

GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION MAINSTREAMING IN PROJECTS

Strategy 2022 – 2025



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Abbreviations

GESI	Gender equality and social inclusion
GESI FP	Gender equality and social inclusion focal point
GFP	Gender focal point
GRP	Gender-responsive procurement
PSEAH	Prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAH	Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks

Foreword

Gender equality and social inclusion are key to creating the conditions for people to live a life they value, where their needs are met, their human rights are protected, and they are able to participate equally in society, as promised in Agenda 2030.

UNOPS is committed to making that vision a reality. We support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and Our Common Agenda through our core areas of expertise: infrastructure, procurement, and project management.

The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Strategy in Projects reaffirms UNOPS commitment to gender equality, diversity and inclusion. It mobilizes our efforts to promote equal rights and opportunities for people to live full lives, supported by sustainable, resilient, and inclusive infrastructure, and by the efficient and transparent use of public resources in procurement and project management.

This requires that we—in our work—understand the root causes of inequalities and take action to target those. It requires all of us to understand the interconnected nature of issues that often lead to discrimination or disadvantage, such as race, class and gender, among other things. And it requires us to design, implement, and measure the success of our projects in ways that enable human agency whether it is in terms of access, participation or decision-making of marginalized groups.

To do this, we need stronger leadership and accountability on the issue of gender equality and social inclusion, and we need to invest in our capacity and expertise in this area.

This strategy runs hand in hand with the [Gender, Diversity and Inclusion in our Workforce Strategy 2022-2025](#), which UNOPS launched in March 2022. Inclusive projects delivering diverse solutions need a diverse workforce to drive them. At UNOPS we are committed to promoting gender equality and inclusion, both in our workforce, and importantly through the projects that we deliver for the benefit of the communities that we serve.



Jens Wandel,
UNOPS Acting Executive Director

Introduction

UNOPS launched its Gender Mainstreaming Strategy in 2018 to address the persistent inequalities faced by women and girls in their access to services and infrastructure.

The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Mainstreaming in Projects Strategy 2022-2025 outlines UNOPS's commitment to gender and social inclusion in its projects. This strategy is anchored in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,¹ the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,² and other international agreements, standards and norms that are shaping the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development³ and seek to realize the human rights of all people and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It is aligned with the United Nations Core values of respect for diversity, integrity and professionalism, which underpin and guide the actions and behaviors of all United Nations personnel.

COVID-19 set us back on our joint journey to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, reversing gains in education, economic opportunities and health. The pandemic also reinforced deep-rooted systemic inequalities. It caused particular harm to certain marginalized groups and individuals, including indigenous people, older people, youth, women and girls, minorities and low-income individuals. These individuals and groups face systemic barriers to accessing opportunities, livelihoods and resources.

UNOPS is determined to strengthen its ability to ensure diversity and inclusion throughout the project lifespan, including its procurement practices. For example, the Gender Responsive Procurement (GRP) will ensure that the procurement process and the selection of goods, services and works have a positive, holistic impact on gender equality and inclusion.

By enhancing diversity and social inclusion and building safer, more stable and just societies for all people, UNOPS is creating the necessary conditions to foster social transformation, leading to more sustainable peace and development.

This strategy articulates the significant shift needed for a more robust, diverse and inclusive approach. UNOPS will ensure that projects promote equitable opportunities for all individuals, regardless of age, sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, religion, language, nationality, migration status and socioeconomic status. Adopting a gender equality and an inclusive approach to how projects and procurement activities are planned, delivered and made fit for purpose will be a corporate priority.

The strategy draws on the findings and recommendations of the 2020 Gender Focal Persons Survey, the 2021 Participatory Gender and Inclusion Audit, the [Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network \(MOPAN\)](#), the Partner Survey Report, and the achievements and learnings from the

¹ United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations, Paris, 10 December 1948.

² The Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing, 15 September 1995; UN Women, [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Beijing+5 Political Declaration and Outcome](#), UN Women, New York, 2014.

³ Resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1, 21 October 2015. The 17 Goals include 169 targets and 232 indicators of which 80 indicators have been identified as gender-relevant.

implementation of the [2018 Gender Mainstreaming Strategy: Enhancing Gender Equality through UNOPS Projects](#).

An **inclusive and consultative process** was undertaken to develop this strategy, which included consultations with personnel from country, regional, and headquarters business units. In addition, UNOPS consulted with multiple development partners to ensure that lessons learned were incorporated, as relevant.

UNOPS has also benefited from the evolving commitments, efforts and initiatives within the United Nations system, including the [United Nations Disability Strategy](#), the [United Nations Youth Strategy](#),⁴ the [Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse \(9 October 2003\)](#), the [PSEA Protocol involving Implementing Partners](#) and the [United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women \(UN-SWAP 2.0\)](#).⁵ UNOPS is aware that these initiatives, as well as others that will evolve over time, will continuously shape and inform UNOPS's own work and initiatives.

