



Gender Mainstreaming Strategy

Enhancing gender equality
through UNOPS projects

30 August 2018

Table of contents

- 1 Promoting gender equality through projects..... 2**
 - 1.1 Context and overview..... 2
 - 1.2 Key terminology 3
 - 1.3 Scope 3
- 2 Gender equality at UNOPS 5**
- 3 Results 7**
 - 3.1 Key objectives 7
- 4 Approaches 8**
 - 4.1 Leadership and accountability 8
 - 4.1.1 Role model behaviour 8
 - 4.1.2 Monitor, review and drive improvement 8
 - 4.1.3 Managing external stakeholders 8
 - 4.1.4 Culture 9
 - 4.2 Operationally focused 9
 - 4.2.1 Revision of strategy and supporting policies and processes..... 9
 - 4.2.2 Communication and implementation of strategy and policies 10
 - 4.3 Personnel 10
 - 4.3.1 Develop knowledge and capabilities 10
 - 4.3.2 Gender architecture 10
 - 4.4 Collaboration and knowledge sharing..... 11
- 5 Monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement..... 12**
- Further information 13**

Cover photo: Schoolchildren are among the 10,000 people in Dennery, in the north of Saint Lucia, benefiting from UNOPS work improving water supplies. ©UNOPS/Elise Laker

Introduction

Today we have reached a pivotal moment for women's rights. As the Secretary-General has stated, "achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls is the unfinished business of our time, and the greatest human rights challenge in our world."

In response to this challenge, earlier in 2018, we launched the UNOPS Gender Parity Strategy. This is part of our efforts to be a more sustainable organization, to better represent the people we serve, and to ensure women, at all levels, see a future for themselves at UNOPS. This strategy is critical. We remain steadfast in our commitment to the goals we have established. But this is only part of the picture.

UNOPS is a project-based organization. Whereas our parity strategy addressed UNOPS as an institution, the situation for women working with the 1,000 or so projects we undertake for our partners each year, is different. Our donors — the governments, international finance institutions, fellow UN family members, private sector organizations and other partners — define our projects.

We need to do more to deliver on our commitment to provide equitable solutions, and therefore I have called for this strategy and its associated plan of action in order to enhance gender equality through UNOPS projects.

For UNOPS, projects are the frontline — be they in Afghanistan, Haiti, Myanmar, Somalia or Yemen, or any other of the more than 80 countries we work in each year. Through projects, we engage directly with affected communities. Through projects, we reach individuals with the greatest needs. Through projects, we can demonstrate impact. And through projects, we have the opportunity not only to demonstrate our commitment to gender equality, but to play a role in the global movements working to make our world a better place.

Neglecting to invest in women is no longer an option. Women's empowerment is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, and equal participation is at the core of sustainable development. It is critical for building peaceful and stable societies. And progress towards more resilient and sustainable communities, societies and economies, also means progress for all women.

Through this strategy, we pledge to ensure that every project and programme, wherever possible, integrates gender considerations that strive to deliver equal benefits for women, men, girls and boys.

Grete Faremo

Under-Secretary-General and
UNOPS Executive Director

1 Promoting gender equality through projects

1.1 Context and overview

The UNOPS leadership strongly advocates for gender equality. Gender equality is a fundamental human right, necessary for our efforts to create a sustainable and resilient future. Although women and girls make up half of the global population, they face inequalities starting at birth and throughout their lives. These inequalities include, inter alia, a lack of access to healthcare and education, early marriage, skills gap and a subsequent lack of competitiveness in the labour market.¹ In specific contexts, they also face discrimination in accessing services, participating in public decision-making and are exposed to gender-based violence. The global challenges of inequality facing women and girls require our attention and thought as we work to develop interventions that generate sustainable and resilient solutions — aimed at improving people’s lives. Enhancing gender equality by mainstreaming gender in UNOPS projects provides a real opportunity to address these challenges.

As a United Nations organization, UNOPS is committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Gender equality will not only be realized through the achievement of SDG 5 which is dedicated to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, but also by ensuring that it is a cross-cutting theme across all the SDGs – especially those which seek to provide equality in access to public services and economic opportunities. UNOPS is well placed to engage with donors and partners, including national governments, to develop and deliver solutions that consider the needs of women and girls, as well as those of men and boys. Guided by UN values, UNOPS will ensure that all its projects, programmes and activities, wherever possible, deliver products and services able to meet the needs of all genders and contribute to the global targets on gender equality.

