Annex III - Gender and Geographical Representation in UNOPS

This document is provided in response to the Executive Board decision 2022/13. It provides an update on the progress made in relation to geographical representation in the UNOPS workforce.

1. Following the achievement of gender parity in 2021 in the workforce, UNOPS has maintained around 50 percent representation of women irrespective of contract type. However, UNOPS journey towards achieving parity across all business units, regions, and levels continues. For example, at the end of 2023, the share of women in senior positions was at 43 percent, underscoring the need to continue our efforts in meeting our targets. Guided by its diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the workforce strategy and its corresponding corporate action plan, UNOPS is working to embrace an intersectional1 approach in its efforts. This is especially in its pursuit to consider geographical diversity in its parity efforts, particularly personnel from the global south. At the end of 2023, there were 44 percent personnel from the global south in senior international positions, and 55 percent in international positions. In addition, at the end of 2023, 67 percent of personnel were employed on national contracts (LICA, GS, NO), and 33 percent were employed on international contracts (IICA, IP, JPO).

A. Leadership and Accountability

2. As part of the restated strategic plan, 2022-2025, UNOPS issued the expanded results framework, which includes goals, indicators, and targets for contributions and management. Under the management goal people culture, driver 1.a composite indicator "share of corporate targets met on gender and diversity", has a target of 95 percent. Progress against this target is reviewed in the context of the quarterly management review". The composite indicator includes:
   a. share of women in the workforce
   b. share of women in senior positions
   c. share of personnel from the global south in international positions
   d. share of personnel from the global south in senior international positions

Since 2018, yearly performance objectives on DEI and inclusive work environments are included for all ICS11 and above personnel, which are believed to have had a significant impact on UNOPS achievement of gender parity in 2021. Furthermore, responsibility for DEI falls within the role of heads of support services (ICS 11/12) to ensure that hiring managers actively seek to create diverse teams, including geographical representation.

B. Recruitment, Talent Attraction, and Outreach

3. As articulated in the annual report of the Executive Director (DP/OPS/2022/5), UNOPS commits to increasing the representation of women at senior levels among international personnel (ICS 11/P4 and above) and achieving targets established by the UN system-wide strategy by 2026. Some of the special measures implemented by UNOPS in 2019 to achieve gender parity remain in place for business units that have not yet achieved parity.

4. UNOPS is continuously working to reinforce an intersectional approach in its pursuit of gender parity by intensifying outreach initiatives targeted toward women from the global south. This underscores UNOPS commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce. For example, this has been evident through the attainment of UNOPS 2023 targets on the share of personnel from the global south in international positions. By Q4 2023, all regions met their 2023 target in this category and the organization stood at 55 percent personnel from the global south in international positions (of which 26 percent were women). To facilitate transparent monitoring of progress, UNOPS continues to make available a live dashboard that provides diverse statistics on personnel demographics, including gender, duty station, ICS level, contract type, nationality category, and more.

1 Intersectionality means the ways in which race, gender, disability, sexual orientation and other aspects of one’s identity overlap and interact, informing how people simultaneously experience oppression and privilege in their daily lives. Intersectionality promotes the idea that aspects of one’s identity do not work in a silo.
5. Personnel are encouraged to share and refer vacancy announcements among their network actively, and vacancy announcements are required to state the provision for flexible working arrangements. UNOPS has further strengthened its competency-based interview (CBI) training which includes a segment on unconscious bias, an e-learning component followed by a virtual or in-person workshop, and a final assessment in order to be fully CBI-certified. The convener, usually the hiring manager, and the panel's HR representative must be CBI-certified to participate in the CBI.

6. With the aim of enhancing candidate and personnel engagement, UNOPS has put a special effort into its employer branding in recent years. UNOPS continues to work to position itself as an inclusive employer of choice by sharing more information on its culture, environment, and diverse offers.

7. UNOPS continues to offer its junior talent program (JTP) which is a recruitment initiative launched in 2019 to source qualified professionals in hardship duty stations. This program is aimed in particular at youth and underrepresented groups, and through that contributes to building national capacity. It allows specific vacancies in hardship locations to be filled by former interns with an educational degree. Over the past years, 55 young professionals (85 percent of them women) have been active participants in the program. Participants of the program are from the global south and from countries in conflict situations such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Afghanistan, Haiti, Guinea, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, and Ethiopia, among others.

