
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 present report has been drafted in response to requests made at recent meetings of the governing bodies¹ in order to provide information on progress made towards achieving the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP).
2. The United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) was introduced in 2012 and constitutes the first accountability framework for gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system. It applies to all entities, departments and offices of the United Nations system. It is designed to define, monitor and drive progress towards a common set of standards to which United Nations entities aspire and adhere for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. In 2018, an updated version of the UN-SWAP framework (UN-SWAP 2.0) was launched. It expanded on the initial framework, incorporating lessons learned and aligning the framework more closely with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. By 2020, a total of 70 United Nations entities (94% of the United Nations system) were reporting against the UN-SWAP framework.
3. The UN-SWAP 2.0 framework includes 17 performance indicators that 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. Progress towards each performance indicator is monitored against a progressive sliding scale for each United Nations entity.² The indicators are presented in the Table, along with the performance of WHO for 2018, 2019 and 2020 and its expected performance in 2021.

¹ See document A73/36; see also the summary records of the Seventy-third World Health Assembly (resumed), second meeting of Committee B, section 2 (document WHA73/2020/REC/3).

² The UN-SWAP performance indicators and rating system consist of levels: (a) Not applicable, (b) Missing, (c) Approaches requirements, (d) Meets requirements, and (e) Exceeds requirements. The requirements for each performance indicator are defined each year in the UN-SWAP Framework and Technical Guidance.

Table. WHO's performance in UN-SWAP 2.0

Performance indicators (PIs)	2018	2019	2020	2021^a
<i>Results-based management</i>				
1. Strategic planning of gender-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) results	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets
2. Reporting on gender-related SDG results	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches
3. Programmatic gender-related SDG results	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Oversight</i>				
4. Evaluation	Meets	Meets	Meets	Exceeds
5. Audit	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets
<i>Accountability</i>				
6. Policy	Meets	Meets	Approaches	Approaches
7. Leadership	Approaches	Approaches	Meets	Approaches
8. Gender-responsive performance management	Exceeds	Exceeds	Exceeds	Exceeds
<i>Human and financial resources</i>				
9. Financial resource tracking	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches
10. Financial resource allocation	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches
11. Gender architecture	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches
12. Equal representation of women	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches
13. Organizational culture	Approaches	Approaches	Meets	Meets
<i>Capacity</i>				
14. Capacity assessment	Approaches	Missing	Missing	Missing
15. Capacity development	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches	Approaches
<i>Coherence</i>				
16. Knowledge and communication	Meets	Approaches	Exceeds	Meets
17. Coherence	Approaches	Approaches	Meets	Meets
Meets or exceeds	6/16 (38%)	5/16 (31%)	8/16 (50%)	7/16 (44%)

^a To be confirmed by UN-WOMEN in 2022.

Results-based management indicators

4. This category includes three indicators: PI-01 (Strategic planning of gender-related SDG results); PI-02 (Reporting on gender-related SDG results); and PI-03 (Programmatic gender-related SDG results). WHO met the requirements for PI-01 in 2018 through 2021 because the Organization's main strategic documents, the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023, and programme budgets, include at least one high-level result (outcome) on gender equality and the empowerment of women that contributes to meeting Sustainable Development Goal targets and makes reference to the targets of Goal 5. Furthermore, the Programme budget 2022–2023 includes a specific reference to gender equality in the statement concerning outcome 1.1,¹ reflecting WHO's commitment in this regard. In addition,

¹ Outcome 1.1 of the Programme budget 2022–2023, improved access to quality essential health services irrespective of gender, age or disability status.

output 4.2.6 addresses gender mainstreaming¹ and is accompanied by a scorecard² for outputs measurement as part of the current WHO results framework. To exceed the requirements for PI-01, WHO needs to have a least one high-level transformative outcome on gender equality and the empowerment of women and to demonstrate that it is on track to meet that high-level outcome. WHO will therefore introduce a high-level transformative outcome going forward in order to improve its score for PI-01.