The implementation of this strategy will benefit from guidance of the Gender Advisory Panel, as well as best practice examples from external networks such as the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP).

¹ http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/5_Why-it-Matters_GenderEquality_2p.pdf.

1.2 Key terminology²

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

Gender	Roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women
Sex	The physical and biological characteristics that distinguish males and females
Gender equality	Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, girls and boys; women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female
Gender mainstreaming	The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, 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 programmes 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.
Empowerment of women and girls	Concerns their gaining power and control over their own lives; 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
UN-SWAP	UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women ³

1.3 Scope

This strategy's success will be anchored not only in the corporate systems and processes that are put in place, but also in how well UNOPS personnel adopt a gender-sensitive approach to the design and implementation of UNOPS projects. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to mainstreaming gender equality, and different projects in different contexts will require different approaches.

While UNOPS will put in place the guidance, training, systems and processes to underpin the achievement of this strategy, and strive to replicate projects and their successes, there will always be unique projects that will require us to assess and understand the scope, scale and context. Therefore, this strategy cannot exist in the silos of a project, country office or region, nor will it satisfy every aspect of gender mainstreaming in the complexity of what we do and where we do it; it needs to draw on our adaptability, the knowledge and skills of the organization as a whole, and supporting strategies such as the Knowledge Management Strategy.

² UN Women Gender Equality Glossary is accessible at: <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36>.

³ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability>.

Not every project will require gender mainstreaming or a Gender Action Plan, due to the nature of the outputs, or, in some instances, a partner may decide not to include gender mainstreaming within a particular engagement. However, in all such cases the exclusion of gender mainstreaming efforts must be justified before the engagement is accepted and the decision for exclusion lies with the engagement authority.

At headquarters, regional and country office levels, there is a wealth of gender expertise and capacity that UNOPS can tap into, including from within the UN family (UN Women, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, International Labour Organization, UN gender networks and working groups), and outside (non-governmental organizations, national bodies and governments). While every project or even every office may not always have a gender expert, UNOPS can better identify the resources and tools already available, and better tap into the skills and knowledge base within UNOPS. New ways can be created to collaborate, to share knowledge and best practices, and to work together, across projects, offices and regions, towards such an important aim.

UNOPS internal capabilities do need to develop; personnel, systems and processes must be strengthened to make the implementation of this strategy a success. But its real success will be determined on how well we can tap into all available resources. Good development is about a participatory approach, making sure there is an inclusion of all necessary perspectives in the design and delivery of the solutions so that the needs and rights of beneficiaries are fully considered and embedded in our development work. We need to apply this same principle to gender mainstreaming, making sure we include essential perspectives — be they from UNOPS, the UN family, development partners or governments. Our real success will be measured by how well we meet the needs of those we serve: our beneficiaries. Each and every one of us must consider their needs and embed them into every engagement we deliver.

As a complement to this strategy, UNOPS launched a Gender Parity Strategy that aims to create a UNOPS workforce, and therefore a perspective, that is equally representative of all genders. The Gender Parity Strategy and the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy enable and enrich each other in support of our strategic management and contribution goals.

UNOPS recognizes that various aspects of diversity and inclusion can and should form part of its efforts, and that some of these are not explicitly covered in the following strategy (e.g. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, people with disabilities, etc.). However, UNOPS also recognizes that many of the benefits that will be realized for women and girls will have a positive ripple effect for many other individuals affected by exclusion, and that this strategy represents a first step on a long and exciting journey.

2 Gender equality at UNOPS

As an organization committed to sustainable implementation, gender equality and gender mainstreaming has long been an important component of UNOPS work. In 2014, UNOPS formalized those efforts through the development and publication of its own first Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit, soon to be replaced by the Gender Mainstreaming in Projects Guidance. The organization also recruited Gender and Social Inclusion Specialists to further develop its in-house expertise, and strengthen gender mainstreaming within engagements. Launched in early 2018, the UNOPS organization-wide Gender Parity Strategy sets ambitious targets to achieve the equal representation of men and women across our workforce, irrespective of levels, by 2020 and to increase the representation of women at senior and decision-making levels as per the criteria of the UN System-Wide Strategy. The Gender Mainstreaming Strategy complements this as part of our efforts to be a more sustainable organization, and to better represent the people we serve. Both strategies outline UNOPS commitment to effectively contribute to the implementation of Agenda 2030.

