

Progress towards achieving the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Report by the Director-General

1. The United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) is the first United Nations system-wide accountability mechanism for gender equality and women’s empowerment. The UN-SWAP framework 2.0 launched in 2018, includes 17 performance indicators aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These indicators focus on institutional processes and actions at the individual entity level, establishing a common method to advance towards the goals of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

2. For 2023, WHO’s performance in UN-SWAP was rated as “meets” or “exceeds” requirements in 81% of performance indicators. This represents a significant increase in WHO’s ratings from its initial 35% in 2018, 47% in 2021 and 63% in 2022. Fig. 1 and Table 1 provide an overview of WHO’s progress between the first ratings in 2018 and the latest ratings in 2023.

Fig. 1. WHO’s performance in UN-SWAP 2018–2023

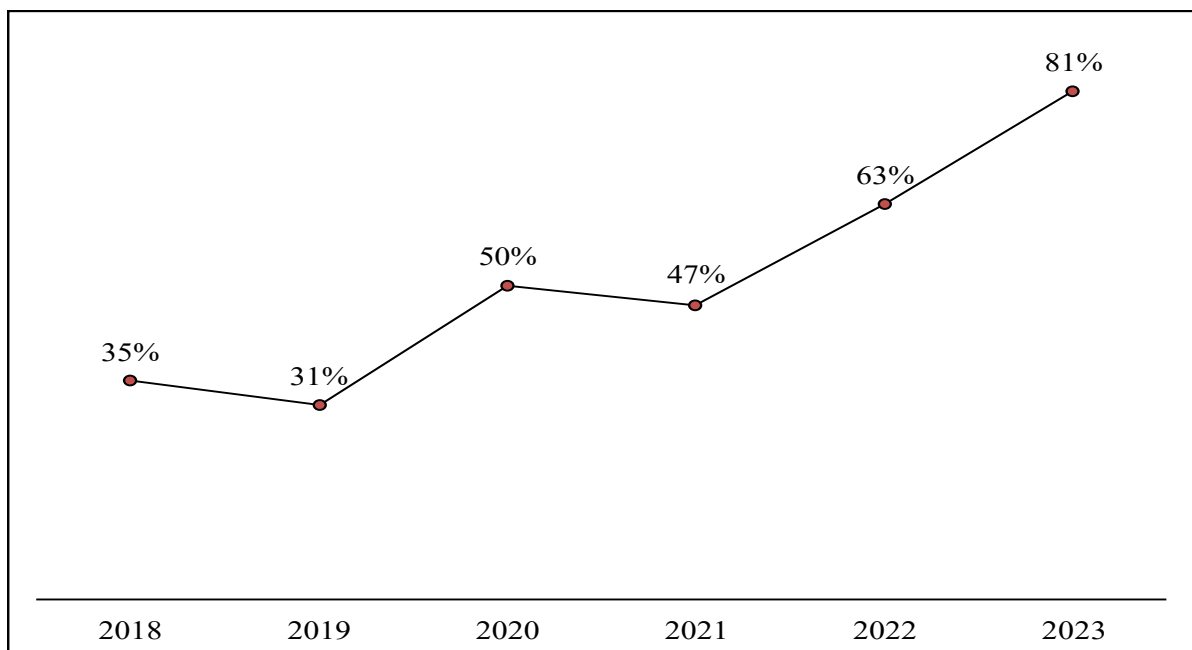


Table 1. WHO's performance in UN-SWAP 2.0

Performance indicators (PIs)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<i>Results-based management</i>						
PI.1: Strategic planning of gender-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) results	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets
PI.2: Reporting on gender-related SDG results	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Meets
PI.3: Programmatic gender-related SDG results	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Oversight</i>						
PI.4: Evaluation	Meets	Meets	Meets	Exceeds	Exceeds	Exceeds
PI.5: Audit	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets
<i>Accountability</i>						
PI.6: Policy	Meets	Meets	Approaches	Approaches	Meets	Meets
PI.7: Leadership	Approaches	Approaches	Meets	Approaches	Meets	Meets
PI.8: Gender-responsive performance management	Exceeds	Exceeds	Exceeds	Exceeds	Exceeds	Exceeds
<i>Human and financial resources</i>						
PI.9: Financial resource tracking	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Meets
PI.10: Financial resource allocation	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches
PI.11: Gender architecture	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Meets	Meets
PI.12: Equal representation of women	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches
PI.13: Organizational culture	Approaches	Approaches	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets
<i>Capacity</i>						
PI.14: Capacity assessment	Approaches	Missing	Missing	Missing	Approaches	Meets
PI.15: Capacity development	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches
<i>Coherence</i>						
PI.16: Knowledge and communication	Approaches	Approaches	Exceeds	Meets	Exceeds	Exceeds
PI.17: Coherence	Approaches	Approaches	Meets	Meets	Exceeds	Exceeds
Meets or exceeds	6/16 (35%)	5/16 (31%)	8/16 (50%)	7/16 (47%)	10/16 (63%)	13/16 (81%)

