

# Update on the implementation of General Assembly Resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations Development System

## UN-Women's Information Note

September 2020

### I. Introduction

1. UN-Women is pleased to provide its Executive Board with an update on the Entity's engagement in the repositioning of the UN Development System (UNDS), supplementing earlier information notes presented to the Executive Board in June 2020 and earlier. UN-Women continues to make the necessary changes to fully align with UNDS reforms and leverage its comparative advantages in support of gender equality and women's empowerment. It does so in close coordination with the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General, and with the support of United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO).
2. UN-Women focused its engagement in UN reform processes in support of the following objectives:
  - Ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment figures centrally in new/revised frameworks, structures and processes in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.<sup>1</sup>
  - Ensuring that the UN system continues to support a strong normative agenda and promote the participation of key stakeholders including civil society in policy development, operational support, and intergovernmental processes.
  - Ensuring that smaller UN entities, such as UN-Women, enhance their ability to make an impact in a cost-effective manner and that they benefit from harmonization and streamlining of business processes including the optimization of field presence and a focus on complementarity between UN-Women and the UN System.
3. This paper provides an update of key developments since June 2020 in UN-Women's engagements in the various aspects related to UNDS repositioning.

---

<sup>1</sup>This includes, among others, the requisite participation in process to ensure mainstreaming of gender perspectives into the System-Wide Strategic Document such as the [UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks \(UNSDCF\)](#), the [Companion Pieces to the Corporate Framework](#) as well as support to embed gender responsive dimensions into systems central to the execution of the reform agenda.

## **II. Supporting the new UN Resident Coordinator System**

UN-Women participated in the ‘UNSDG Task Force on RC Talent Management’ and through this process contributed to the development of the new RC Leadership Profile. At the regional level, the Entity also participated in Performance Appraisal Meetings of Resident Coordinators and UNCTs.

### **a. Management and Accountability Framework (MAF)**

4. In line with the new Management and Accountability Framework, and as part of the 2019 Performance Assessment, all Resident Coordinators have been requested to provide feedback as a matrix manager in Entity’s Country Representative’s performance goal related to their work in the UNCT. Similar to the last two years, UN-Women Country Representatives have added a performance goal on their work in the UNCT in their 2020 Plan. This performance goal has been shared with the respective RC.
5. UN-Women continues to engage respective Resident Coordinators in the recruitment and selection process of UN-Women Country Representatives and Regional Directors.

### **b. Support to the RC pool**

6. UN-Women has invited staff members to apply to Entity’s internal Resident Coordinator Assessment Center (RCAC) Nomination Committee to be considered for nomination for the RCAC. UN-Women is planning to nominate up to 5 candidates for ‘November 2020 round’ of the RCAC.

### **c. Funding: levy implementation, cost sharing**

7. UN-Women commenced collection of the 1 percent coordination levy from donors in the second quarter of 2019 on tightly earmarked contributions. Quarterly reports were submitted in a timely manner to UNDCO, with the following funds remitted:
  - Q2 2019 - USD \$5,558
  - Q3 2019 - USD \$57,643
  - Q4 2019 - USD \$242,912
  - Q1 2020 – USD \$23,759
  - Q2 2020 – USD \$100,629
8. For the 1 percent coordination levy, on behalf of UNDCO, UN-Women has, so far (2019-20) collected \$430,501. UN-Women's initial experience with the implementation of the levy appears to indicate that few donors offset this requirement with equivalent additional contributions.

9. As advised by the Deputy Secretary-General, UN-Women will complete an impact assessment of the 1 percent coordination levy on donor engagement, and also provide details of UN-Women's transaction costs associated with collection of the 1 percent levy in the third quarter of 2020, after a full year of implementation.

### **III. Funding and Financing**

#### **a. Funding compact tracking**

10. UN-Women integrated entity-specific Funding Compact<sup>2</sup> tracking and reporting to the Executive Board with the Structured Dialogue on Financing in September 2019. It included a tracking matrix in the official report and undertook joint informal Executive Board sessions with New York-based UN Funds and Programmes on Funding Compact implementation in August 2019. The Entity also explored options to improve the structured dialogues in January 2020. UN-Women contributed to system-wide reporting to ECOSOC as part of the Secretary-General's Annual report on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review.