This strategy is complementary to the [Gender, Diversity and Inclusion in our Workforce Strategy 2022-2025](#), launched by UNOPS in March 2022. These two strategies enable and enrich one other, supporting UNOPS' vision, management goals and contribution goals. **Without diversity in the workforce, projects themselves are unlikely to be truly inclusive.**

In close collaboration with our partners and community stakeholders, UNOPS will further strengthen its approach and actions, building on lessons learned, challenges and successes in the projects we implement on behalf of our partners.

⁴ Youth development and youth engagement are cross-cutting issues in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Youth-related targets are under several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and are interrelated.

⁵ UN Women, 'United Nations Office For Project Services (UNOPS) UN-SWAP 2.0 Performance 2019', <<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/How%20We%20Work/UNSystemCoordination/UN-SWAP/Results/2019/2019-UNOPS-SWAP-2-reporting-results-en.pdf>>, accessed 19 August 2022. In 2020, UNOPS exceeded the requirements for nine indicators and met another two indicators, including gender-responsive performance management.

1 Vision

The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Mainstreaming in Projects Strategy vision is to promote equal rights and opportunities for people to live full lives, supported by sustainable, resilient, and inclusive infrastructure, and by the efficient and transparent use of public resources in procurement and project management.

This strategy articulates an approach to achieve this vision through a GESI mainstreaming approach in all UNOPS projects. This approach requires an understanding of intersectionality and how discrimination in relation to access, participation and decision-making against particular communities and groups can be alleviated and accounted for throughout the project lifespan.

This strategy focuses on mainstreaming inclusive approaches in the projects UNOPS delivers for its partners – to save lives, protect and promote human rights and build a better world – in UNOPS core areas of expertise: quality infrastructure; sustainable public procurement; and project management. This includes identifying the root causes of inequalities and systemic barriers, with particular focus on determining the positive and negative implications throughout the project lifespan.

2 Enhancing the gender equality and social inclusion approach in UNOPS projects

This strategy builds on the success of the UNOPS Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2018-2021 and expands the UNOPS approach to diversity and social inclusion. It is aligned with the UNOPS strategic plan 2022-2025 and, in particular, the following commitments made therein:

“We are committed to **human rights for all**, respecting diversity and focusing on inclusion of the most vulnerable. **We will expand our gender mainstreaming strategy to intensify our efforts and include people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.** It will also address mainstreaming prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, including associated risk indicators.”⁶

“We are attentive to the needs of the most vulnerable and to **leaving no one behind.** We will mainstream gender equality, inclusion, and respect for diversity into what we do and how we do it.”⁷

UNOPS appreciates the interlinkages between sustainable development and the drivers of conflict, disaster risks, humanitarian crises and complex emergencies. Therefore, UNOPS recognizes the following:

“[T]hat sustainable development underpins peace; sustained peace enables development; and societies are more resilient when they uphold human rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment, rule of law, inclusion, and diversity, as well as nurture their children and youth.”⁸

Figure 1 illustrates UNOPS's progress in addressing gender inequality and social inclusion in projects, as well as UNOPS's vision and goals for the future. Moving from a gender-sensitive approach in 2018, UNOPS has worked to develop a GESI-responsive approach. With this strategy, it is envisaged that all UNOPS projects will implement a GESI responsive approach by 2025, and will make progress toward the adoption of a GESI transformative approach.⁹

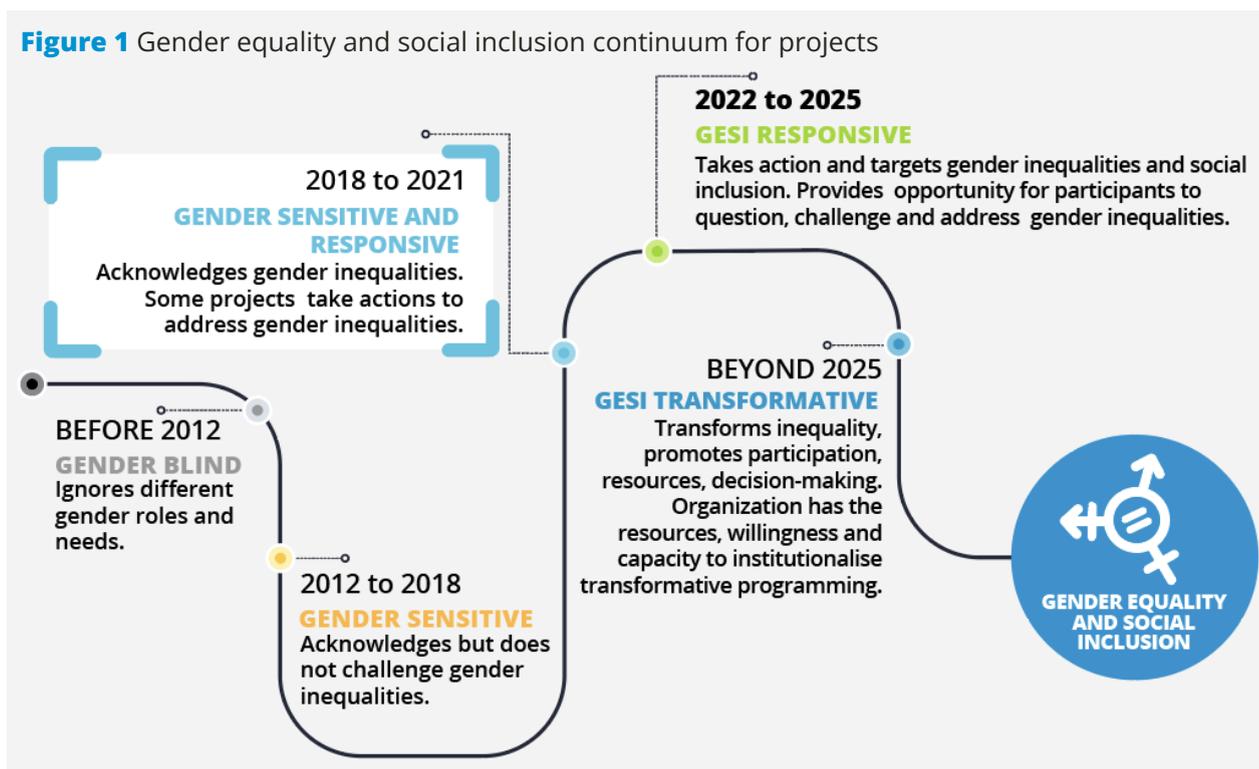
⁶ United Nations, Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, ‘The UNOPS strategic plan, 2022–2025’, DP/OPS/2021/5, 29 June 2021, para. 85 (emphasis added).