Results-based management indicators

3. This category includes three indicators: PI-01 (Strategic planning of gender-related Sustainable Development Goals results); PI-02 (Reporting on gender-related Sustainable Development Goals results); and PI-03 (Programmatic gender-related Sustainable Development Goals results). WHO continued to meet requirements for PI-01 in 2023. WHO tracks the implementation of the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2025 through a selection of outcome and impact indicators, some of which include sex-disaggregated data. The output scorecard supports the measurement of output indicators as part of the current WHO results framework. The draft Fourteenth General Programme of Work, 2025–2028 proposes a gender-transformative high-level objective to ensure the centrality of considerations of gender, as well as rights, equity and diversity, throughout the high-level strategic document.

4. Concerning indicator PI-02, WHO increased its rating from “approaches” to “meets” requirements in 2023. In implementing the Programme budget 2022–2023, WHO provides specific data disaggregation by sex, age, and at least one other inequality dimension, such as evidence of populations

left behind. It also offers guidance for incorporating gender, human rights and equity analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, policies or laws affecting the delivery of outputs. Of the 46 outcome indicators of the Thirteenth Global Programme of Work, 31 are suitable for disaggregation, of which there are currently 13 that have sex-disaggregated data available at the global level. The annual *World Health Statistics* report also incorporates sex-disaggregated data. The main WHO data portal, the Global Health Observatory, contains 1357 health-related indicators, including 211 indicators with sex-disaggregated data. WHO has adopted the Sex and Gender Equity in Research Guidelines which serve as a valuable tool to facilitate a more systematic approach to the integration and reporting of sex and gender dimensions in WHO technical products. PI-03 is still not applicable to WHO, as all its programmatic and corporate results are included in the Programme budget and are therefore covered by PI-01 and PI-02.

Oversight indicators

5. The two performance indicators in this category are PI-04 (Evaluation) and PI-05 (Audit). WHO exceeded the PI-04 requirements in 2021, and continued to exceed them in 2022 and 2023. A new guidance note issued at the end of 2022 offers support on how gender equality and the empowerment of women,¹ and human rights, can be integrated into evaluations. In 2023, five of the eight evaluations were corporate evaluations commissioned and either managed or conducted by the WHO Evaluation Office, and three were decentralized evaluations commissioned by various other offices within WHO. The eight evaluations met the requirements, and either scored satisfactory or fully met the requirement on all three scoring criteria of integrating gender equity and human rights concerns.

6. WHO continued to meet requirements for indicator PI-05 (Audit) in 2023. The Office of Internal Oversight covers gender, equity, human rights and disability considerations in the audits of headquarters, regional offices and technical programmes at WHO country offices. The Report of the Internal Auditor for the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly explains that integrated audits in 2022 systematically include relevant gender equality findings.² The report also contains information on mandatory training and iLearn monitoring, including mandatory training courses on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (paragraph 39). Gender-related observations identified during 2023 audits will be included in the 2024 Report of the Internal Auditor to the World Health Assembly.³

Accountability indicators

7. This category includes three performance indicators: PI-06 (Policy), PI-07 (Leadership) and PI-08 (Gender-responsive performance management).

8. WHO continued to meet requirements for PI-06 (Policy) in 2023. A new Policy on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Misconduct, launched in 2023, enhances legal and accountability frameworks for achieving zero tolerance for sexual misconduct and inaction against it. The WHO's human resource business intelligence dashboard,⁴ launched in April 2023 showcases information for (i) "gender parity indicator for all workforces" and (ii) "number of women as heads of offices". This highlights WHO's

¹ Reference documents: Evaluation policy and frameworks (<https://www.who.int/about/evaluation/resources/reference-documents>, accessed 21 March 2024).

² See document A76/23, paragraph 41.

³ Document A77/23.