To ensure that gender considerations were implemented across the entire project cycle, between 2015 and 2017, UNOPS also initiated several changes to the way that it does procurement: the organization developed and launched the UNOPS Possibilities Programme,⁴ made several enhancements to the Procurement Manual⁵ — enabling greater access and recognition for women-owned businesses — and, working in partnership with other UN organizations, helped to implement a women-owned business flag in UN Global Marketplace, the UN’s vendor registration portal. These efforts have been undertaken in parallel with the development of several other initiatives to ensure that UNOPS walks the talk when it comes to gender equality and inclusiveness.

Most recently, data collected through the Results-Based Reporting (RBR) survey, an annual internal review of projects against key sustainability metrics, noted that 36 percent of UNOPS projects globally considered gender elements as part of project plans in 2017. While these numbers and activities present a positive trend, UNOPS recognizes that important opportunities exist for it to continue the journey, as outlined in the organization’s new 2018-2021 strategic plan:⁶

- “All pillars of the Charter are essential to mitigating the risks of fragility: sustainable development underpins peace; sustained peace enables development; and societies are more resilient when they uphold the full breadth of human rights, **gender equality and women’s empowerment**, rule of law, inclusion and diversity, as well as nurture their youth and children.”
- “Our purpose: We help people build better lives and countries achieve peace and sustainable development . . . We provide practical solutions to assist our partners [to] save lives, protect people and their rights, and to build a better world . . . What drives us is a passion to **fight inequalities and to create opportunities for those most vulnerable**. This means we often work in the most challenging

⁴ <https://www.unops.org/possibilities>.

⁵ https://content.unops.org/service-Line-Documents/Procurement/UNOPS-Procurement-manual-2017_EN.pdf?mtime=20171207160547.

⁶ https://content.unops.org/documents/libraries/executive-board/documents-for-sessions/2017/second-regular-session/unops-segment-item-11.-united-nations-office-for-project-services/dp-ops-2017-5/en/DP-OPS-2017-5_EN.pdf?mtime=20171122175108.

contexts, building foundations for communities to function and for people to live with dignity and respect.”

- “UNOPS is committed to helping people achieve individual, local, national and global objectives through effective specialized technical expertise grounded in international norms and standards. It will strive to . . . be a resource for infrastructure and other specialized operational solutions connecting peace and security, humanitarian and development efforts, and **advancing gender-sensitive approaches.**”
- “The UNOPS sustainable implementation approaches include measures for local and national capacity development . . . including:
 - Supporting livelihoods through expanded market access and use of local workforces and suppliers wherever possible, including **opportunities for women- and youth-owned businesses.**
 - Supporting social justice and inclusion by exercising due diligence, respect for human rights and rights-based approaches, and **advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls throughout implementation projects;** and engaging local communities and beneficiaries and ensuring equitable access to project benefits, with particular emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable.”

3 Results

Working to achieve gender equality cannot be a separate initiative, but must be incorporated into existing activities, project management and procurement processes, and governance structures. UNOPS needs to be practical, focused, transparent, process-driven and accountable for how we mainstream gender across all activities. Therefore, by the end of our 2018-2021 strategic plan period, we will set our sights on achieving the following objectives that outline our vision:

3.1 Key objectives

1. **Leadership:** UNOPS will be known as a leader in gender equality and mainstreaming and be recognized as a valued resource for partners in driving awareness and action globally.
2. **Policy and process:** UNOPS will have institutionalized measures to address the specific needs of all people, including women, men, girls and boys, in every relevant engagement.
3. **Resources and capacity building:** UNOPS will have strengthened institutional capacity to support the implementation of gender mainstreaming activities.
4. **Successful projects:** UNOPS will have helped partners deliver for impact by integrating gender equality considerations into all relevant projects from initiation to closure,⁷ and gender-responsive infrastructure and procurement⁸ will be standard practice at UNOPS.
5. **Monitoring and reporting:** UNOPS will have monitored and reviewed implementation of gender mainstreaming activities through the quarterly engagement assurance process, and will report on progress annually to remain accountable and transparent, and keep internal stakeholders informed on our continuous improvement agenda. This will include measuring and reporting on the number of women-owned businesses we work with, and on relevant UN-SWAP indicators.

These objectives will be achieved in tandem with existing internal initiatives that align with UNOPS approach to sustainable implementation. Wherever possible, efforts will be made to streamline these activities with other sustainability initiatives to ensure that change is realistic and achievable. These objectives will also be complemented by other corporate efforts to address gender parity in the make up of our personnel around the globe, as well as how we manage our offices.