⁷ Ibid., para. 12 (emphasis added).

⁸ Ibid., para. 21.

⁹ See Annex 1 for definitions of key terminology, including ‘gender sensitive’, ‘gender equality and social inclusion responsive’ and ‘gender equality and social inclusion transformative’.

Figure 1 Gender equality and social inclusion continuum for projects

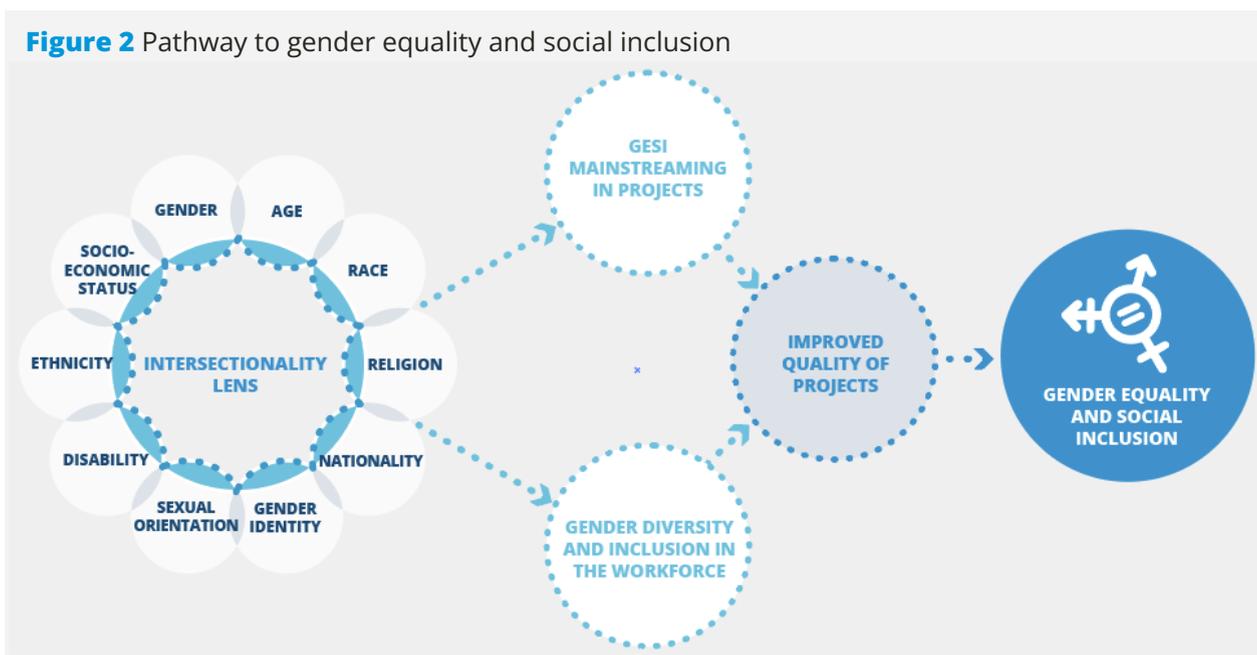


UNOPS acknowledges the need to improve on the current approach, and that UNOPS personnel must be trained to lead the way toward inclusiveness.

UNOPS recognizes that an individual's gender, age, race, religion, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, and socio-economic status can be used as grounds for discrimination and marginalization. When an individual possesses multiple identity categories, it may exacerbate discrimination and marginalization. Therefore, UNOPS strives to consider an intersectional lens in its approach to GESI mainstreaming in projects (see Section 4.1).

Figure 2 illustrates the pathway to GESI. Completing an intersectional analysis will lead to more robust GESI mainstreaming in projects. At the same time, incorporating gender, diversity and inclusion in the workforce aligns with the organizational culture and supports GESI in projects. The ultimate goal is to achieve GESI, where all people have equal rights and opportunities and are not faced with discrimination or marginalization.