5. With respect to PI-02, WHO approached these requirements in 2018 through 2020. There are two requirements to meet this indicator: a standing report to governing bodies on gender equality and the systematic use of sex-disaggregated data in strategic plan reporting. The annual assessment report indicates that WHO continued to approach these requirements in 2021.

6. PI-03 is not applicable to WHO, according to the UN-WOMEN technical notes on the UN-SWAP and as confirmed by UN-WOMEN in its latest revision of WHO's report in 2021. The reason for WHO's non-applicability is that all programmatic and corporate results are included in the Programme budget and are, therefore, covered by PI-01 and PI-02.

Oversight indicators

7. This category includes two performance indicators: PI-04 (Evaluation) and PI-05 (Audit). WHO met the requirements in 2018 through 2020. Following an organization-wide evaluation of the integration of gender, equity and human rights in the work of WHO, as requested by Member States,³ WHO exceeded this requirement in 2021. Furthermore, WHO meets the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) gender equality-related norms and standards, and applies the UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality. WHO has also developed tools for integrating gender, equity and human rights in audits. The gender equity and human rights team within the Secretariat works with the Evaluation Unit and the Office of Internal Oversight to build capacity in, and maintain a strong focus on, these areas.

Accountability indicators

8. This category includes three performance indicators: PI-06 (Policy); PI-07 (Leadership); and PI-08 (Gender-responsive performance management). WHO met the requirements for PI-06 in 2018 and 2019 on the basis of the strategy document entitled "Integrating equity, gender, human rights and social determinants into the work of WHO: Roadmap for Action (2014–2019)". However, in 2020 and 2021, WHO only approached requirements as it lacked an organizational policy on gender equality and women's empowerment. Regarding PI-07, WHO approached the requirements in 2018 and 2019. In 2020, UN-WOMEN accepted WHO's self-assessment that it met the requirements, thanks to the remedial action plans put in place by the gender equity and human rights team, including the development of the output scorecard measurements. In 2021, UN-WOMEN requested WHO to adjust its score from meeting to approaching the requirements for PI-07 due to an observed continuous funding gap for gender, equity and human rights-related staff and activities both in the gender equity and human rights team and across the Organization.

¹ Output 4.2.6 of the Programme budget 2022–2023 and the Programme budget 2020–2021, the "Leave no one behind" approach, focused on equity, gender and human rights progressively incorporated and monitored.

² Document EB146/28/Rev.1.

³ Document EB146/3.

9. With respect to PI-08, WHO exceeded requirements in 2018 through 2021, primarily thanks to the allocation of staff and resources for assessing the inclusion of gender, along with equity, human rights, diversity and inclusiveness, in the core competencies and performance assessment of all staff.

Human and financial resources indicators

10. This category encompasses 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). WHO approached the requirements for all of these indicators in 2018 through 2021, with the exception of PI-13, for which it met the requirements in 2020 and 2021. The key reasons for its continuing to approach the requirements include: (a) the constraints against tracking the resources that are spent on gender-related activities outside the assigned output in the Programme budget (for example output 4.2.6 in the Programme budget 2020-2021); (b) the funding gap for gender, equity and human rights-related activities when planned costs and actual funding are assessed in the UN-SWAP report; and (c) the reduction of staff appointed to gender mainstreaming activities in the Organization's lead unit for this work, which is measured by the UN-SWAP indicator. To remediate the shortcomings in PI-09, the Secretariat is working towards a gender marker system to better track expenses in line with the related guidance from UN-WOMEN. The development of a new enterprise management system in the coming year offers an opportunity to work towards this objective.

11. With respect to PI-12, WHO continues to approach the requirement based on the WHO workforce statistics as of 31 July 2021. The range for achieving equal representation of women is 47–53% in all staff categories. As of 31 July 2021, women accounted for 43.8% of professional positions at the P4 level and above globally, which represents an increase of 4.3 percentage points since 2017, when the corresponding figure was 39.5%. However, notable variations occur across regions and grades, with parity gaps at certain leadership levels, such as D1 and D2, where women represent only 35%.