⁴ <https://app.powerbi.com/groups/me/apps/207630bc-a0ce-4230-b9db-4e68a824e6df/reports/433565e6-6ad4-4f7e-ba30-808144f8fc4f/ReportSection7c6a53b006e5704bd697> (accessed 27 March 2024).

commitment to equal representation of women and men at decision-making level positions. The new career development programme entitled “Advance” was delivered twice to promote women’s leadership. The Secretariat also completed a plan to strengthen its support to Member States to advance gender equality, human rights and health equity for country impact in the form of an internal Roadmap.

9. WHO continued to meet requirements for PI-07 (Leadership) in 2023. The Director-General is committed to standing for zero tolerance for gender-based violence and to advocating for gender equality in health. Communications from all senior leadership have also emphasized gender, as well as rights and equity concerns. WHO governing bodies mechanisms have called upon Member States to consider ensuring gender parity within their delegations to the Health Assembly.

10. WHO maintained its rating as exceeding the requirements for the gender-responsive performance management (PI-08) indicator in 2023. The criteria chosen for more than 50% of the recognition awards were gender and diversity and leadership. The text of all WHO vacancy notices includes references to the WHO Values Charter and a statement on the Organization’s commitment to zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. A diversity statement has been added to the vacancy announcements for all categories of contracts, including consultants and interns. All hiring managers monitor sex-disaggregated data on recruitment of P4 staff and above at every stage of the process.

Human and financial resources indicators

11. This category includes five indicators: PI-09 (Financial resource tracking), PI-10 (Financial resource allocation), PI-11 (Gender architecture), PI-12 (Equal representation of women) and PI-13 (Organizational culture).

12. Concerning PI-09, WHO progressed from approaching the requirements to meeting them in 2023. Towards the end of 2023, WHO introduced a new mandatory gender marker system to track the contribution of products and services, and related expenses, to gender equality and the empowerment of women. The gender marker is aligned with the United Nations Country Team country marker and was implemented for the planning of the biennium 2024–2025 at the end of 2023, with orientation for its use included in operational guidance. The new marker will enable reporting of financial contributions for the financial closure of the biennium 2024–2025 in 2026.

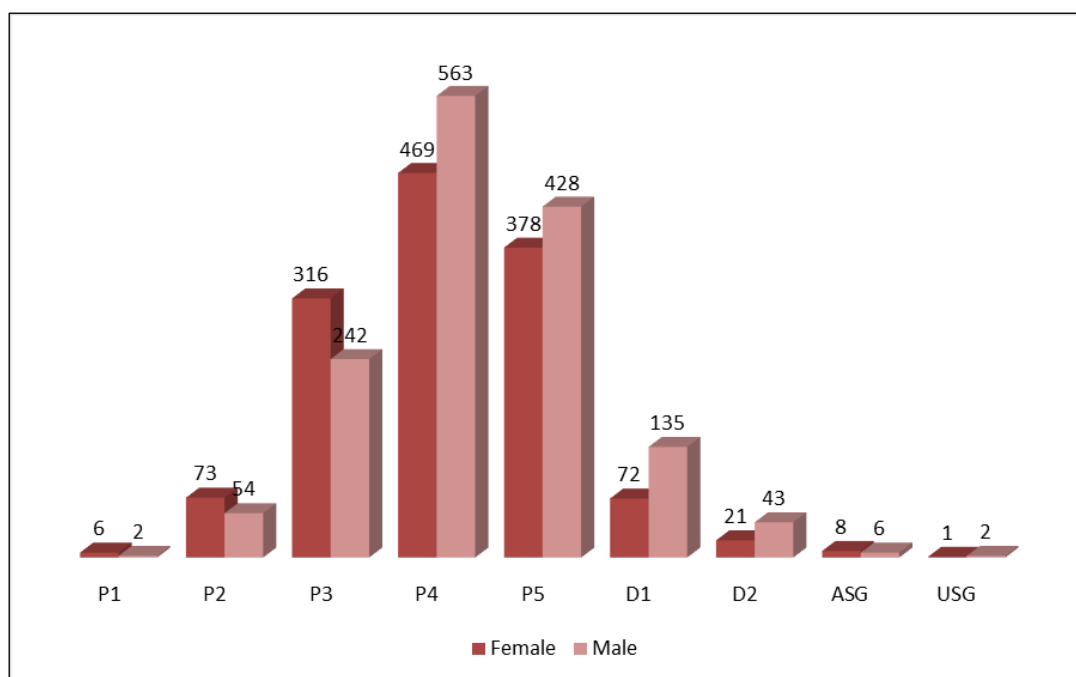
13. WHO continued to approach requirements for PI-10 in 2023. For 2023, WHO gathered data by analyzing the use of the composite gender, equity and rights classification (GER10-GER100), the expenditures towards the relevant targets of the Sustainable Development Goal, and the calculation of the investments to achieve outputs 1.1.3 and 4.2.6 (considering outputs with a clear gender equality component).