Figure 2 Pathway to gender equality and social inclusion



3 Objectives

UNOPS has defined three interrelated and reinforcing objectives to achieve the vision outlined in this strategy. UNOPS recognizes that GESI must not be a separate initiative but must build on the existing achievements, lessons learned and insights from the implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2018-2021. The GESI approach must also be implemented together with existing internal UNOPS initiatives, such as the Expanding Contributions and Social and Environment Safeguards projects, the Possibilities Programme, Gender-responsive procurement, the Disability Action Plan, and the Youth Action Plan.

By the end of the 2022-2025 strategic plan period, UNOPS intends to achieve the following three objectives.

Objective 1

Projects integrate a comprehensive approach to gender equality and social inclusion mainstreaming.

All UNOPS projects should integrate a comprehensive approach to GESI mainstreaming throughout the entire project lifespan. The following key areas for action will support the achievement of this objective:

- Embed gender equality and social inclusion via an intersectional lens;
- Strengthen partnerships;
- Increase the meaningful participation of women, marginalized and underrepresented groups; and
- Increase awareness, communication, advocacy and knowledge management on GESI.

Objective 2

Institutional capacity to support gender equality and social inclusion mainstreaming in projects is strengthened.

UNOPS's institutional capacity to support the mainstreaming of GESI in projects will be strengthened by 2025 and will facilitate the achievement of Objective 1. The following key areas for action will support the achievement of this objective:

- Strengthen leadership and enhance accountability;
- Strengthen the GESI architecture;¹⁰
- Expand GESI expertise; and
- Invest in capacity-building for UNOPS personnel.

¹⁰ GESI architecture is a term referring to all governance structures and resources that are in place in an organization to tackle gender inequality and discrimination.

Objective 3

Increased project contributions to sustainable and inclusive results.

UNOPS projects will contribute to sustainable and inclusive results via GESI mainstreaming. The following key areas for action will support the achievement of this objective:

- Contribute to existing and emerging corporate initiatives;
- Support the implementation of the three UNOPS contribution goals;
- Ensure that safeguards are inclusive;
- Enhance recognition of the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH); and
- Improve data management and the measurement of progress and results.

4 Key areas for action

There are several key areas for action to achieve the three objectives identified in this strategy.

4.1. Objective 1: Key areas for action

Objective 1: Projects integrate a comprehensive approach to gender equality and social inclusion mainstreaming.

Embed gender equality and social inclusion in projects via an intersectional lens

A comprehensive approach to GESI mainstreaming requires the consideration of an intersectional lens throughout the project lifespan. Intersectionality involves acknowledging that people are often discriminated against and marginalized by multiple factors of oppression. It considers an individual's overlapping identities and experiences and aims to understand the complexity of prejudices they face.¹¹

For example, the overlapping, multiple needs of an adolescent girl belonging to an ethnic minority and living with a physical disability need to be considered when designing a school. In this example, discrimination may occur based on her ethnicity, sex and disability. If her specific needs of accessibility, culture and menstrual hygiene have not been accommodated in the design of the school, her chances of benefitting from school education are low. The intersection of gender, age, ethnicity and disability results in multiple forms of discrimination, which often remain invisible and unaddressed. The failure to use an intersectional lens when developing actions to address the discrimination and/or marginalization of a particular group can lead to the perpetuation of inequalities for other groups.¹²

Strengthen partnerships

The UNOPS mandate authorizes it to work with various partners, including United Nations entities, governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. In 2021, UNOPS conducted an online survey to solicit feedback from its partners worldwide to explore their perceptions, experiences, needs and expectations about their engagement with UNOPS.

The 2021 Partner Survey Report noted that “[u]p to 38% [of respondents] are unfamiliar with UNOPS priorities within gender equality and climate-resilient infrastructure.”¹³ It further underlined that “[m]ore than half (62%) think UNOPS should be more visible to beneficiaries, with the potential to strengthen transparency and project objectives.”¹⁴

¹¹ The term ‘intersectionality’ was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to describe how systems of oppression overlap to create distinct experiences for people with multiple identity categories.

¹² Taylor, Bridie, ‘Intersectionality 101: what is it and why is it important?’, Womankind Worldwide, 24 November 2019,

www.womankind.org.uk/intersectionality-101-what-is-it-and-why-is-it-important/#:~:text=Intersectionality%20is%20the%20acknowledgement%20that,orientation%2C%20physical%20ability%2C%20etc, accessed 30 June 2022.

¹³ Deloitte, ‘UNOPS 2021 Partner Survey Report’, Deloitte, 2021, slide 5.

¹⁴ Ibid.

UNOPS has the opportunity to make its work on GESI acknowledged and to improve transparency for beneficiaries.

