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Gender equality at UNDP

UNDP gender equality strategy, 2022–2025

Executive summary

This gender equality strategy, 2022–2025 has been written in unprecedented times. The COVID-19 pandemic has imperilled every dimension of our well-being and amplified a sense of fear across the globe, and there is an alarming escalation in armed violence. This strategy responds to reflections around two key concerns. First, why has progress towards gender equality been so slow and scattered, and even reversed? Second, what can UNDP best do in response?

No matter how deep, every challenge offers opportunities. New paradigms often emerge during crises; old orders break down. This strategy describes the future direction of UNDP work on gender equality and the empowerment of women, complementing the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. The challenge for the next four years will be to help governments shift systems and power structures that generate gender inequalities and women's disempowerment. The UNDP commitment to gender equality is integral to all efforts to expand people's choices, realize a just and sustainable world, and achieve the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UNDP will work through its six 'signature solutions', on poverty and inequality; governance; resilience; environment; energy; and gender equality.

Evaluations and consultations have demonstrated that partners expect UNDP to elevate its role as convener and advocate as much as, if not more than, a programme provider. To accelerate and significantly scale up results, UNDP will help governments to place gender equality at the core of political, economic and environmental dialogues and decisions. We stand ready to play this role including in opening difficult conversations around power imbalances and the distribution of resources. UNDP recognizes that mechanical and compliance approaches will not suffice to address the scope of gender discrimination.

This strategy establishes measures for institutional transformation grouped into seven interconnected building blocks inspired by the UNDP Gender Equality Seal certification. Meaningfully integrating gender equality across UNDP work starts with the everyday decisions, actions, and behaviours of our personnel. Our efforts will require leadership that fosters listening and learning and calls for courage and new ways of working. UNDP will succeed only if it creates and sustains a culture where every person is respected, valued, and empowered, and feels safe and included.



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I. The global context: crisis and opportunity

1. The world faces unprecedented planetary and social crises driven by human actions. The COVID-19 crisis has raised acute questions about why progress continues to lag in many places, for many people, for so long. Development and other thought leaders, including many in feminist movements¹, have called for rethinking and rebalancing political, economic, social and environmental systems so that they become inclusive and sustainable. UNDP is ready to stand at the vanguard of this call for a new direction, including through this 2022-2025 gender equality strategy.

2. Many paths to achieving gender equality have been defined and agreed by United Nations Member States. These include commitments in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security. Gender equality is an explicit goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which further states that all goals and targets depend on gender equality and the empowerment of women. All such commitments reference the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which sets forth in its first lines that equal rights are the “foundation of freedom, justice and peace”—for the entire world. This strategy is guided by those normative frameworks.

3. The climate crisis, COVID-19, and nearly every other humanitarian and development challenge are worse for women due to the unequal sharing of power and deep-rooted gender discrimination. Before the COVID 19 crisis, women already held many of the worst jobs and faced persistent disparities in pay. Women spend three times more hours on unpaid care work than men² which, translated into labour market terms, would amount to 2.2 billion full-time jobs annually. During the pandemic, they were more likely to lose their jobs, making up 39 per cent of global employment but 54 per cent of job losses. The pandemic led to soaring rates of gender-based violence while preventing access to assistance. Already disproportionate burdens of unpaid care work became heavier. For women who experience multiple forms of discrimination – including based on age, class, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity or migration status – the obstacles to progress are even greater.³ Gender inequality also takes a toll on men and other affected groups. In men, for example, rigid gender norms can compel risky behaviours resulting in violence, poor health and lower life expectancy.

4. Against a backdrop of growing distrust in governments, a sense of unfairness and a deterioration in the quality of democracies, there is now notable pushback against gender equality. This backlash has also been seen in the form of a rise in fundamentalist ideologies, authoritarianism, and extremism. Women and other affected groups continue to face a host of discriminatory laws and social norms, and women human rights defenders often lose their lives.⁴ Further, an international debt crisis may spur fiscal austerity measures that further undercut⁵ public services. Widening digital gender gaps and the concentration of power and knowledge in the digital economy could entrench discrimination and exclusion in a new generation.

5. This gender equality strategy views the current moment as a historic chance to open new doors. There are many calls to move beyond economies tied to gross domestic product (GDP) towards economies aligned with social and environmental goals. UNDP recognizes that more is achieved by pulling people in instead of leaving them out: opportunities for new social contracts are emerging. Enhanced State capacities to deliver quality services and greater civic space for women to mobilize and lead are part of the equation. So are new alliances with male allies.

6. A Green New Deal envisions just transitions that expand human freedoms while linking care for human life with care for nature. It propels innovations such as finance, which both accelerates progress

¹ Feminist movements are acknowledged by the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women 65 as contributors to gender equality, including them as actors to implement the Conference on the Status of Women recommendations.

² UN-Women, COVID-19 and the Gender Monitor, <https://data.unwomen.org/resources/covid-19-and-gender-monitor>

³ Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2020/3)

⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24232&LangID=E>

on gender equality and tackles climate change. Such efforts build on the recognition that gender equality is innate to the long-term structural transformations underpinning stability, resilience and well-being.

7. In this context, UNDP is uniquely capable of taking a whole-of-society approach and helping governments expand national development choices that work for all. Over the past 56 years, UNDP has generated credibility and trust. Our presence in 170 territories across the humanitarian-development nexus provides an unparalleled 360-degree view of society in the countries where we operate. This gender equality strategy calls for taking ambitious actions, gender equality is among the most important contributions to human and sustainable development that UNDP as an organization can make.

