



REFLECT. REALIZE. RESPOND.

Rising to New Challenges:
Accelerating Gender Parity
in Times of Crisis and Beyond

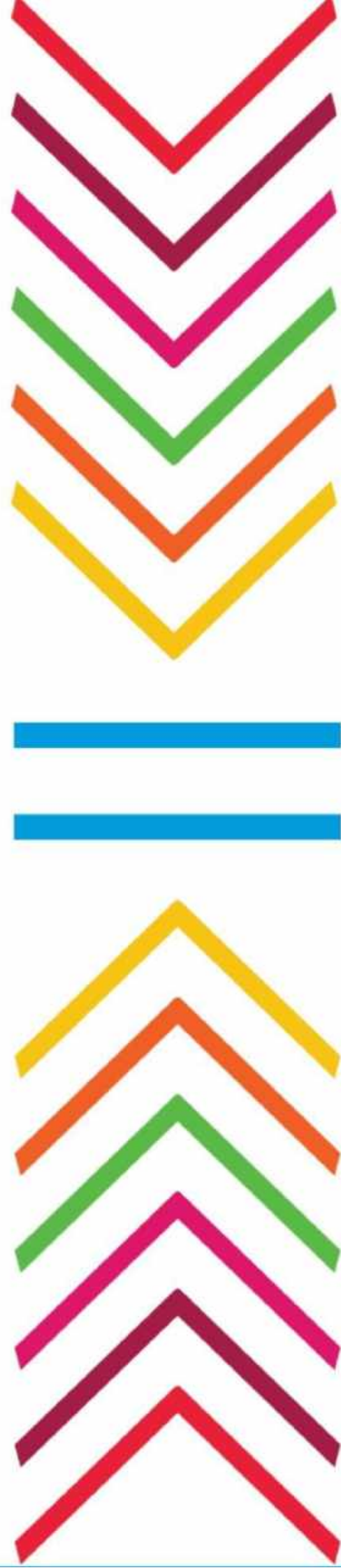
Global Annual Meeting of Gender Focal
Points and Focal Points for Women
October 5-7, 2020
@Zoom



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This report was prepared by Ms. Katariina Haapea and the Office of the Focal Point for Women in the UN system at UN Women





01 INTRODUCTION

Background

The Office of the Focal Point for Women in the UN System at UN Women (hereafter the Office) is mandated to monitor and report on the status of women in the United Nations system, serving as the chief advocate for monitoring and improving the status of women across the system and assisting the UN Secretary-General in achieving the General Assembly mandated goal of 50:50 gender parity at all levels in the UN system.

The Office provides capacity-building, guidance and updates on General Assembly mandates, organizational policies and emerging issues and facilitates networking opportunities for the network of Gender Focal Points. The Office supports the implementation of the UN Secretary-General's *System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity* through leading and coordinating the network of nearly 400 Gender Focal Points across the United Nations.

The Gender Focal Points and their alternates are appointed in each department, office, regional commission and mission, and are vital 'agents of change' to accelerate the efforts to reach the goal of gender parity by 2028. They work together with the UN leadership across the world for the achievement of gender equality and gender parity. Gender Focal Points act as advocates and liaison with the leadership to address systemic issues and changes to processes that have demonstrated to impact disproportionately personnel based on their gender.

Gender Focal Points promote greater awareness on gender parity and equality. They also provide information to staff on policies relevant to advancing gender equality in the workplace and on creation of enabling working environments, such as on issues related to standards of conduct, flexible working arrangements and family friendly policies. Furthermore, they initiate and support training or capacity-building possibilities on gender sensitivity, work/life balance and career path strategies. They also provide information on avenues to address situations of gender-based workplace concerns, including but not limited to harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination and/or abuse of power.

The Office organized the **Global Annual Gender Focal Point Meeting** on 5-7 October 2020: *"Reflect. Realize. Respond. Rising to New Challenges: Accelerating Gender Parity in Times of Crisis and Beyond"*. The annual meeting was conducted online for the first time, with 163 participants.