C. Talent Management

8. DEI continues to be a consideration in talent management initiatives, including but not limited to leadership development, succession planning, and talent benches to identify internal candidates for future leadership roles. The same applies to access to learning opportunities where target agreements are in place to ensure the representation of women in such opportunities. For example, UNOPS established a target of equal representation of women in leadership training. In addition, UNOPS continues to use a strengthened representation of women in outreach materials. Its social media specifically targets followers who are women, particularly from the global south, in fields such as engineering, procurement, and leadership.

9. UNOPS has made efforts to fill its talent benches with diverse candidates, allowing it to acquire and retain talent and enable succession planning for mission-critical leadership roles. UNOPS continues to work with a senior infrastructure project manager talent bench and the pool of project managers for rehire/reassignment due to project closure to strengthen UNOPS capacity to acquire and retain project management talent. The pool is a mechanism to enable talent retention of personnel whose projects are closing; it facilitates internal mobility through the reassignment to other similar opportunities within UNOPS and supports the organization's readiness to respond to emerging needs through surge capacity. For mission-critical leadership recruitment panels, UNOPS makes special efforts to ensure a diverse panel composition both in regard to gender and geographical diversity.

C. Learning and Professional development

10. From 2023, UNOPS has been offering an induction initiative called the ‘new leaders induction journey’ to everyone who takes up a role as a supervisor in UNOPS for the first time (both experienced leaders from other organizations and first-time supervisors). This initiative informs new supervisors/people leaders at all levels from the start on the tools and resources they will need to be a people leader. This includes UNOPS DEI Strategy and actions, and other related DEI topics.

11. UNOPS has integrated unconscious bias awareness into its full suite of leadership development programs and training. These programmes in 2024 cover all levels of leaders from aspiring to experienced and to senior leaders. In 2018, UNOPS developed a training that focuses specifically on inclusive leadership. In addition, UNOPS sends cohorts of 5-10 mid-level women leaders each year to the UNSSC program on “leadership, women, and the UN”. Equal representation of women is ensured in all leadership development programs.
C. UNOPS Moving Forward

12. A vital goal for UNOPS is to foster a workplace characterized by diversity, inclusion, and a positive workplace culture — a workplace where individuals can thrive, contribute, and develop. UNOPS is committed to continuing to sustain gender parity in its overall workforce and pursue it across all levels and business units, ensuring that an intersectional approach is integral to its efforts. Presently, engagement levels among women and personnel with psychosocial and mental health disabilities are comparatively lower as highlighted in recent pulse survey results in 2023. UNOPS will therefore explore ways to improve the experiences of women colleagues and personnel with disabilities, aiming to cultivate a workplace that nurtures their growth, empowerment, and active engagement. In addition, UNOPS will endeavor to make improvements to the survey for a better understanding of personnel’s experiences and engagement.

13. Furthermore, UNOPS seeks ways to reinforce accountability for management to increase representation of women and personnel from the global south in senior positions, and to foster an inclusive work environment. UNOPS continues to face challenges in geographical representation in higher ICS levels where a combined share of European and North American citizens hold a relatively higher share of senior positions than non-senior positions. For example, by the end of 2023, European and North American citizens comprised 51 percent of ICS 14 positions and 73 percent of ICS 13 positions. This highlights the need for concerted efforts to enhance diversity and ensure equitable representation across all levels within the organization, an area UNOPS remains committed to continuously improving upon.

14. In addition, UNOPS will continuously seek to attract, develop, and retain talent, skills, and expertise to effectively meet the needs of its partners. Regular feedback, an inclusive work environment, and opportunities for professional development are crucial to retaining such talent. As part of its work on organizational culture, UNOPS will continue to seek new ways to encourage career progression in the organization and to enhance the attraction and retention of personnel. In summary, UNOPS remains dedicated to fostering an inclusive and diverse workplace where every individual's potential is realized and valued.