II. What we have learned

8. The gender equality strategy, 2022-2025, of UNDP builds on the accomplishments and lessons of the previous strategy. It draws on insights from assessments, gender audits and evaluations, and United Nations system reports, as well as comprehensive consultations with leaders from government, leading thinkers, feminist practitioners, civil society, the private sector, the United Nations system and UNDP staff worldwide.

9. The strategy responds to several key lessons, including:

(a) *Shifting power dynamics.* There is a clear upward trend in recognition of improved UNDP work on gender equality in recent years. At the same time, evaluations identified growing demand for UNDP to help countries go further in shifting power relationships and cutting the deep roots of gender inequality. Interventions that consciously act on understanding of how power relations and negative social norms shape institutions and access to and control over resources, can make stronger contributions to achieving gender equality and an array of other development goals.

(b) *More sophisticated analysis is needed to address the complexities of gender inequalities.* For UNDP to alter structural barriers and shift whole development systems, we need to be equipped to see across the different socio-political contexts as well as intersections between different forms of discrimination. Multidimensional data is also needed, and the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker created by UNDP and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) serves as a model for future work.

(c) *Integration and resources help scale up impact.* Several evaluations have showed that accelerating and scaling up transformative results for gender equality require the full integration of gender expertise across technical teams and the investment of adequate financial resources. The Climate Promise initiative, for example, has made large and consistent investments in specialized expertise and resources. As a result, in 2021 96 per cent of 93 Climate Promise countries included more ambitious commitments to gender equality in their nationally determined contributions.

(d) *Partnering with grass-roots and women's organizations can shift policy.* Connecting and opening dialogues between grass-roots groups and decision-makers has been among the most efficient means of influencing policy decisions. UNDP can further develop such alliances, recognizing their additional potential to shift structural dynamics.

(e) *Financing matters.* Multiple evaluations and reports show that gender equality and the empowerment of women are chronically underfunded. For instance, official development assistance for gender equality and women's empowerment puts minimal focus on intersections with poverty, environment, and the economy.⁶ UNDP can expand investments in its environment and finance portfolios to help unlock finance to achieve gender equality.

⁶ Only 1 per cent of official development assistance in economic and productive sectors targets gender equality and women's empowerment.

III. Our partnerships

10. UNDP will pursue new partnerships for gender equality and deepen existing ones to advance longer-term advocacy and policy goals. In its partnerships, UNDP will acknowledge power differences, including those related to funding and decision-making, and manage these to avoid replicating unequal relationships. It fosters collaborative leadership and learning, values diverse sources of knowledge, and pursues creative, emotionally engaging and analytically sound collaboration.

11. **Coordination with the United Nations system.** UNDP operates in line with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development call on all United Nations entities to improve interagency coordination and maximize impact. At the country level, UNDP supports the integration of gender equality in all common country analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. Having co-led with UN-Women the development of the Gender Equality Scorecard of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, UNDP will advocate to expand the use of this tool by United Nations country teams. It will pursue joint programmes to achieve gender equality gains, especially with UN-Women, UNFPA and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). UN-Women will remain the main partner of UNDP on gender equality and women’s empowerment, including in crisis and development contexts. The two organizations collaborate in 102 country offices on legal and policy reforms, women’s political participation, and economic empowerment. Globally, UNDP continues its collaboration through the System-wide Action Plan network and the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality.

12. UNDP will take full advantage of the complementary skills and capacities of United Nations organizations. As examples, it engages with UNICEF on law and judicial reform; the International Labour Organization (ILO) on jobs, livelihoods and social protection; the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on more resilient and equitable development; the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development on research, health and gender equality; and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction on gender-responsive and risk-informed development.

13. **Expanded links with civil society.** UNDP will more systematically involve women’s organizations and other groups advocating for rights in dialogues with national and international institutions, especially those setting directions for economies and political agendas. Such grass-roots groups encompass those for people with disabilities, those experiencing racial discrimination, and those led by and for youth, including young feminist movements. For example, in 2020 UNDP supported women-led community-based associations in 55 countries through its green portfolio and will explore linking this constituency to broader networks and coalitions.

14. **A broader spectrum of partners.** UNDP will tap new partners who can help shift norms and behaviours to support gender equality, placing special emphasis on faith-based organizations and networks of young women innovators and influencers. UNDP will work with academia and think tanks to advocate for evidence-based research on gender equality.

15. **Private sector.** UNDP is expanding collaboration with the private sector to promote women’s leadership and participation, develop inclusive workplaces, and ensure equal pay for equal work, through the Gender Equality Seal certification. UNDP will mobilize private firms as influential allies on critical development issues such as preventing gender-based violence.