The Office of the Focal Point for Women together with the Executive Director of UN Women, Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

The Office of the Focal Point for Women in the UN System

Ms. Katja Pehrman, Senior Advisor and Focal Point for Women in the UN System
Ms. Samantha Ronda, Executive Associate
Ms. Shinobu Sasaki, Gender Parity Specialist
Ms. Minna Nurminen, Gender Parity Analyst
Mr. David Gawellek, Gender Parity Consultant
Ms. Hannah Phillips, Gender Parity Consultant



The Office supports the role of the Focal Points for Women and Gender Focal Points (hereafter *Gender Focal Points*)¹ as changemakers for advancing gender parity and transforming the organizational culture of the United Nations. In this regard, the Office provides guidance and expertise, amongst others, on the implementation of *the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the UN system* and *the Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines*.

In 2020, the Office has organized several capacity building sessions for the Gender Focal Points to share and exchange information as well as to showcase good examples to accelerate action to reach parity, including:

- A series to build Gender Focal Points' capacities to appropriately respond to harassment, including sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse of authority;
- Sessions on Inclusive Vacancy Announcements in support of gender parity and inclusion;
- Webinars on how to work effectively from home during COVID-19;
- Workshop on how to influence others as Gender Focal Points;
- Event on LGBTQI+ equality to create an inclusive workplace; and
- Dialogue with the International Gender Champions on Parental Leave Policies.

The Office has also developed several communication products, including:

- Ten ways to Create an Enabling Environment during COVID-19; Top tips to Foster Inclusivity Online During COVID-19; How to address online sexual harassment during COVID-19;
- Reference support document to help Gender Focal Points to identify appropriate support mechanisms in cases of misconduct;
- Guidance on mentoring as a part of creating an enabling environment.
- Top Tips for Inclusive Vacancy Announcements in support of gender parity;
- Inclusive and gender-sensitive model template for Exit Surveys; and
- Video messages from UN leadership underlining the importance of reaching gender parity and creating enabling working environments.

The Focal Point for Women has also continued to represent the Gender Focal Points in *the Chief Executives Board (CEB) Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the UN system* to drive joint action in key priority areas. The Office also contributes to *the Secretary-General's Working Group on Emergency Measures* to create recommendations and good examples on how to attract and retain more women in the field and peacekeeping missions.

¹ Please note that "Gender Focal Points" here also encompasses "Focal Points for Women". These terms are synonymous. The term "Focal Points for Women" is used by the UN Secretariat, and is guided by the Secretary-General's (ST/SGB/2008/12) "Departmental focal points for women in the Secretariat." The term "Gender Focal Point" is used by the remainder of the UN system.



02 REMARKS

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Opening by Ms. Katja Pehrman, Senior Advisor & Focal Point for Women in the UN System, UN Women

'I would like to kick off this Annual Meeting by thanking you, dear Gender Focal Points, for all your hard work and tireless efforts towards gender parity and creating enabling working environments. We know that it has not always been easy, but we know that it has been worth it.'

In her opening remarks Senior Advisor and Focal Point for Women, **Ms. Katja Pehrman**, warmly welcomed the Gender Focal Points to the 2020 Global Annual meeting, which was the first ever to be conducted virtually. She thanked the Gender Focal Points for their valuable work on enhancing gender parity. She also referred to the title of the annual meeting, **"Rising to New Challenges: Accelerating Gender Parity in Times of Crisis and Beyond"**, that duly reflects the challenges of 2020. How can we realize gender parity during the difficult times and think about a response that makes us stronger?

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated gendered inequalities. The Secretary-General's Policy Brief on 'the Impact of COVID-19 on Women' indicated that compounded economic impacts are felt especially by women and girls who are generally earning less, saving less, and holding insecure jobs. UN Women's research shows that across the world, women are more likely to take on the burden of increased personal and family demands. The lockdowns have also highlighted and intensified the existing "shadow pandemic" of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence.

To assess how the pandemic has influenced UN personnel, the Office conducted a survey with the Gender Focal Point network. The results confirmed that COVID-19 crisis has negatively affected women, especially mothers and single mothers across the UN system. Several Gender Focal Points described the situation as a "double burden" or a "triple role of women", referring to the responsibilities of working, homeschooling and caring.

According to the survey, COVID-19 has also led to a decreased focus on gender parity efforts. Only less than half of the Gender Focal Points indicated that gender parity and an enabling working environment have remained priorities during the crisis. Over 70 % of the Gender Focal Points indicated that the COVID-19 crisis has affected progress towards gender parity and the creation of enabling working environments. 'Achieving gender parity and the creation of enabling working environments are essential to realizing the UN's mandate in times of crisis and beyond', Ms. Pehrman reminded.