Strengthening UNOPS partnerships is key to facilitating a comprehensive approach to GESI mainstreaming in projects. In particular, UNOPS will increase efforts to identify and engage with partners who have particular expertise in GESI, as well as deepen existing partnerships with those who have developed requirements on GESI. UNOPS will also promote its efforts to embed GESI mainstreaming in projects in negotiations with partners to ensure that GESI is reflected during the development of UNOPS projects. Furthermore, UNOPS will work with academia and think tanks to develop and publish evidence-based publications on GESI and organize joint events with key partners (either by leading these events or supporting others) to further ensure its credibility on GESI.

At the country level, UNOPS will be part of efforts to improve inter-agency coordination by supporting the integration of GESI in all common country analyses and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

Increase the meaningful participation of women and marginalized and underrepresented groups

Stakeholder engagement activities should include a representative group of end users, with a specific focus on the representation of women, marginalized and underrepresented groups. Ensuring inclusive stakeholder engagement provides the legitimacy of a project, is rooted in human rights and is critical to the following activities:

- To accurately identify and understand the needs of end users;
- To ensure that stakeholders are effectively informed;
- To involve stakeholders in the development and decision-making process;
- To receive feedback and evaluate project performance and outputs; and
- To ensure that projects are contributing to outcomes.

Furthermore, consultations with identified marginalized and underrepresented groups, with the support of GESI specialists, are vital to identify and address any barriers to participation and to support their role in decision-making.

GESI analysis is necessary to identify context-specific needs and to establish an understanding of local situations and contexts in UNOPS projects. The analysis should incorporate an intersectional lens to identify the overlapping vulnerabilities of marginalized groups. The analysis can also inform the scope of GESI and project development activities for the broader portfolio at the country, multi-country and regional levels, ensuring more inclusive and better-targeted projects. Without a GESI analysis, there is a significant risk of failing to address the needs of a substantial population of marginalized and underrepresented groups.

UNOPS recognizes its existing limitations in working with all marginalized and underrepresented groups and will adopt a proportional approach to strengthen efforts for their inclusion in all projects. Therefore, UNOPS will initially focus on accelerating work with:

- **Women and girls** by contributing directly to women's economic empowerment through decent work, employment, access to resources, participation in decision-making, capacity and skills-building;
- **People with disabilities** by focusing on four areas of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy framework: 1) leadership, strategic planning, and management; 2) inclusiveness to be able to fully encapsulate the principles of 'Nothing About Us without Us'; 3) programming; and 4) organizational culture as defined in the UNOPS Disability Inclusion Action Plan;
- **Youth** by the participation, promotion, and inclusion of youth in its projects as per the UNOPS Youth Action Plan; and
- **Context-sensitive** (based on sexual orientation and gender identity) and **context-specific** (based on race, ethnicity, religion and indigenous status) groups.

In addition, procurement must be a driver of change to ensure the effective participation of women and marginalized and underrepresented groups in projects. The UNOPS strategic plan, 2022-2025 acknowledges the following:

"We know public procurement can be an agent of change promoting **social inclusion** while ensuring fairness and value for money. We believe inclusion is reinforced by focusing on supply chain resilience. Public procurement can also have profound negative effects [when not done properly], such as the lock-in of unsustainable economic, environmental, and social practices; **exclusion and marginalization of vulnerable groups**; as well as the **entrenchment of vulnerabilities and risks**." ¹⁵

Increase awareness, communication, advocacy and knowledge management on GESI

Good practices and lessons learned, including success and failures, at the regional and country level shall be used to build knowledge across UNOPS and to replicate or scale up successes in more sustainable work on GESI. Making success stories visible can foster a better understanding of the opportunities for GESI-related activities and help to increase the maturity of projects in the application of a consistent approach to GESI.

In close alignment with the Knowledge Management Strategy and collaboration with the Knowledge Management Team, UNOPS will strive to implement the following actions:

- Redeploy and reuse existing knowledge assets;
- Solve problems and innovate;
- Share information internally and externally; and
- Ensure that knowledge and competencies are not lost.

¹⁵ UNOPS Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, para. 68 (emphasis added).

In collaboration with the Communications Group, UNOPS will define key messages for the strategy.

Furthermore, internal advocacy to ensure that GESI mainstreaming activities are identified in project budgets, together with dedicated personnel, is crucial to ensure a consistent approach to GESI. External advocacy is also a key component that relates to strengthening partnerships (discussed above) and it should address the allocation of funds to address GESI and the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH) in discussions with donors and implementing partners.

In close collaboration with the Communications Group, UNOPS personnel, partners and the Executive Board will be updated on the progress of the implementation of this strategy and the associated Corporate Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Action Plan (see Section 5).

4.2. Objective 2: Key areas for action

Objective 2: Institutional capacity to support GESI mainstreaming in projects is strengthened.

Strengthen leadership and enhance accountability

UNOPS leadership is responsible for encouraging the implementation of this strategy at all levels, driving the cultural change necessary to make this strategy successful. Reiterating the link to GESI mainstreaming, as articulated in the UNOPS mission, is critical to achieving the sustainable, long-lasting change necessary to transform the organizational culture.

Talking about GESI as ‘who we are,’ especially when communicated by senior leadership, and having difficult conversations will not only help to ensure a strong foundation of GESI but will encourage UNOPS personnel to see GESI as a valued part of the organization’s identity and the expectation for ‘how we work’ at UNOPS. Personnel in leadership positions at all levels will advocate for GESI in their public speeches, statements and presentations.