#### **b. Reporting on financial data**

11. UN-Women recognizes the importance of improving transparency of system-wide financial data and has actively engaged the UNSDG in the development of the financial data cube. UN-Women provided its 2018 financial statements data to the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), in accordance with UN data cube standards.<sup>3</sup> UN-Women also expects to continue to update its Enterprise Resource Planning System and Reporting Tools to capture data requirements for Standard III Geographical Location, Standard IV Financing Instruments, Standard V Sustainable Development Goals and Standard VI Contributor Type. These will continue to be rolled out in Q3 of 2020.

#### **c. Financing for Gender Equality**

12. Following the endorsement of the Secretary General of the recommendations made by the High-level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality<sup>4</sup>, UN-Women is supporting the integration of Gender Equality criteria in the design, selection, implementation and monitoring of pooled funds. UN-Women has created Guidance for the integration of gender markers and financial targets for gender equality and the empowerment of women in the recently created UN COVID-19 MPTF

---

<sup>2</sup> The Funding Compact seeks to provide the financial support required to align the UNDS with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

<sup>3</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/data-standards-united-nations-system-wide-reporting-financial-data>

<sup>4</sup> The High-Level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality established as a result of a June 2017 EC decision to review UN budgets/expenditures across the system.

(Recommendation 6) and has established a helpdesk to support UN entities in applying and reviewing proposals from a gender lens.

13. Furthermore, UN-Women successfully advocated for the establishment of gender criteria and financial targets in Multi-Partner Trust Funds (MPTFs). The clear commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women of the Peacebuilding Fund, the UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD, a Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF)<sup>5</sup>, and, Joint SDG Fund has created an environment ripe for the establishment of minimum financial targets in support of gender-responsive programming in MPTFs. As a result, the UN Secretary-General's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund<sup>6</sup> will set up a 30% financial target for programmes that have gender equality and/or the empowerment of women and girls as the primary or principal objective in the call for proposals to support implementation of the Socio-Economic Response Plans to the COVID-19 crisis.

#### **IV. Strengthening system-wide support to the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda**

##### **a. Support to System-wide response to COVID-19**

14. UN-Women consistently engages in inter-agency mechanisms at HQ, regional and country levels addressing the UN system's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, gender equality has emerged as a central tenet of the response, ranging from advocacy from the highest levels, to the inclusion of gender equality perspectives in any number of policy briefs, strategic messages and publications emanating from UN system entities to the mandatory inclusion of the gender equality marker in the call for proposals of the COVID-19 Fund.
15. In line with its UN system coordination mandate, UN-Women made systematic inter-agency efforts to drive policy coherence, especially with respect to mainstreaming gender perspectives, across the system. These included:
  - Substantive engagement with the Office of the Secretary-General for the development of COVID-19 related Secretary-General Policy Briefs on 'The impact of COVID-19 on women'; 'A Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19'; 'COVID-19 and Human Rights'; and 'The Impact of COVID-19 on older persons.'<sup>7</sup>
  - Consistent engagement with the UNSDG<sup>8</sup>, for the development of the 'UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19'<sup>9</sup>. Several

---

<sup>5</sup> Addressing gender inequality and advancing the rights of women and girls with disabilities has been identified as one of the key cross-cutting approaches for the implementation of UNPRPD MPTF's five-year Strategic Operational Framework (SOF) 2020-2025.

<sup>6</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/secretary-generals-un-covid-19-response-and-recovery-fund>

<sup>7</sup> All Policy Briefs and relevant knowledge resources are available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources>

<sup>8</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/un-framework-immediate-socio-economic-response-covid-19>

checklists and corresponding key messages were prepared that provides minimum requirements for the integration of “gender equality” in the implementation of the “UN framework”.<sup>10</sup>

- Participation as ex-officio member of the Advisory Committee the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, where UN-Women successfully advocated for the mandatory integration of the gender marker in the call for proposals, developed the Guidance Note on the Gender Equality Marker for the Fund, and provided advice and feedback to all proposals submitted to the Fund’s first Call for Proposals, providing helpdesk support to the application of the gender equality marker.
- Leveraging past and current leadership roles of different inter-agency mechanisms<sup>11</sup>, UN-Women continued to promote an intersectional approach for a system-wide disability inclusive response to COVID-19<sup>12</sup>, coordinate an inter-agency ‘Joint Programme on Disability Inclusive Response to COVID-19’ (2020-21)<sup>13</sup>, and participate in the Inter-Agency Mental Health Strategy Implementation Board as well as its reference group on domestic abuse to develop and share awareness resources.<sup>14</sup> The Entity is directly engaged in the development of inter-agency mapping of good practices, key messages, and checklists of disability inclusive COVID-19 response.<sup>15</sup>
- Initiated and coordinated the development of the IANWGE compendium on integrating gender considerations in the response to COVID-19: Key messages and actions from UN entities.<sup>16</sup>
- Participation, at the regional and country levels, in inter-agency work on the COVID-19 responses including in socio-economic impact assessment exercises and Socio-Economic Response Plans (SERPs).<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> These checklists are intended to support UNCTs that are undertaking gender and intersectional analyses, developing key messages, and/or members of the Gender Theme Groups (GTGs) in UNCTs to effectively integrate gender equality and intersectionality in UNCT COVID-19 recovery and socioeconomic response.