⁷ Unless determined otherwise by the engagement authority.

⁸ Gender responsive procurement refers to UNOPS current efforts to address gender equality through the procurement process, including, but not limited to, sourcing from women-owned businesses. For more information, please visit: www.unops.org/possibilities.

4 Approaches

In order to ensure that a comprehensive set of enabling approaches are deployed with clear lines of accountability, the actions to be developed and implemented are categorized based on the enablers of the UNOPS Excellence Model.

4.1 Leadership and accountability

The Infrastructure and Project Management Group (IPMG) and Procurement Group (PG) will champion, support and monitor the implementation of this strategy, and its success will require leadership at all levels.

The Global Leadership Group (GLG) will be crucial in the successful deployment of this strategy and will be held accountable for its implementation in the field, based on the guidance and input provided by IPMG and PG.

The Corporate Operations Group (COG) will play a vital role in evaluating the effect of this strategy's Action Plan and suggesting and developing revised tactics and approaches where necessary.

4.1.1 Role model behaviour

All UNOPS managers will be held accountable for ensuring that all the planned initiatives are put into action and that the people under their supervision understand their commitment to the objectives of this strategy, as well as their own contribution. UNOPS personnel at all levels are expected to demonstrate role model behaviour in the promotion and consideration of gender equality in all UNOPS activities, projects and programmes.

4.1.2 Monitor, review and drive improvement

The goals for gender mainstreaming are integrated into UNOPS management results framework and corporate and regional business targets. IPMG and PG will report on progress at each Quarterly Business Review (QBR) meeting.

IPMG and PG will monitor and regularly review the progress of this strategy and will provide analysis and insight at a corporate level, as well as advice on how to refine the organization's approaches.

IPMG and PG, in collaboration with the Gender Advisory Panel, will inform the COG on progress made against the strategy and advise the GLG on results and potential new actions.

UNOPS managers at all levels will be responsible for regularly driving improvements through the implementation of the strategy and for providing feedback to IPMG and PG through existing channels.

4.1.3 Managing external stakeholders

UNOPS works with numerous partners and donors, many of whom have their own gender equality and mainstreaming policies, strategies, processes and resources. Taking into consideration existing policies on gender that apply to the broader project context, UNOPS, based on its excellence model, must advocate for all engagements with its partners to consider gender equality, and must work together with partners to develop solutions that meet and consider the needs of all end-users.

In line with this thinking, UNOPS will continue to monitor the expectations of its key stakeholders, revising this strategy when and where appropriate. It will do this through the guidance it receives from the Secretary-General and the Executive Board, and from its relationships with other key stakeholders such as UN Women.

UNOPS will continue to create and explore new ways to collaborate with gender networks, to share knowledge and best practices, and to work together across projects, offices and regions to design and implement more inclusive solutions.

4.1.4 Culture

Leadership will be required at all levels to drive the cultural change needed to make this strategy successful. Existing and new policies processes, tools and resources will be communicated to all personnel. Leaders are expected to ensure the success of this strategy and adherence to related policies and their effective and systematic use by motivating and raising the performance of their teams vis-à-vis gender equality.

4.2 Operationally focused

UNOPS has engaged with external as well as internal stakeholders to build a common understanding of the challenges and opportunities that exist both today and tomorrow. This strategy has been informed by this knowledge, and is based on a sound understanding of UNOPS internal capabilities.

4.2.1 Revision of strategy and supporting policies and processes

UNOPS has strengthened its approaches to Governance, Risk and Compliance with the aim to enhance its internal control mechanisms. This work is overseen by the Legislative Framework Committee, which is chaired by the UNOPS Executive Director.

IPMG and PG have a thorough understanding of the processes that support the organization's policies. Together, they will build on this knowledge to ensure successful deployment of the policies necessary to implement this strategy. IPMG and PG have revised their respective policies on project implementation, and will continue to develop relevant Operational Instructions (OIs) and related work processes to support the implementation of this strategy. Within the set of OIs is the newly promulgated OI.IPMG.2018.01: Project Management, underpinned by the Project Management Manual that provides the basis for managing successful projects. The latter will be fundamental for ensuring projects are designed and governed to deliver on this strategy. These documents are aligned with the Procurement Policies and Manual, which also support the delivery of gender equality through the implementation of UNOPS projects.