There are critical roles and responsibilities during the entire project lifespan to ensure that all projects actively integrate GESI mainstreaming. While UNOPS personnel across all functional levels are responsible for operationalizing the strategy, partnerships personnel, business developers, project managers and engagement acceptance roles are pivotal for its effective realization.

Strengthen the gender equality and social inclusion architecture

A global gender focal point (GFP) network was put in place following the release of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy in 2018 to enable UNOPS to advance its work in gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Gender Focal Persons Survey in 2020 highlighted a recurrent issue expressed by GFPs that they are expected to complete their GFP duties in addition to the responsibilities associated with their position and that they experience difficulty managing competing workload demands. These findings further highlighted that a large percentage of GFPs are not gender specialists and that some may not possess any experience promoting gender mainstreaming.

With the addition of social inclusion in this strategy, UNOPS will take steps to broaden the scope of the GFP network to include social inclusion and the GFPs will be renamed gender equality and social inclusion mainstreaming focal points (GESI FPs). These steps will entail revising the terms of reference (TORs) and conducting systematic capacity-building workshops to enable the GESI FPs to contribute to a broader awareness of GESI in projects, as well as integrating relevant indicators in the PER/PRA of GESI FPs so that their time and contributions are acknowledged and given due recognition. Pertinent changes in the PERs/PRA are also recommended for senior management at the headquarters, regional, and project management levels to enhance the accountability for GESI mainstreaming.

It is the responsibility of senior leadership and the supervisors of the GESI FPs to jointly ensure that adequate time is allocated to allow these individuals to effectively fulfill the responsibilities of both their position and their role as a GESI FP.

Expand gender equality and social inclusion expertise

Currently, the availability of gender-related resources is uneven across the five regions at UNOPS. Regional and Country Offices are encouraged to hire experienced GESI Specialists to ensure that projects have access to these resources and to develop GESI retainer pools at the regional and country levels.

Invest in capacity-building for UNOPS personnel

Despite individual success cases, training and capacity-building rarely have a significant impact on UNOPS as a whole unless the working culture of the organization becomes gender-responsive. Therefore, UNOPS will invest in capacity-building for all personnel to increase GESI responsiveness in everyday working practices and the collective norms of project management. Actions that stimulate changes in attitude shall be encouraged.

Capacity-building can provide a pivotal opportunity to help UNOPS personnel to understand the relevance of GESI for the organization, both internally and externally, and to foster support for GESI throughout the organization. UNOPS will provide personnel with an understanding of how and when to use GESI mainstreaming tools and how they apply to specific projects.

4.3. Objective 3: Key areas for action

Objective 3: Increased project contributions to sustainable and inclusive results.

Contribute to existing and emerging corporate initiatives

This strategy has the potential to impact the achievement of other existing and emerging corporate initiatives such as the Expanding Contributions project and the development and implementation of the Social and Environment Safeguards project and the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) initiatives. The progress of these, and other initiatives, will be closely followed to align with this strategy and to ensure that these initiatives are viewed through a GESI lens.

Support the implementation of the three UNOPS contribution goals

UNOPS work is guided by the three contribution goals in the UNOPS strategic plan, 2022-2025: Support countries; Help people in need; and Enable our partners.¹⁶ These contribution goals are central to UNOPS' purpose, vision and mission. For the current strategic period, UNOPS has agreed to a set of contribution indicators and targets that help to focus the collective efforts at UNOPS to enhance contributions under the strategic plan.¹⁷

GESI and the empowerment of women and girls are fundamental to sustainable development, peace and security and progress on the three UNOPS contribution goals. Therefore, under the goal to 'Help people in need,' one of the contribution indicators is that at least 60 percent of UNOPS Category 2 and 3 projects address GESI mainstreaming and include related activities within the project budget.

This strategy will support the implementation of the three contribution goals that frame UNOPS operations. By working toward the achievement of Objectives 1 and 2 in this strategy, UNOPS projects can increase their contributions to sustainable and inclusive results and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). For example, integrating GESI in infrastructure design will support countries and ensure that infrastructure is designed following the best interests of users, including the needs of women and girls, and that it does not perpetuate inequalities.¹⁸ Furthermore, integrating GESI in all UNOPS projects will also enable national partners to increase their progress on the SDGs, as well as support United Nations partners in implementing the United Nations system-wide strategies on gender, youth and disability inclusion.

Ensure that safeguards are inclusive

Under the contribution goal to 'Help people in need,' UNOPS considers that "social and environmental safeguards are a crucial means of targeting efforts towards helping people in need and developing resilient communities."¹⁹ To this end, UNOPS commits to "expand [the] gender mainstreaming strategy to intensify our efforts and include youth, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups [...] and] also address mainstreaming [the]

¹⁶ UNOPS strategic plan, 2022-2025, para. 49.

¹⁷ UNOPS, 'Contribution indicators for 2022-2025'.

¹⁸ See UNOPS strategic plan, 2022-2025, para. 56.