IV. The UNDP offer on gender equality: directions of change

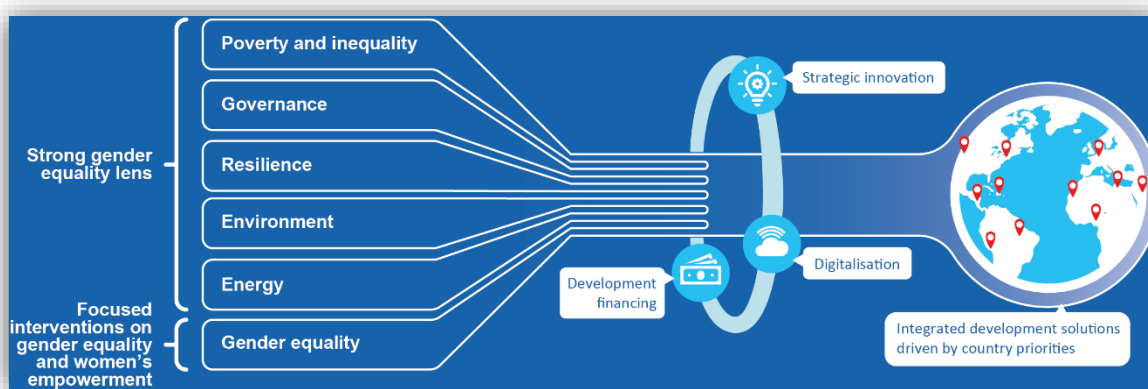
16. Across its programmes, and driven by national development choices, UNDP pursues three directions of change. All three reinforce each other and are fundamental to gender equality.

17. **Structural transformation** UNDP will work with countries to shift the underlying systems and power structures that determine development. Linking issues and partners, asking questions and holding

difficult conversations helps development build on a foundation of gender equality and inclusion. In this regard, UNDP can serve as a convener and advocate as much as, if not more than, a programme provider.

18. **Leaving no one behind** responds to the will of governments to ‘reach the furthest behind first’ and is rooted in human rights and principles of equality and non-discrimination. The strategy includes a focus on addressing the multiple and intersecting forms of deprivation, disadvantage, and discrimination. For instance, discrimination against women based on sex and gender is inextricably linked with factors such as race, ethnicity, religion or belief, health, status, age, class, caste, and sexual orientation and identity⁷. Other factors are urbanization, migration and displacement, natural disasters and armed conflicts.

19. **Building resilience** by helping countries develop capacities to prevent, mitigate and respond to diverse risks and crises. This depends on fully involving women, on equal terms and at all levels, including in decision-making. UNDP will put gender equality at the centre of resilience-building by diminishing structural obstacles and empowering individuals.



V. Our priorities

20. UNDP recognizes that progress requires sustained action and investment over decades. It will strategically combine shorter-term incremental changes that reach individuals and communities with longer-term reductions in structural barriers that generate changes across social, economic and other systems.⁸

21. UNDP will pursue gender mainstreaming across the five signature solutions of the Strategic Plan reflected in this section, and stand-alone interventions, summarized under signature solution 6. Selected priorities presented in this section are not exhaustive. Rather, they represent accelerators where UNDP has demonstrated results and offers comparative advantages. They combine focused attention on closing historical inequities with interventions to achieve women’s empowerment, autonomy and ability to make choices.

22. With governments in a range of country situations as core partners, UNDP follows a contextualized, country-driven approach to implementing its priorities. National development choices frame country programmes to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment in the context of achieving the 2030 Agenda and as envisioned by the quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

⁷ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation no. 28 on the core obligations of States parties under article 2

⁸ <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Innovation-Ambition.pdf?hsCtaTracking=addad353-a589-4daa-9639-9da5ddd82a95%7C506b9326-3d3b-4d71-ad9e-110d49a14a00>

A. Contribute to gender equal and sustainable economies

Signature solution 1. Poverty and inequality

23. Ending poverty requires a major shift in economic thinking and a radical reconfiguration of economic power relations. Through the gender equality strategy, UNDP will continue directly contributing to women's economic empowerment, employment, and access to resources, with a particular focus on women in the informal economy. It will also be ambitious in helping countries to diminish the structural barriers in economies that keep women behind. It will join forces with United Nations system partners – notably UN-Women and the ILO – as well as women's organizations, feminist economists' networks, international financial institutions, and the Global Alliance on Care.

24. The main areas of focus are as described below.

25. *Universal and gender-responsive social protection and care services.* The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the widening gap between those with access to quality social protection and those without. UNDP will support governments in establishing or expanding gender-responsive social protection systems while exploring proven informal models developed in communities. It will help to map care needs and infrastructure, and design, pilot and scale up promising measures such as a temporary basic income, cash transfers for those who need or provide care, and maternity and paternity leave provisions. UNDP plans to explore indicators defining a caring economy; capture 'time poverty; and recognize the economic value of unpaid care work in national accounting systems, using communication campaigns to shift discriminatory norms.

26. *Fiscal policies that work for gender equality.* UNDP works on integrated national financing frameworks to align public and private finance with gender-equality commitments and the Sustainable Development Goals. This process can help governments ensure that flows directly or indirectly support gender equality. Priorities include supporting tax reforms to incentivize women's incorporation into the labour force, and helping ministries of finance, tax authorities and public central banks to strengthen capacities for upholding global gender equality standards while opening more space for women experts and leaders. Strong partnerships with rights-holders will ensure accountability and transparency. In coordination with UN-Women, UNDP will advocate applying a gender lens to all Sustainable Development Goals budgeting interventions (see the gender equality strategy enabler on finance).

27. *Expanded access to essential services, digital and other assets, and finance.* Services for livelihoods, well-being and economic empowerment are critical to ending multidimensional poverty. That is why UNDP supports 71 countries in advancing gender equality and equal access to quality health care. UNDP will continue to help enhance productivity and resilience, reaching those who are most marginalized, including by multiple forms of discrimination. This will encompass innovative business development services for informal sector workers and entrepreneurs, who are disproportionately women. At all levels, UNDP commits to advocating for women to lead social and financial services and for reducing structural barriers imposed by laws, policies, budget choices, and social norms. Partnerships with governments and the private sector on closing digital divides will remove barriers related to availability, affordability and skills, among other factors.