<sup>11</sup> This includes, among others, Chair of the UNPRPD (2019-20), Co-Chair of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Women with Disabilities (2018-19), Chair of the Inter-Agency Support Group for the UNCRPD (2017-18) etc.

<sup>12</sup> This included, among others, consultation with women leaders and human rights defenders of the organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) on Impact of COVID-19 on women with disabilities (April-May 2020). Briefs on women with disabilities available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/12/series-briefs-on-women-with-disabilities>

<sup>13</sup> <http://unprpd.qburst.build/our-programmes/160>

<sup>14</sup> These, among others, enabled UN-Women to respond to the need of support from UN Gender Focal Points, personnel and managers by periodically providing tailored guidance with practical and context-specific recommendations for advancing an enabling environment for all in the UN common system.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/disability-inclusion>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/ianwge-compendium-on-integrating-gender-considerations-in-the-response-to-covid-19>

<sup>17</sup> A clear example of UN Women’s influence and contribution has been the strong focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment across most SERPs. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UN Women chairs the Social Protection Coordination Group and Communications Group in response to the crisis and in Ukraine, UN Women developed a Technical Note on mainstreaming of Gender Equality.

16. UN-Women’s support to the system-wide response to COVID-19 in the Human Resources context remains swift and effective. In particular:
- The Human Resource Team engaged in inter-agency discussions to harmonize special measures in the CEB HR Network, the HR Network Standing Committee on Field Duty Stations (the Field Group), the HLCCM Taskforce on the Future of the UN workforce (in particular on deliverable 4 Work life balance) and other informal HR networks across the UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes.
  - Although UN-Women country offices are guided by CEB HR Network Administrative Guidelines for Offices on the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and decisions made by the UNCT (such as harmonized measure on salary advances, medevac, etc.), UN-Women HQ adapted relevant guidance for UN-Women headquarters and for affiliate workforce categories (consultants, Service Contractors, UNVs, interns) not covered by the CEB HR Network Guidance. On affiliate workforce measures UN-Women aligned its specific measures closely with UNDP and UNFPA.

**b. Strengthening system-wide analysis, planning and reporting through UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs)**

17. UN-Women contributed to the development of the Guidance to support UN Resident Coordinator Offices (UNRCOs) and stakeholders to translate Common Country Assessment (CCA) into an actionable Cooperation framework including tools on Prioritization, Theory of Change, and Development of Results Frameworks.
18. UN-Women has ensured that gender equality and women’s empowerment are centrally positioned in new and revised structures and processes supporting the 2030 Agenda. These encompass UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF) guidance documents, UNSDCF companion package<sup>18</sup>, gender equality markers and gender mainstreaming tools, as well as efforts towards gender parity. The Entity also developed training manual for effective integration of gender equality principles in the UNSDCF. At the regional level, UN-Women is also participating in country dialogues between Resident Coordinators and Regional Directors to discuss UNSDCF Roadmaps and Cooperation Frameworks.

**c. Tracking and supporting system-wide results at corporate and country level**

19. The COVID-19 crisis has accelerated the implementation of the UN Reform and tested its effectiveness in responding to an unprecedented health and development emergency. UN-Women strives to adapt system-wide accountability frameworks to capture progress on gender mainstreaming relevant to the UN direct response to the pandemic and economic shocks.

---

<sup>18</sup> <https://unwomen.sharepoint.com/Policy-Programming/ProgrammeDivision/CF/Pages/Guidance-Documents.aspx>