¹⁹ Ibid., para. 84.

prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, including associated risk indicators.”²⁰ This strategy seeks to ensure that the safeguards developed are reflective of GESI, in accordance with this commitment.

The UNOPS Legislative Framework currently includes certain social and environmental safeguards.²¹ UNOPS is planning to develop existing standards into a more comprehensive framework of safeguards for projects and programmes, which reflect international best practices such as the World Bank Environmental and Social Framework²² and the United Nations model approach to environmental and social Standards in UN programming.²³

Enhance recognition of the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment

UNOPS has a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH).²⁴ GESI mainstreaming is critical to reinforce this policy and to support organizational efforts on PSEAH. SEAH is a violation of human rights rooted in gender discrimination, which intersects with social inequalities and violence against women and girls and other individuals in situations of vulnerability.

Individuals who are marginalized or discriminated against are at particular risk of SEAH due to an imbalance of power and their lack of access to and control over resources and services. GESI mainstreaming can support UNOPS efforts to address the needs of individuals at risk of SEAH in connection with UNOPS projects and the projects of implementing partners.

UNOPS will develop the capacity, guidance and reporting mechanisms needed to address the obligations in the United Nations Protocol on Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Involving Implementing Partners and will ensure that adequate safeguards for PSEAH are in place.

Improve data management and the measurement of progress and results

Improving the collection and management of project data and measuring progress and results is critical to achieving increased project contributions to sustainable and inclusive results.²⁵ Key activities, including GESI responsive procurement, should be identified and included in the budget and planned, monitored and controlled during the project lifespan as part of the comprehensive approach to GESI in projects. In addition, the number and type of beneficiaries should be identified in the legal agreement, disaggregated by gender, age and other socially inclusive metrics.²⁶

²⁰ UNOPS strategic plan, 2022-2025, para. 85.

²¹ See the Executive Office Directive on Occupational Health & Safety and Social & Environmental Management and the accompanying Executive Office Instructions.

²² World Bank, World Bank Environmental and Social Framework, World Bank, Washington, DC, 2016.

²³ United Nations Environmental Management Group, Moving towards a Common Approach to Environmental and Social Standards for UN Programming, UNEMG, 8 July 2019.

²⁴ UNOPS, 'Prevention of Sexual Harassment (SH) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) Strategy', UNOPS, Copenhagen, March 2020.

²⁵ See the UNOPS Project Success Criteria, Vers. 2.0, August 2022, Criterion 1.5.

²⁶ Ibid.

Finally, there is a need to harmonize and align the current tools for gender mainstreaming to meet the requirements of this strategy, with consideration for the expanded approach to social inclusion. Therefore, all relevant projects should incorporate systemic data collection against set targets at various levels to enable reporting on context-specific sex, age, disability and other vulnerabilities – where possible – using disaggregated data.

5 Governance

UNOPS will develop a four-year Corporate Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Action Plan to implement this strategy through a clearly defined set of activities. In addition, the action plan will include a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to track progress on the three objectives in this strategy. The action plan, along with the associated indicators, will be reviewed and updated annually during this strategic period.

The Infrastructure and Project Management Group (IPMG) will be accountable for the implementation of the action plan and monitoring and measuring the associated KPIs. While other functional units and teams own several of the activities included within the action plan, IPMG is responsible for coordinating with the relevant unit or team to ensure that these activities are implemented. IPMG will provide quarterly reports and updates to highlight progress, risks, corrective actions and additional activities.

A GESI Task Force will be established to build a broader commitment to GESI throughout UNOPS and to develop guidance and advice on the implementation of this strategy, especially concerning the targets at the headquarter, regional, multi-country and country levels.

Senior Management will regularly communicate and demonstrate its commitment to the implementation of this strategy. It will be responsible and accountable for creating an enabling environment for GESI mainstreaming in UNOPS projects.

Annex 1: Key terminology

Several key terms and concepts are referenced throughout this document. For clarity and transparency, these terms have been defined below, in accordance with standard United Nations terminology.²⁷

Key terminology	
Diversity	Means having people who are different in a group or organization ²⁸
Empowerment of Women and Girls	Concerns their gaining power and control over their own lives. It involves awareness-raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources and actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality.
Gender	Gender refers to the roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women. In addition to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, gender also refers to the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies, there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context, as are other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis including class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, sexual orientation, age, etc. ²⁹
Gender blind	This term refers to the failure to recognize that the roles and responsibilities of men/boys and women/girls are assigned to them in specific social, cultural, economic, and political contexts and backgrounds. Projects, programs, policies and attitudes that are gender blind do not take into account these different roles and diverse needs. They maintain the status quo and will not help transform the unequal structure of gender relations.

²⁷ Except as otherwise noted, the terms in this list are defined in the UN Women Training Centre, 'Gender Equality Glossary', <<https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36>>, accessed 4 July 2022.

²⁸ UNOPS Gender, Diversity and Inclusion in our Workforce Strategy 2022-2025, p. 19.

²⁹ Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), 'Concepts and definitions', UN Women, <www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>, accessed 19 August 2022.