B. Help reinvigorate inclusive governance, participation and women's leadership

Signature solution 2. Governance

28. Effective, inclusive and accountable governance keeps development focused on meeting people's needs and realizing their rights. Evidence shows the multiple benefits of gender equality in governance. Women's presence in politics restores trust in government and increases the amount of attention paid by political bodies to social welfare, legal protection, and the transparency of government and business.⁹ Higher levels of gender equality are associated with a lower propensity for conflict, both between and

⁹ Hudson, V. et al. (2008). 'The Security of Women and the Security of States'. Harvard Kennedy School, Belfer Center, Winter 2008; International Parliamentary Union, [Women in Politics: Insight](#).

within states.¹⁰ Under this gender equality strategy, women's equal participation in governance remains one of the most important objectives of UNDP.

29. The main areas of focus are described below.

30. ***Women's collective mobilization, voice and influence.*** UNDP will help protect and expand space for urban and rural women-led civil society organizations and networks to advance women's leadership and participation, under the leadership of UN-Women. It will advocate the adoption and implementation of laws and regulations for civil society to function effectively in the public sphere and will stand behind mechanisms for civic engagement and women's participation in constitution-making bodies. UNDP will support capacities for feminist collective action by working with gender equality organizations in all countries, including crisis and conflict contexts, to nurture their growth and sustainability. Country offices will be encouraged to develop engagement strategies for each programme portfolio.

31. ***Towards gender-responsive States.*** At a moment of renewed focus on the central importance of States, UNDP will pursue opportunities to advance gender-responsive public policies and services that deliver for all citizens. This work includes the promotion of gender equality in parliaments, public administration, and all other public arenas, including at local levels. The Gender Equality in Public Administration global initiative and the UNDP Gender Equality Seal certification for public institutions will help spark a new generation of public policies to diminish discriminatory norms.

32. ***Achieving gender justice to realize rights.*** The UNDP Global Programme on Strengthening the Rule of Law and Human Rights emphasizes gender justice in supporting over 48 countries and contexts affected by crisis, fragility or conflict. With partners such as UN-Women, and through initiatives such as the 'Gender Justice Platform', UNDP will provide continued technical, financial and policy support on links between gender equality and legal protection, gender-responsive justice, security sector reforms, legal aid services, transitional justice and constitutional reforms. More systematic work with men, especially in conflict and crisis contexts, will help reduce harmful practices of masculinity, such as those driving gender-based violence.

33. UNDP maintains partnerships with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, UN-Women, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; and with universities, such as with the University of Pittsburgh, under the Gender Equality in Public Administration initiative.

C. Support equal societies to build resilience

Signature solution 3. Resilience

34. UNDP supports countries and communities in building resilience to a wide range of shocks and crises, including conflict, climate change, disasters, environmental degradation and epidemics. Long-term resilience calls for empowerment that puts decision-making in the hands of people, as well as for social and state institutions that reduce structural inequalities. No country is resilient with large numbers of women shut out of political decision-making or subject to gender-based violence. Since gender equality determines the resilience of individuals and societies, UNDP will help partners promote both community-based models and state institutions that ensure that both women and men shape and benefit from solutions to crises.

35. The main areas of focus are described below.

36. ***Fully gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and management.*** Studies have shown that disaster fatality rates are much higher for the poorest women, due, in large part, to gender differences in coping with such events, such as insufficient access to information and early warnings. At the same time, women are key agents of positive change in disaster risk reduction and management. UNDP will continue to help ensure that all risk-informed development strategies, early warning and preparedness measures and post-disaster assessments integrate gender equality, including through leveraging innovative metrics

¹⁰ Mary Caprioli (2003) Gender Equality and State Aggression: The Impact of Domestic Gender Equality on State First Use of Force, *International Interactions*, 29:3.

such as the Women's Resilience Index, created with Action Aid in Cambodia. Efforts to identify and challenge structures that prevent women's leadership and participation will accompany sustained engagement with women human rights defenders, community health workers, social and media actors, and the private sector, among others.

37. ***Resilient economic recovery to advance gender equality.*** Recovery and stabilization solutions offer significant scope to jump-start long-term structural changes, reset negative social norms and open opportunities for women's full and equal participation in economic life. Learning from evaluations, UNDP will ensure that employment and livelihood initiatives not only target and reach all women but also help dismantle long-standing obstacles that limit recovery, such as unequal access to knowledge, land, credit, technology, social protection and care services. UNDP commits to coordinate with women's rights organizations, women rights defenders and communities to anticipate and respond to women's particular needs for livelihoods, housing, transportation and health care; and to contribute to mitigating the growing number of internally displaced people and refugees.

38. ***Women's leadership and full participation in peace and recovery (see signature solution 6).***

39. UNDP, under the leadership of UN-Women, will work with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations country teams on gender issues across the humanitarian, peace and development nexus. Other partners are the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, ILO, FAO, the United Nations Capital Development Fund and IOM. It will collaborate with leading academics on measuring impact.

D. Put gender equality at the heart of caring for people and the planet

Signature solution 4. Environment

40. Current consumption and production patterns are both unsustainable and unjust, causing environmental harms that disproportionately affect marginalized people, who have contributed least to the crisis.¹¹ Gender inequality is one of the main barriers to advancing the environmental dimension of sustainable development. Land degradation, deforestation, water scarcity and pollution increase poverty and hunger for all, especially women, and intensify their paid and unpaid workloads.