20. UN-Women continues to provide capacity development and advisory support for the implementation of the UN-SWAP 2.0 and its country-level equivalent, the UNCT-SWAP. These accountability frameworks contribute to drive coherence, strengthen partnerships, facilitate knowledge sharing and systematic monitoring of progress or gaps across a range of indicators at both the corporate and UNCT levels. 64 UNCTs are now included on UN INFO<sup>19</sup>; of which 51 (75%) are applying the gender marker to their Joint Work Plans. In support of improving consistency and a common approach to the gender marker, UN-Women is providing helpdesk and training support to UNCTs, with training sessions delivered to 21 UNCTs during May-July period.
21. As an integral part of the Secretary-General's initiative for the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS), UN-Women reported on progress on the implementation of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy with a focus on gender responsive and intersectional approaches.
22. Based on lessons learned from the 2019 Strategic Notes (SNs) drafting process, UN-Women is currently updating its guidance for Strategic Notes to integrate the UNSDCF principles and guidelines into the design of the Strategic Notes and to ensure effective contribution to the implementation of UNSDCF through its SNs. The revised guidance aims to target those country offices expecting to draft a new SN this year for implementation in 2021. In this manner UN-Women expects to contribute to overall preparations for system-wide tracking of results both at the corporate and country levels.

**e. Improving the production and use of gender data for SDG monitoring and implementation**

23. Together with UN partner agencies, UN-Women continues to support members of the Inter-Agency and Experts Group on SDGs (IAGE-SDGs) to ensure the incorporation of gender perspectives in the global monitoring and reporting on SDGs. As member of the Inter-Agency and Experts Group on SDGs (IAEG-SDGs) and through its technical guidance to the data disaggregation workstream of the IAEG-SDGs, UN-Women strongly advocated for multi-dimensional disaggregation of SDG indicators from a gender perspective. UN-Women continues to expand partnerships with diverse data providers, across the UN system and beyond to ensure SDG areas and related areas are monitored from a gender perspective.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> UN INFO<[www.uninfo.org](http://www.uninfo.org)> is a planning, monitoring and reporting system to track how the UN system at the country level supports governments to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda.

<sup>20</sup> For example, UN-Women launched a report titled '*Unlocking the lockdown: The gendered effects of COVID-19 on achieving the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific*' which provides an overview of the impacts of the pandemic of specific gender-related SDGs, based on rapid assessment surveys in 11 Asia-Pacific countries. In order to address the data gap,

## **f. Engagement in coordination bodies**

24. UN-Women continued to contribute to UNDS repositioning processes through its engagement in the UNSDG Core Group and other UNSDG Working Groups, with staff deployed to task teams and working groups at global, regional, and country levels, co-leading two regional Issue-Based Coalitions at regional level and one regional UN Gender Theme Group. At global level, UN-Women initiated the establishment of a Task Team on Gender Equality under the UNSDG.
25. The UN-Women Executive Board Secretariat represented UN-Women as the coordinating agency until July 2020, for all joint activities of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP. In this regard, UN-Women played a key role in coordinating and promoting the drafting of an Executive Board paper on ‘harmonization of the horizontal governance’ of the operational agencies and the background paper on the “Working Methods of the Executive Boards”. The Secretariat organized the joint townhall meeting of the Executive Board in April on the agencies’ joint response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the joint meeting of the Executive Boards in May, with focus on the United Nations development system reform in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the Secretariat supports and organizes frequent and regular meetings among the Presidents of the Executive Boards, and among the Executive Board Secretariats.

## **V. Advancing shared business operations and common premises**

### **a. Efficiencies from Business Operations Strategy (BOS)**

26. UN-Women continued its active engagement in the Business Innovation Group (BIG), which is leading system-wide efforts to identify efficiency gains in common business operations through its different workstreams. For example, the UNSDG efficiency strategy outlines the way the UN System will report on efficiencies. UNDCO will convene a UNSDG Working Group on efficiency reporting with UN-Women participation along with others to discuss how best to approach this with the aim to realize cost avoidance and performance improvement by harmonizing, centralizing and consolidating the use of resources to generate efficiencies in financial and quality terms. The work of the Group is expected to be underway in the Fall of 2020.

### **b. Moving toward common premises**

---

the Entity also launched a multi-country study on *‘Mapping of Discrimination Faced by Women with Disabilities in East and Southern Africa Region’*.



27. UN-Women continued its active participation in the Inter-Agency Task Team on Common Premises supporting six pilots now completed. Working closely with UNDCO, UN-Women is supporting the development of the strategy to establish UN common premises worldwide. The Entity will continue to promulgate the consolidation of options and strategies within its locations with the immediate focus on consolidation through government-provided and leased premises. Construction of new premises will be reserved only for a limited number of capital city projects where the business case supports a full cost recovery. The Entity's goal is to maintain the achieved results of 84% common premises worldwide.