UNOPS provides project services to partners and hosted entities. As part of this strategy, UNOPS will advocate for and encourage these partners to achieve the same ambitions on gender equality. UNOPS will provide advice and guidance to our partners to support their efforts.

Tools, guidance and technology exist and will be further developed to support the effective implementation of this strategy, such as oneUNOPS Projects, the Gender Mainstreaming in Projects Guidance.

4.2.2 Communication and implementation of strategy and policies

The UNOPS Executive Office has already communicated widely about the importance of achieving the targets set out in this strategy, both from a principled as well as operational perspective, and they will continue to do so during its implementation.

Key stakeholders, in particular the Executive Board, will be updated on the progress that UNOPS is making. The UNOPS Communications Group, supported by IPMG and PG will develop a communications strategy to support the roll-out of this strategy within UNOPS, and this plan will ensure that all personnel remain informed on progress. The communications strategy will also support and elevate awareness of UNOPS efforts externally.

Additionally, the communications strategy will give personnel across the organization the opportunity to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the actions being taken through 'pulse' surveys. IPMG Organizational Portfolio Management Reports will track UNOPS progress against the agreed objectives and targets.

4.3 Personnel

UNOPS personnel are the organization's most critical assets, and will therefore be empowered to become effective agents of change.

4.3.1 Develop knowledge and capabilities

Achievement of the objectives set within this strategy depends upon the commitment and support of our personnel at all levels of the organization. Through enhanced learning opportunities, UNOPS can empower regional and country office personnel to become the champions it needs to drive change. Gender will be a cross-cutting theme in the UNOPS Knowledge Management Strategy and a focus area for UNOPS learning and development offerings.

4.3.2 Gender architecture

UNOPS has already developed a global Gender Focal Point (GFP) network to build capacity in mainstreaming gender equality at a country office level, and to help ensure that the skills and knowledge of the network feed into the development of engagements, project management, procurement, finance, human resources and other practices at the office level. At UNOPS headquarters, several other GFPs have also been identified for each business unit.

In an effort to support the delivery of outputs and the availability of support mechanisms to country GFPs, this network will be formalized. Accountability for gender equality in projects will be elevated to the regional directors, who may be supported by the development of new Regional Gender Task Forces. These task forces will provide more specialized knowledge and best practice sharing across the regions and will enable greater and more effective support to country GFPs with the application of corporate tools and resources, including the use of gender specialists.

These Regional Gender Task Forces will in turn be supported by all headquarters GFPs, country GFPs, as well as the Gender Mainstreaming Coordinator. This coordinator will be resourced through IPMG, will report to IPMG and PG, and will be responsible for supporting the development of policies, tools and resources, as well as coordinating the GFP network. The GFP network will meet on a regular basis to provide progress updates to the organization, which will be captured and reported by the Gender Mainstreaming Coordinator through regular updates.

4.4 Collaboration and knowledge sharing

Collaboration and knowledge sharing between headquarters business units, regional offices and country offices, is crucial for sustained success. Collaboration is expected to take place through the GFP network as identified above, as well as through other corporate initiatives such as knowledge management.

External collaboration and knowledge sharing is also important to enable UNOPS to be informed about new developments and best practices outside the organization, and to promote UNOPS objectives to be a leader. This will be achieved with both informal and formal linkages to other UN organizations, counterparts and initiatives, such as UN-SWAP.

5 **Monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement**

This strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis by IPMG and PG in conjunction with the COG to ensure its relevance and applicability, and to assess its approach. UNOPS will continue to reflect upon the needs and expectations of key stakeholders. UNOPS will revise its policies where necessary to support the implementation of this strategy. After formal adoption of the strategy, IPMG and PG will monitor the implementation of the strategy and will report on the Gender Action Plan in Annex I on a quarterly basis to the COG, through the QBR.

Further information

For more information on this document, please contact:

Nicholas O'Regan

Director, IPMG

Tel: +45 4533 7530

Email: NicholasO@unops.org

Patricia J. Moser

Director, PG

Tel: +45 4533 7670

Email: PatriciaMo@unops.org

UNOPS Headquarters
PO Box 2695
2100 Copenhagen
Denmark

Tel: +45 4533 7500
Fax: +45 4533 7501
Email: info@unops.org
www.unops.org

 [/unops.org](https://www.facebook.com/unops.org)

 [/company/unops](https://www.linkedin.com/company/unops)

 [/unops](https://twitter.com/unops)

 [/unops_official](https://www.instagram.com/unops_official)