41. The main areas of focus are described below.

42. ***Gender-responsive management of natural resources.*** Protecting and managing ecosystems and biodiversity requires gender-responsive governance systems that recognize and advance women's environmental stewardship. They should emphasize the distinct ways in which women use and are affected by natural resources, including the acute risks faced by many indigenous and rural women. UNDP will continue working with climate and environmental public institutions to bring more women leaders into decision-making positions where they can influence solutions, and more women's organizations into local and national environmental management mechanisms. It will collaborate with women's organizations already advocating the value of nature-based solutions that rural, indigenous and other women apply in successfully managing the environment.

43. ***Implementing gender equality commitments in climate action plans.*** Climate change requires a wholesale transformation of economies and societies. Nationally determined contributions under the Paris climate agreement set the direction for moving forward. Based on good practices, UNDP will help countries implement nationally determined contribution commitments to include, at a minimum, measures to increase women's environmental stewardship and leadership at all levels. Work will link with priority 4, on the environment, and priority 5, on energy.

44. ***Climate finance for gender equality.*** While climate finance can achieve both climate and gender equality goals, only a small share goes to gender equality. UNDP will tap its partnerships with multilateral climate funds to advance practices that raise the bar, such as through required and rigorous

¹¹ UN-Women, *Beyond COVID-19: A feminist plan for sustainability and social justice*, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/09/feminist-plan-for-sustainability-and-social-justice>.

gender analysis in designing and financing initiatives and mechanisms to routinely bring women's organizations into decision-making on project development, implementation and evaluation. UNDP will work with the funds to explore modes of finance more accessible to smaller women's organizations.

45. UNDP will expand its collaboration with UNEP, FAO, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and other specialist partners. UNDP will scale up its partnership with civil society organizations, including through the Action Coalition on Feminist Action for Climate Justice.

E. Close gender gaps in access to modern, sustainable energy

Signature solution 5. Energy

46. Access to energy is a precondition for health, education and economic prosperity: an essential multiplier for all the Sustainable Development Goals. Until access to modern energy reaches the 759 million people who still do not have it, gender equality will not be achieved.¹² UNDP has over two decades of experience in bringing sustainable energy solutions to unconnected communities around the world – and has set itself the ambitious goal of closing energy gaps for 500 million people by 2025. At least half must be women. Beyond numbers, UNDP will challenge inequalities in green energy systems, policies, decision-making and ownership, as well as at the technical and service provision levels.

47. The main areas of focus are described below.

48. ***Energy access to unleash women's economic empowerment.*** Energy access programmes have strong potential to accelerate women's economic empowerment. UNDP will prioritize ensuring that women gain ownership to energy assets and benefit from the productive use of energy. It will map entry points in energy access activities with links to occupations where women predominate, and work with private firms to create opportunities for women in value chains. UNDP will connect policymakers and women's groups to define labour, economic demands, and the jobs and livelihood services women want, and will advocate for factoring findings into national energy plans and budget allocations.

49. Developing energy services should itself be a source of employment for women, with off-grid systems expected to create 4.5 million jobs by 2030.¹³ UNDP will provide skills training targeted to women coupled with advocacy for equal pay and opportunities, including in leadership roles. UNDP will promote solutions under the framework of 'energy democracy', which includes community control over energy management and consumption (such as through energy cooperatives). These can open opportunities for women in leadership and employment while making energy cheaper, more available, sustainable, and aligned with local needs.

50. ***Energy investments to reduce time poverty.*** Electric household appliances perform tasks that save time and obviate the need for additional chores such as gathering firewood. UNDP will pursue strategies to ensure energy access and technology to consider the needs and preferences of women, particularly in vulnerable households. For poorer households, it will advocate subsidies for electric appliances commonly used by women. All these steps will operate within the broader UNDP drive to encourage men and boys to take equal responsibility for unpaid tasks.

51. ***A global energy hub that galvanizes new knowledge.*** The UNDP Sustainable Development Energy Hub will host a platform to promote innovative policy dialogues on gender equality and energy, build capacities, and develop gender-responsive energy policy guidance and tools.

¹² *The Atlantic*, "Women, Energy and Economic Empowerment," <https://www.theatlantic.com/sponsored/deloitte-shifts/women-energy-and-economic-empowerment/261/>

¹³ UN-Women, *Beyond COVID-19: A feminist plan for sustainability and social justice*, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/09/feminist-plan-for-sustainability-and-social-justice>

52. UNDP will continue its work with national entities, United Nations Energy, the International Renewable Energy Agency, the Global Climate Fund, UN-Women, OECD, Sustainable Energy for All, financial institutions and civil society.

F. Accelerate the achievement of gender equality

Signature solution 6. Gender equality

53. The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains the global blueprint for achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment. Yet much unfinished business remains, as confirmed by the 25-year review of the Platform, which identified gaps and made recommendations for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in both development and crisis contexts. Signature solution 6 seeks to reflect key priorities identified by the 25-year review. While it calls for stand-alone interventions on gender equality and women’s empowerment at each level of the organization, signature solution 6 is designed for implementation across all the other signature solutions.

54. ***Inclusive economies and the economic empowerment of women.*** In line with signature solutions 1 and 3, UNDP will work with countries to eliminate gender-based discrimination and occupational segregation in labour markets, reduce informal and precarious work, and raise women’s employment rates. It will support women’s increased access to and use of digital technologies, digital finance, e-commerce and digital value chains, building on initiatives such as the network of “STEMinists” – those who advocate the increased presence of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics – in 34 countries. UNDP will promote policies, laws and regulations that ensure women’s equal rights to property, credit, land and natural resources. In crisis contexts, UNDP will help ensure that the economic security and empowerment of women are central to sustainable recovery plans.

