation of the *System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity*

1. Since the release of the *System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity* in 2017, United Nations entities have been implementing the suggested recommendations for advancing progress towards gender parity. Entities have done this by creating their own implementation plans specific to their organization size, starting point, resources and feasible timeline. In the 2019 biennial survey[1] on gender-related policies and practices completed by the Gender Focal Points and Focal Points for Women[2] across the United Nations conducted by UN-Women, surveyed entities were asked to comment on the challenges to implementing the *System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity* within their organization.

2. The two most commonly reported challenges by surveyed entities were backlash from staff members and a lack of buy-in from senior managers. It was also noted that staff members, particularly male employees, viewed women's empowerment as coming at the expense of men, and women-specific approaches were found to trigger resistance. It is vital to challenge these perceptions of gender parity and highlight the benefits of gender parity for all staff members. Initiatives aimed at achieving gender parity should engage men and promote their necessary role. In the words of the Secretary-General, "we must be clear that these efforts are not about shifting the rules of our Organization to accommodate half our population. It is in fact about changing the rules so that they no longer only suit half our staff."

3. Another challenge widely reported was the ability for entities to secure the necessary budget to achieve the recommended initiatives. Smaller entities also reported a lack of available resources, and this paired with their small staff population made parity advancements particularly challenging. Recruitment is particularly limited due to budget restraints on human resources.

4. One entity reported that the change in the mandatory age of separation, and the generally high level of staff retention, has limited the number of vacancy positions that provide opportunities for advancement towards parity.

5. Work-life balance is a key component in the Strategy. However, several entities reported that resistance from managers in allowing the use of flexible working arrangements hindered the promotion of work-life balance. Another organization, with the majority of its workforce based in
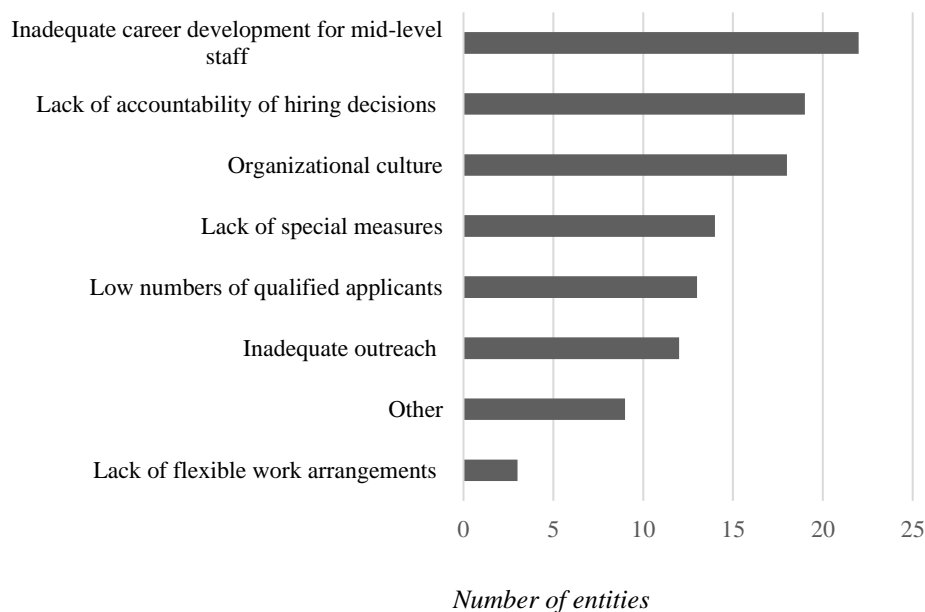
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[1] Every two years, UN-Women administers a survey on gender parity-related policies and practices. Two versions of the survey were developed, one for United Nations Secretariat departments and offices, and another for United Nations system entities which included questions on entity-specific policies. The Department of Management, Strategy, Policy and Compliance (DMSPC) answered policy questions on behalf of the entire United Nations Secretariat. In the 2019 survey, 40 entities completed the survey and their inputs are reflected herewith.

[2] The term "Focal Points for Women" is used by the United Nations Secretariat, and is guided by the Secretary-General's "Departmental focal points for women in the Secretariat" (ST/ SGB/2008/12). The remainder of the United Nations system uses the term "Gender Focal Points". These terms are synonymous.

the field, reported particular difficulty in attracting women to non-family field duty stations and hardship duty stations.

Progress towards gender parity

6. Surveyed entities were asked to rank, in the respondent's opinion, what are the "three main impediments to achieving gender parity at the P-4 level and higher". Find the synthesized response below.

Inadequate career development for mid-level staff
Lack of accountability of hiring decisions
Organizational culture
Lack of special measures
Low numbers of qualified applicants
Inadequate outreach
Other
Lack of flexible work arrangements

0   5   10   15   20   25

Number of entities

7. The survey findings reveal that the three main impediments identified by surveyed entities to achieving gender parity at P-4 level and higher are inadequate career development for mid-level staff, lack of accountability, and issues related to organizational culture.

8. However, it is evident that there is not one significantly disproportional problem that hinders progress to gender parity, but rather multiple and interacting issues of importance that need attention. Advancements towards gender parity are reliant on several factors, and the complexity expands beyond numbers to involve existing organizational culture and opportunities.

9. Therefore, in order to achieve gender parity, efforts must be sustained at the senior levels for accountability, the policy level to ensure integrated special measures into staff selection policies and at the cultural level with the implementation of flexible working arrangements and development of career opportunities for mid-level staff.