Gender equality	<p>This term refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women’s issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development.</p>
Gender equality and social inclusion responsive	<p>Activities that address inequality and discrimination faced by individuals and groups based on their gender, age, race, religion, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity and socio-economic status and build on the knowledge, experience, and contributions of all stakeholders to promote gender equality and social inclusion.³⁰</p>
Gender equality and social inclusion transformative approach	<p>Activities that attempt to redefine traditional gender roles and relations and transform inequality and the marginalization of particular groups to promote shared power, control of resources, decision-making and support for gender equality and social inclusion.³¹</p>
Gender identity	<p>Gender identity refers to a person’s innate, deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person’s physiology or designated sex at birth. It includes both the personal sense of the body, which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means.</p>
Gender mainstreaming	<p>The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a way to make women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.</p>

³⁰ This definition has been modified from the term “gender equality (equality between men and women)” defined in the UN Women Training Centre.

³¹ This definition has been modified, the original term defined in the UN Women Training Centre, ‘Gender Equality Glossary’ is ‘gender transformative’.

Gender-responsive procurement	<p>The selection of services, goods and civil works that considers their impact on gender equality and women’s empowerment.³² Gender-responsive procurement (GRP) leverages purchasing policies and practices that increase sourcing from gender-responsive and women-owned businesses.</p>
Gender-sensitive	<p>When an activity attempts to redress existing gender inequalities. Gender is a means to reach set development goals. Addressing gender norms, roles, and access to resources in so far as needed to achieve project goals.</p>
Intersectionality	<p>The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, is regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.³³</p>
Marginalized population	<p>“Groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions.”³⁴ Marginalized people can be excluded in a specific context based on different personal characteristics or grounds, such as sex, gender, age, ethnicity, religion or belief, health status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, education, or income, or living in various geographic localities. A person belonging to a marginalized group (whether actual or perceived) faces an increased risk of inequalities in accessing rights and use of services and goods,³⁵ including essential infrastructure services.</p>
Sex	<p>The physical and biological characteristics that distinguish males and females.</p>
Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)	<p>‘Sexual exploitation includes any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.’³⁶</p> <p>‘Sexual abuse’ is the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.³⁷</p>

³² UN Women, ‘Gender-responsive Procurement’,

<www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/procurement/gender-responsive-procurement>, accessed 5 July 2022.

³³ Oxford University Press, ‘Definition of intersectionality’, Lexico.com, 2021

<<https://www.lexico.com/definition/intersectionality>>, accessed 5 July 2022.

³⁴ National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health, ‘Glossary of Essential Health Equity Terms’, St.

Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia,

<<https://nccdh.ca/glossary/entry/marginalized-populations>>, accessed 22 August 2022.

³⁵ European Institute for Gender Equality, ‘Glossary & Thesaurus: marginalized groups’, EIEG, Vilnius,

Lithuania, <<https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1280>>, accessed 22 August 2022.

³⁶ United Nations Secretariat, ‘Secretary-General’s Bulletin: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse’, ST/SGB/2003/13, 9 October 2003, sect. 1.

³⁷ Ibid.

Sexual harassment	Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offense or humiliation to another. ³⁸
Sexual orientation	Sexual orientation refers to each person’s capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different sex/gender or the same sex/ gender or more than one sex/gender. ³⁹
Social inclusion	Social inclusion is the process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities – that everyone, regardless of their background, can achieve their full potential in life. Such measures include policies and actions that promote equal access to (public) services as well as enable citizens’ participation in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. ⁴⁰
Sustainable procurement	Sustainable procurement practices integrate requirements, specifications, and criteria that are compatible and in favor of the protection of the environment, of social progress, and support of economic development, namely by seeking resource efficiency and improving the quality of products and services and ultimately optimizing costs. ⁴¹
UN-SWAP 2.0	The United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women implements the 2006 UN System-wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women of its highest executive body, the UN Chief Executives Board. The UN-SWAP (now in its version 2.0) enables gender issues to be mainstreamed systematically and measurably into all major institutional functions of the UN system entities. ⁴²
Underrepresented	Means a group that is not represented in the majority with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or physical ability. ⁴³

³⁸ United Nations Secretariat, ‘Secretary-General’s Bulletin: Prohibition of discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority’, ST/SGB/2008/5, 11 February 2008, sect. 1.3.

³⁹ The Williams Institute on the Study of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, ‘Comment on the Definition of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity’, <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Testimony-Yogyakarta-2nd-Sub-Feb-2017.pdf>, accessed 5 July 2022.

⁴⁰ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Poverty, ‘Social Inclusion’, www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/issues/social-integration.html, accessed 5 July 2022.

⁴¹ United Nations Global Marketplace, ‘Sustainable procurement in the United Nations’, www.ungm.org/Shared/KnowledgeCenter/Pages/asr_sustainableprocurement, accessed 5 July 2022.

⁴² UN Women, ‘Promoting UN accountability (UN-SWAP and UNCT-SWAP)’, www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability, accessed 5 July 2022.

⁴³ Law Insider, ‘Underrepresented community definition’, www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/underrepresented-community, accessed 22 August 2022.