55. UNDP will help governments establish social dialogues engaging employers, labour unions and social justice organizations. It will work with UN-Women to scale up good practices at the local, regional and global levels and advance inclusive economies, as well as with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNICEF and ILO.

56. ***Equal power and representation.*** When women lead and participate on equal terms, countries thrive. In line with signature solution 2, UNDP will help accelerate the leadership and equal participation of women in public institutions, elected positions, the judiciary, and the private sector. It will operate across the electoral cycle to strengthen women’s political participation and leadership and shift discriminatory power dynamics. UNDP commits to promoting legislative and constitutional reforms to ensure women’s access to political spheres – as voters, candidates, elected officials and civil service members. This will entail working more closely with men in power to challenge such biases as the notion that the political realm is unsuitable for women. UNDP will work with UN-Women, the United Nations Department of Political Affairs, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and regional normative bodies.

57. ***Women’s leadership and full participation in peace and recovery.*** Learning from lessons of the last four years, UNDP will redouble its efforts to advance women’s peace and recovery roles. It will ensure that country offices apply insights from recent evaluations and consultations with women’s organizations. Actions will include consistent advocacy for women leaders and local women’s organizations to participate directly in peace and recovery processes. UNDP will foster engagement between political representatives and women’s grass-roots leaders, and partner with civil society and grass-roots groups and networks to design and implement peace and recovery interventions. UNDP will promote greater recognition of women peacebuilders, networks of advocates and community leaders to help advance their agenda. UNDP will invest in women’s organizing to generate more powerful advocacy, ensure that gender and crisis experts are available to advise governments, and act as liaisons with civil society. New guidelines will help economic recovery programmes to strengthen gender analysis and challenge stereotypes. Such programmes will prioritize digital connectivity. UNDP will ensure that large infrastructure interventions include decentralized social service infrastructure and networks built by women’s organizations and communities.

58. ***Preventing and responding to gender-based violence.*** Gender-based violence is the world's most pervasive violation of human rights, occurring everywhere in the world. It undermines development and is a driver of conflict and poverty. UNDP takes a holistic, whole-of-society approach, helping governments develop legal and policy frameworks and build capacities to prevent violence, end impunity for perpetrators, and ensure access to justice and protection. UNDP will promote institutional environments that prevent violence and support survivors, especially women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as those living with disabilities, migrants and survivors of sexual exploitation. Continued work in communities will generate bottom-up evidence, including on changing negative social norms that fuel gender-based violence. Behavioral change interventions will help address the root causes of violence.

59. UNDP will work to integrate, prevent and respond to gender-based violence across other portfolios, such as on economic recovery, livelihoods, climate change, elections and rising rates of violence against women politicians. Recognizing both the risks and opportunities presented by digitalization, the organization will leverage digital technologies to improve services and address cyber-violence, especially against young women.

60. Since gender inequality and sexual and gender-based violence raise the risk of acquiring HIV, UNDP will scale up rights-based solutions that link eliminating violence with improved access to HIV and other health services for women, key populations at risk of HIV, and other excluded groups.

61. Under the leadership of UN-Women, UNDP will partner with entities including the European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women, the United Nations Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence, and the Secretary-General's UNiTE Campaign to End Violence Against Women. Engagement of civil society will remain at the core of transformative change in eliminating violence against women and girls.

62. ***Reversing the backlash against gender equality.*** UNDP will strengthen its understanding of backlash through increased research and sharper measurement. Using artificial intelligence, it will work with partners to explore options such as early-warning systems or the like to detect and monitor backlash against gender equality and women's rights, especially the erosion of public policies. As indicated in signature solution 2, UNDP will help protect and expand space for women-led civil society organizations and networks while developing a complementary long-term strategy to transform violent masculinities through community interventions and the modelling of positive behaviours and masculinity. Since technology can amplify misogyny, discrimination and cyber-violence, UNDP will deepen the understanding of its impact on women's rights and its links to governance.

63. ***Changing negative social norms.*** The UNDP Gender Social Norms Index revealed that approximately half the population perceives that men make better political leaders. As a result, women hold only 24 per cent of parliamentary seats worldwide. Investment in new evidence and analysis will support countries in dismantling long-standing social norms. This process will include advocating policies to tackle deep-seated negative norms and harmful gender stereotypes and practices, towards fully realizing women's human rights. UNDP will create a Gender Social Norms Global Lab to test and scale up interventions, and replicate successful experiences such as the time use survey in Turkey, which generated evidence of gender inequalities in care responsibilities during the pandemic.

64. ***Better data and analysis for policymaking:*** New solutions to complex development challenges, begin with better understanding and more robust evidence. Globally, UNDP will use the COVID 19 Global Response Tracker to identify new ways to generate rigorous, real-time data. Through collaboration with national statistical offices, observatories, and others, it will test new indicators, such as a gender digital divide gap index, and explore GDP alternatives along with methods to fully reflect unpaid care in national accounts. UNDP will support governments to conduct more comprehensive and country-specific analysis through Human Development Report teams, and to conduct gender responsive conflict analysis and rapid assessments in crisis contexts.

VI. Three enablers

65. To achieve this Gender Equality Strategy and the commitments of the Strategic Plan, UNDP will pursue three enablers: finance, digitalization and innovation.