14. WHO continued to meet the requirements for PI-11 in 2023. The gender, rights and equity department continues to host a global network, with focal points to support the integration of gender, rights and equity into programmes.

15. WHO continues to approach the requirement in PI-12 in 2023. The representation of women holding long-term appointments is highest at P-1 level (75%) and P-2 level (57.5%), while it is 56.6% at the P3 level. The representation of women at P4 level is 45.4 % and at P-5 level is 46.9%, with wider gaps at senior grades recorded at 34.8% (D1) and 32.8% (D2). The new Gender Policy and implementation plan came into force in March 2023. They include updated targets, temporary recruitment measures, reliance on WHO’s human resource business intelligence dashboard for monitoring and formulated actions and accountability mechanisms for achieving parity by 2026.

Fig. 2 shows the current situation within the Organization for staff in the professional and higher categories in respect of gender parity by grade.

Fig. 2. Gender parity among the professional and higher categories, by grade



16. WHO continued to meet the requirements for PI-13 in 2023. A policy for the employment of persons with disabilities was launched. Unified parental leave was implemented effective as of 1 January 2023 to recognize the role of all parents. A new Policy on Preventing and Addressing Retaliation to create and sustain zero tolerance for any form of retaliation was adopted in March 2023. The new version of the policy covering harassment (excluding sexual harassment), discrimination and abuse of authority (collectively known as “abusive conduct”) was issued on 20 June 2023. A Code of Ethics and a Policy on Preventing and Addressing Retaliation were launched on 1 July 2023. The exit survey was updated for staff leaving the organization to better capture the gender- and diversity-related reasons staff, particularly women, leave the WHO with a view to addressing those concerns.

Capacity indicators

17. This category contains two indicators: PI-14 (Capacity assessment) and PI-15 (Capacity development). Concerning PI-14, WHO progressed from approaching to meeting the requirements in 2023. The first ever Organization-wide capacity assessment gauged the knowledge, skills and capacity-building needs of the workforce concerning gender equality, health equity and human rights in 2022. Based on the results of the capacity assessment, a capacity development plan was established to ensure that staff members are equipped to fulfil their responsibility to take evidence-based, gender-responsive, human rights-based and equity-oriented actions to support WHO’s mandate.

18. WHO continued to approach requirements for PI-15 (Capacity development) in 2023. Several training sessions were offered to WHO staff to introduce key gender, rights and equity concepts and tools, and guidance on conducting gender, equity and rights analyses. Development has begun of the mandatory course on gender, rights and equity, with its completion estimated for late 2024 or early 2025.

Knowledge, communication and coherence indicators

19. Concerning PI-16 (Knowledge and communication), WHO exceeded requirements in 2023. The preceding Communications Strategy remained effective throughout 2022–2023. The upcoming strategy, anticipated in 2024, includes a focus on achieving a more seamless integration of gender considerations. The communications plan for 2023 included components on gender equality and women’s empowerment. Publicly available material highlighted various human rights issues facing women, in all six official languages wherever possible.

20. Concerning PI-17 (Coherence), WHO met requirements. Members of the gender, rights and equity department and other departments regularly liaise with UN-SWAP Inter-Agency Network, the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, United Nations Task Force on Violence Against Women, United Nations Joint Programme on Violence against Women, among others. In accordance with the recommendations of the peer review conducted between WHO and International Trade Center in 2020, the parental leave policy was updated in 2023.

21. UN-WOMEN has commended WHO for several achievements, including its rigorous UN-SWAP reporting, enhanced organizational culture, and the development of the output scorecard related to gender, equity and human rights mainstreaming. WHO takes encouragement from the performance improvements in 2023 compared to previous years. In 2023, WHO took firm and ambitious steps to accelerate progress, which is demonstrated by the notable increase from 63% in 2022 to 81% of indicators meeting or exceeding the requirements in 2023.

ACTION BY THE PROGRAMME, BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

22. The Committee is invited to note the report and provide guidance in respect of the following question:

- in what areas should the Secretariat prioritize its continuing gender-mainstreaming efforts?

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