12. With respect to PI-13, the annual assessment report suggests that WHO met requirements in 2021 as a result of remedial actions plans and policies put in place by the Organization, including policies and regulations on ethical behaviour, facilitative policies for staff such as flexible working arrangements, gender analysis of staff exit interviews and strengthened efforts on zero tolerance towards sexual harassment and abuse, and preventing and addressing abusive conduct. Several other initiatives are also being developed, such as the human resources agenda and the action plan on diversity and inclusion in the WHO workforce, in which gender equality will be a key component. WHO could exceed the requirements for this indicator if it conducts a participatory gender audit; the Secretariat is currently exploring this possibility.

Capacity indicators

13. This category contains two indicators: PI-14 (Capacity assessment) and PI-15 (Capacity development). With respect to PI-14, WHO approached the requirements in 2018 but has continued to miss the requirements since 2019. In 2019 and 2020, the Secretariat conducted a mapping and needs assessment of gender, equity and human rights focal points at WHO headquarters, which provided a snapshot of the knowledge and the need for capacity development at headquarters. WHO plans to conduct an Organization-wide assessment of staff gender equality capacities in 2022, which will enable the Organization to meet the requirements for this indicator. With respect to PI-15, WHO continued to approach requirements in 2021, since the Organization-wide assessment of staff capacities in gender equality first needs to be conducted before a capacity development plan can be established. It is important to note that, although a capacity assessment has not been conducted and a capacity development plan not yet established, WHO continues to build on its efforts relating to

capacity-building, online learning and collaboration with the WHO Academy to develop a course on gender, equity and human rights. The WHO Academy is also working on embedding gender, equity and human rights as a core standard in its learning design approach.

Knowledge, communication and coherence indicators

14. This category covers two indicators: PI-16 (Knowledge and communication) and PI-17 (Coherence). WHO met the requirements for PI-16 in 2021. A critical review of WHO's communications activities highlighted that, while WHO's overarching communications plan includes gender equality and women's empowerment, these aspects are only briefly mentioned and have not been explored as an integral component of internal and public information dissemination. The Organization's communications team makes a concerted effort to ensure that communications products are gender-sensitive; at the same time, there are limited internal guidelines available to staff to ensure that these considerations are implemented by all staff and for all products. This shortcoming was reflected in the struggle to mainstream gender and ensure gender responsiveness in communications concerning the response to the pandemic of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). Addressing this gap would involve providing guidance for the external communications of senior management on how to ensure that gender issues are more effectively and adequately addressed in all health topics.

15. In 2020, relevant teams at WHO headquarters and the International Trade Centre partnered to conduct a peer-review process to mutually assess the quality of reporting on gender equality and gender mainstreaming through UN-SWAP. This peer-review process and continued inter-agency collaboration on gender, equity and human rights by multiple programmes of the Organization have enabled WHO to continue meeting the requirements for PI-17.

16. The performance of WHO in the UN-SWAP is assessed and published by UN-WOMEN. UN-WOMEN has commended WHO for its innovations on performance management, the UN-SWAP clinics, enhanced organizational culture and the development of the output scorecard with a section dedicated to assessing gender, equity and human rights mainstreaming. UN-WOMEN also recognizes that the performance of WHO is falling behind the average level within the United Nations system, particularly with regard to other large specialized agencies. UN-WOMEN continues to encourage WHO to make progress on the UN-SWAP performance indicators in order to advance its commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. This is crucial given the leadership role that WHO has played during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately affected women and girls. It should be noted that as of 2020, the performances of all United Nations entities reporting to the UN-SWAP framework are available on the UN-WOMEN website.¹

ACTION BY THE PROGRAMME, BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

17. The Committee is invited to note the report.

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¹ See <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability/un-swap-results/2020>, accessed 28 March 2022.