66. **Finance.** By 2025, UNDP is committed to mobilizing public and private sources of finance to channel \$100 billion towards gender equality, including through gender-responsive fiscal policies and tax reforms. Efforts will be rooted in aligning public and private finance with gender equality commitments through integrated national financing frameworks for Sustainable Development Goals. Tax reforms, gender-responsive budgeting and planning and assistance in developing sovereign debt instruments, and gender responsive green and blue bonds will help to include more systematically gender equality in the Sustainable Development Goals.

67. **Digitalization.** The enormous power of digital transformation can help close gender gaps in access to and use of digital technology. Globally, men are still 21 per cent more likely to be online than women, rising to 52 per cent in the least developed countries. UNDP will help countries put measurable gender equality goals at the centre of national digital strategies, building on the digital gender divide index developed with interested partners.

68. Other priorities are extending gender-responsive digital public and financial services and the promotion of women's economic empowerment and using digital tools for income generation and entrepreneurship. These will draw on successes such as the 2021 launch of the Women Innovators Programme to mentor women leading digital social enterprises in 12 Arab States.¹⁴ UNDP will promote equal access to tech skills and STEM education. Towards better governance of digital activities, UNDP will open dialogues bringing women's rights movements, policymakers and the private sector together to advocate for regulations upholding gender equality and women's rights in the digital sphere.

69. **Strategic innovation.** To address issues using a more systemic and transformational lens, UNDP will use a portfolio logic, addressing multiple facets of gender inequality at the same time. UNDP will use sense-making methods to provide governments with policy options that avoid the trap of 'silver bullets'. The Accelerator labs will help activate the global research and development capability of UNDP to provide governments and other partners with a unique set of capacities for exploring non-obvious solutions, with a particular emphasis on women's grass roots. UNDP will promote a culture of listening, learning, testing and self-reflection to push gender equality forward (see chapter VII on institutional transformation).

VII. Institutional transformation

70. At a pivotal moment for reimagining development, much depends on learning from the past to reframe strategies for our future. We know, for instance, that technocratic and reductionist approaches to gender mainstreaming will not suffice to respond to the complexities of our organization, much less the world. UNDP is committed to embracing complexity and finding new solutions to both long-standing and emerging challenges, responding with flexibility and promoting learning instead of compliance or rigid responses to gender equality.

71. This strategy seeks to connect individual change to organizational change and long-term development goals. Building on lessons learned from the UNDP Gender Equality Seal, we will facilitate individual informal change through safe spaces where staff can question assumptions, unlearn biases, listen actively, stimulate curiosity in themselves and others, and share power. Leaders will drive meaningful change through everyday decisions, actions and behaviours. UNDP will redouble its efforts to adopt stronger policies and processes to transform deep structures of inequality across our portfolios.

72. Seven interconnected building blocks will help UNDP scale up impact and achieve transformative results for gender equality: leadership, integration, learning and innovation, culture, funding, accountability, and communication. The **Gender Equality Seal** will continue to be the UNDP global

¹⁴ See <https://www.4yfn.com/women-innovators-programme>.

initiative for operationalizing this strategy. Expanding the seal to regional hubs and headquarters will accelerate individual and organizational change and achieve transformative shifts, such as a tailored track of services for crisis countries.

73. UNDP remains committed to full implementation of and annual reporting on the principles and requirements of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, led by UN-Women.

Leadership

74. UNDP will invest in leaders skilled in opening spaces for self-reflection around the profound changes that gender equality requires. It will call on leaders to push beyond comfort zones to generate changes in thinking and behaviours while modelling power-sharing in practice.

75. UNDP will develop world class leadership for gender equality, starting with a certificate for resident representatives and deputy resident representatives to complete a course to sharpen thinking on gender inequalities. A complementary sense-making programme will provide regular spaces for learning and self-reflection across country offices on progress in implementing the strategy and how to unlock the structural changes required to achieve gender equality.

76. Senior managers will routinely advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment in public speeches, statements and advocacy, and ensure gender parity in meetings and UNDP-hosted events. For all country visits, following the commitment of the Secretary-General, senior managers will continue where possible to "meet with women's civil society organizations and/or visit a programme focused on furthering gender equality and women's empowerment".

Integration and specialization

77. UNDP will build a gender architecture supporting country offices in moving away from mechanical approaches to gender equality and towards dismantling structural barriers. Achieving this goal will require integration, coordination and gender expertise.

(a) A new network of gender specialists, including feminist groups of economists and experts on gender equality and nature, climate and energy, will provide on-call support to country offices and UNDP teams.

(b) Participatory portfolio reviews with partners will be expanded as an interactive exercise to understand gender equality from a systems perspective, connect diverse interventions to achieve broader gender equality goals, and optimize the programmatic, human and financial architecture for gender equality.

(c) Country offices are encouraged to hire experienced gender specialists and integrate them into management mechanisms, with improved contracts and full access to decision-making.

(d) In crisis countries, it will be mandatory to recruit at least one full-time gender specialist, at the national officer or international staff level. This will be monitored by the Gender Steering and Implementation Committee.

(e) The global Gender Team will remain the anchor of the global gender architecture and will oversee the Gender Equality Strategy. The team includes a new gender and crisis facility and gender teams in each regional hub. Gender teams in regional hubs will be strengthened. New alliances will be built with innovation labs across regions.

(f) Each regional director will be responsible for developing a regional gender equality strategy and action plan. Resident and deputy resident representatives will establish country-level plans and ensure full integration of gender equality in country programme documents, backed by adequate capacities and funding.