At the same time, the crisis has offered opportunities to rethink issues related to organizational culture and the way the UN works. The results of the survey point to the changing attitudes related to teleworking and how the crisis has highlighted care responsibilities. Some aspects of an enabling environment and personnel wellbeing have also been put to the forefront during the crisis, and several entities responded to the crisis with agility and empathy.

The year 2020 has been significant for the UN community, marking a series of important anniversaries, including the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, the 10th anniversary of UN Women, five years of implementing the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals, and 20 years since the adoption of the Security Council resolution 1325. Importantly, the UN has also celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which is the landmark framework for gender equality and women's empowerment. The Beijing Platform for Action established the goal of 50:50 for the Professional level and above, with a deadline of the year 2000. 'We are twenty years behind schedule of reaching gender parity and therefore the efforts to achieve this goal are ever more important', Ms. Pehrman stated.

Furthermore, September 2020 marked the third anniversary of the Secretary-General's *System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity*. Ms. Pehrman highlighted that Gender Focal Points make change happen every day, all around the UN and the world. Since the launching of the Strategy, the Gender Focal Points have, for instance:

- created implementation or action plans on how to reach parity and create enabling working environments;
- established gender parity targets, strengthened awareness raising and training, tackled unconscious bias and stereotypes;
- used creative ways of enhancing parity across the UN;

- shared examples and success stories to inspire others; and
- demanded changes, initiated policy adjustments, and achieved tangible results.

‘You should be very proud of these achievements’, Ms. Pehrman acknowledged, ‘not only have you focused on efforts that will advance progress, but also sustain it.’

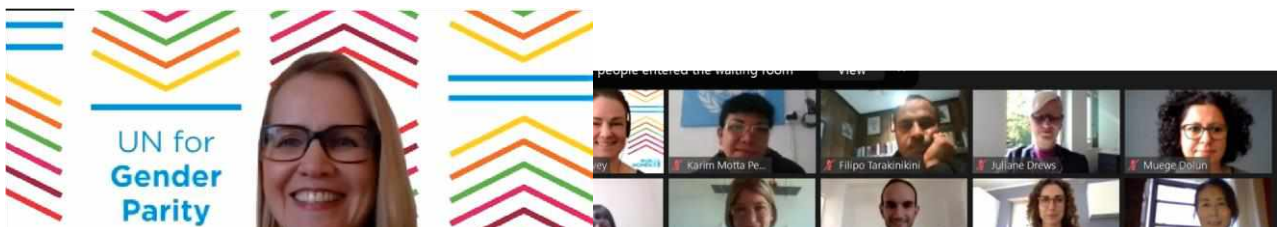
For the United Nations, gender parity is not merely about numbers, but also about changing the organizational culture to achieve and sustain parity and attain equal opportunities for all. ‘This is why we need to look at and change things around us, whether it is about standards of conduct, flexible working arrangements, family-friendly policies, recruitment processes, health, security and safety, or a range of other issues’, Ms. Pehrman said.

The UN Secretary-General **António Guterres** launched *the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the UN System* in support of his System-wide Strategy in 2019. The Office has also prepared *the Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines* which provide concrete recommendations and good practice examples from across the UN system on how to reach gender parity and create enabling working environments specifically in the field and peacekeeping missions, where the gap is greatest and the rate of change slowest.

Ms. Pehrman thanked the Gender Focal Points for their valuable support and contributions to both guidelines. In the preparation of the new guidelines, the Office conducted nearly 200 interviews with Heads of Missions, Resident Coordinators, Gender Focal Points, HR personnel and other stakeholders from over 50 countries where the UN operates.

‘The Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines have been created by UN personnel for UN personnel, and they are a great example of system-wide teamwork and cooperation. They also illustrate the strength of the Gender Focal Point network as a platform for change’, Ms. Pehrman noted. However, the guidelines themselves will not bring about change without implementation. While leadership has a particular responsibility in this regard, achieving an enabling working environment requires engagement at all levels and from all personnel.

She also underlined the importance of regular monitoring and reporting. The Office will soon begin the preparations for the next Secretary-General’s report on *the Improvement in the Status of Women*, which will be published in 2021. As indicated by Ms. Pehrman, the Office looks forward to collaborating with the Focal Points and their entities in this regard.



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