## **VI. Optimizing UN-Women to deliver in a repositioned UNDS**

28. With the joint aims of optimizing the Entity's institutional capacity to deliver in the context of a repositioned UNDS, enhancing UN-Women's ability to respond in times of COVID-19 and in order to address the issues identified in evaluations and assessments including the 2018 Multilateral Organizational Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) report, UN-Women continues to work towards integrating important ongoing change management projects in order to build an organization which drives for impact: a networked and matrixed knowledge organization, which in turn enables a stronger field presence, a nimble and effective HQ, more efficient processes and better governance. These adaptations will be captured in the new Strategic Plan and Integrated Budget.

29. Since the last update, UN-Women has been emphasizing a client-focused approach to its work, and more effective support of field offices to deliver and highlighting service delivery and accountability to stakeholders. This manifests in our push towards virtual decentralization in times of COVID-19, and in the functional reviews taking place across the organization.

30. UN-Women has started the process of developing the new Strategic Plan which will serve as stepping-stone in aligning the Entity even more fully behind the aims of UN Reform. The new Strategic Plan will enhance the complementarity, integration and synergy between UN-Women and the UN System: ensuring that UN-Women can work in a way that focusses on coordination and collaboration with the rest of the UN system whilst avoiding duplication. This principle will also be reflected in UN-Women's field presences since this impinges on our ability to deliver as part of the UN System, and in turn on the UN System's capacity to achieve the SDGs.

### **a. Optimizing UN-Women's field presence**

31. To ensure that UN-Women can be present and capacitated at the right level where it is most needed and in order to make strategic and aligned use of its resources, the Entity has developed a clear and systematic process for establishing and changing its

country presence which supports consultation for decision-making; sets out a clear rationale, criteria and funding principles; and defines the typologies of presence of physical and non-physical modalities.

32. These typologies provide a benchmark for each type of presence; clarity on what is expected of UN-Women country presences in the field; and how the presence should be set up to deliver on these expectations. As part of the framework, UN-Women is continually developing and refining its offer for each presence type, including non-resident modalities.
33. Since the last update, this framework is being rolled out gradually, in alignment with UNDSCF and Strategic Note processes: driving standardization and alignment across the organization in line with available resources, whilst allowing flexibility to adapt to local context and priorities.
34. UN-Women has rolled out a virtual decentralization initiative, which allows capacity to be redeployed remotely to closest to where it is most needed in order to address urgent business needs in COVID-19 response, and where recruitment of long-term capacity and office-based assignments are not a feasible or optimal solution. Telecommuting across the organization has allowed the Entity to redeploy capacity without the related logistical requirements, thereby allowing UN-Women to re-orient itself towards the field. This initiative allows to trial modalities of decentralization and capacity redeployment in a cost-neutral manner.

**b. Improving and streamlining business processes and workflows**

35. As part of its continued work on bringing greater focus and quality to the work of the Entity, UN-Women is continuing the roll-out of its portfolio review to other regions. The Entity has also designed and refined the methodology for the Quarterly Business Review, including development of a corporate performance management tool which will be used to consistently monitor and manage performance across the organization. To bolster the Entity's evidence-based decision making and forward-looking business intelligence, the Entity is strengthening its capacity in business intelligence data collection and analytics.
36. The Entity has also begun a series of functional reviews, beginning in the East and Southern Africa Regional Office. The functional reviews follow a holistic business process improvement and strategy implementation methodology which aims at improving functional accountability, address oversight recommendations, client focus and business model innovation at regional and country levels. The Entity aims at working with further regions and countries in this regard.

## VII. Conclusion

37. UN-Women continues both to proactively engage in system-wide processes to ensure that their outcomes support the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment and promote the implementation of system-wide commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women amongst partners in the UNDS. This includes UN-Women leadership at the country level through the UNSDCF engagement, mobilizing simultaneously a range of partners including civil society and private sector, both of which support to amplify implementation of normative commitments. In addition, UN-Women expects to continue to contribute to acceleration of progress through the decade of action for the SDGs, including through the priority accorded to support COVID-19 responses at global, regional, and country levels.
38. Looking ahead, UN-Women will engage closely with key elements of the reform still underway, including the finalization of the Funding Compact, and the MAF chapters at the global and regional levels. UN-Women believes that the visibility of results and a strong link between results and resources remain essential to enhance the financing of the Entity.
39. UN-Women will leverage the development of its new Strategic Plan to align the Entity even more fully behind UN Reform: focusing on coordination, complementarity and synergies with our UN counterparts. The Entity, as part of the broader UNDS, will continue to support countries to respond to the COVID-19 response and accelerate SDG implementation with a focus on the principle of 'Leaving No One Behind'.