Continuous learning and innovation

78. Harvesting new knowledge, learning continuously and harnessing innovation will transform how UNDP thinks about and acts on gender equality.

(a) To deepen staff skills, particularly around achieving structural transformation, UNDP will create global learning labs to offer frontier knowledge, such as in behavioral science and social and individual change, and inclusive economies valuing unpaid care work. The labs will become knowledge platforms for country experiences connecting UNDP and its partners with the best external experts in each field.

(b) Given critical gaps in assessing the gender dimensions of changing political and socioeconomic contexts, UNDP country offices will invest in human development teams and innovation labs as hubs for generating actionable and updated gender data and analytics across a range of areas linked to the present strategy.

(c) Other creative forms for capacity development will be explored, such as an advanced mentoring programme for technical staff in crisis settings and a programme on gender-equal finance and macro-economics.

(d) UNDP will explore new approaches to measuring impact and capturing system transformation, and will include quantitative data, such as stories of transformation, to support learning.

An equal and inclusive culture

79. UNDP looks for a culture where every person is respected and valued, and everyone is safe, feels included and has access to opportunities. Opening spaces for collective action through the UNDP Gender Equality Seal will help our personnel to question and shift individual values and beliefs that reinforce discriminatory norms and reflect on our power and privilege. Empowerment of all personnel is a fundamental driver of change.

80. **Mobilizing men for gender equality.** With a global workforce of over 20,000 staff – 53 per cent of whom are men – UNDP has a responsibility and opportunity to engage men fully in achieving gender equality. This applies to its programmes and workforce development. UNDP will create male peer groups for reflection and collective action for organizational change.

81. Zero tolerance of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse means UNDP will not tolerate those behaviours in our workplace or in work with partners and communities. In addition to identifying and reporting cases of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse, UNDP will continue stepping-up actions to prevent these behaviours and achieve an inclusive and safe environment for all staff and stakeholders. Among other dimensions, this will entail strengthening safeguards in projects and programmes, further expanding work with implementing partners, increasing our network of respectful workplace facilitators in partnership with the Office of the Ombudsman, and investing in awareness and behavioural change.

82. Gender parity will remain a top priority, in line with the United Nations System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity and as detailed in the UNDP gender parity strategy, 2022-2025. The latter envisions taking UNDP to the next level of gender parity. This will require continued focus on the equal representation of men and women across the organization, and special focus on conflict and post-conflict contexts.

Matching ambition with financial resources

83. Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment will require adequate, sustained financing. UNDP will meet the standards of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

84. The gender marker will remain the main tool to track budget and expenditures. During the period of the present strategy, UNDP will aim to progressively achieve having 70 per cent of allocations to advancing gender equality and/or empowering women (gender marker attributes GEN-2 and GEN-3 combined¹⁵). UNDP track 2 and track 3 funding, as well as country offices in crisis contexts, will progressively achieve 15 per cent of allocations to advancing gender equality and/or empowering women

¹⁵GEN 3 – Have gender equality and/or the empowerment of women and girls as the primary or principal objective. GEN 2 – Make a significant contribution to gender equality and/or the empowerment of women and girls.

(gender marker attribute GEN-3). Global, regional and country office programmes and projects will identify, at their design stage, at least one stand-alone gender-specific component¹⁶ with at least 15 per cent of the total resources of the initiative allocated to this component.

85. Country offices are encouraged to explore innovative options such as establishing an internal ‘pool of funds’ within portfolios to finance gender capacities and strengthen programming.

86. UNDP will mobilize additional resources to incentivize stronger commitment and achieve the scale-up of flagship initiatives focusing on signature solution 6 and priorities across portfolios.

Accountability

87. UNDP will maintain its solid chain of accountability for gender equality. Implementation of this strategy begins in the Office of the Administrator and continues to bureau directors and country representatives responsible for delivering transformative results on the ground.

(a) The Gender Steering and Implementation Committee, chaired by the Administrator, will remain the principal mechanism for monitoring implementation of the strategy, providing policy guidance and serving as a peer review group.

(b) The Executive Board will retain its role as the primary oversight mechanism for implementation. UNDP will report progress annually to the Board.

(c) To increase transparency, UNDP will create a mechanism comprising civil society and external experts to guide and track implementation of this strategy.

(d) UNDP will ensure that performance assessment criteria for all senior and middle managers include implementation of the strategy.

(e) The UNDP corporate results-based management system and monitoring tools will continue to mainstream gender equality. All UNDP evaluations will be designed and implemented in accordance with gender standards for evaluation in the United Nations system.

(f) UNDP will establish a ‘gender data powerhouse’ to provide reliable and timely gender-related data. It will draw together data from the gender marker, the results-oriented annual report and the Gender Equality Seal.

Communication for advocacy

88. UNDP will define key messages and ‘branding’ for the present strategy, and will identify allies, tools and targeted actions in support of our advocacy goals. We will build strategic relationships; gather the evidence base to make the case; frame innovative integrated solutions; and seize opportunities. Country offices are expected to use communication for advocacy across their portfolios – including identifying their policy goals – and develop accessible messages to foster strategic dialogues with stakeholders. UNDP will pursue long-term engagement with media networks and will partner with other United Nations organizations, academia, leaders and influencers, including young feminist organizations and governments leading pioneer initiatives. UNDP will use persuasive techniques such as modern ways of story-telling and digital technologies to transform complex issues into accessible information. At least one annual global campaign will focus on strategic priorities. Global, regional, and country office communications teams will help drive this agenda.

¹⁶ Component should be understood as outputs of project documents.