

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



# **UNDP GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY 2018-2021**

**2021 ANNUAL REPORT**



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# Foreword

The year 2021 was a seminal moment for development and gender equality. A range of new laws and policies were passed to advance gender equality; meaningful progress was made to expand women's access to health services; and grassroots civic action brought women's rights to the fore. However, the year also saw the climate emergency deepen and the COVID-19 pandemic continued to exacerbate gender-based discrimination and inequalities. Since COVID-19 hit, seven in 10 women say that abuse by a partner has become more common while women have been nearly twice as likely as men to lose their jobs during the pandemic.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the emergence of new conflicts, including the war in Ukraine, has further increased the risk of conflict-related sexual violence.<sup>2</sup> In the face of these multiple crises and a growing backlash against women's rights, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) worked with our partners from the United Nations (UN) family and beyond to increase our support on gender equality to countries and communities across the globe.

This 2021 Annual Report on the UNDP [Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021](#) provides a snapshot of the key results we achieved together with our partners in closing gender gaps and helping to empower all women and girls. UNDP scaled up its work with countries on gender-responsive social protection, recognizing the centrality and value of unpaid care. UNDP also boosted its engagement in tackling gender-based violence in 96 countries, including through the groundbreaking European Union-UN [Spotlight Initiative](#). The organization also worked to improve women's leadership in natural resource management and climate action. For instance, over 95 percent of [UNDP Climate Promise](#) countries' nationally determined contributions (NDCs) now include gender considerations as compared to 48 percent of first-generation NDCs.<sup>3</sup> UNDP also strived to place gender equality at the core of efforts towards mobilizing finance towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, the report also outlines how UNDP continued to walk the talk on gender equality within the organization. In detailing such efforts, it can

help countries and partners to identify some of the most effective approaches to advancing gender equality.

As we watch progress towards gender equality stall or even reverse, global commitment and innovative approaches are needed more than ever. In line with our Strategic Plan, UNDP's ambitious new [Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025](#) builds on gender equality as one of the most powerful development solutions, aiming to move past piecemeal efforts and to instead help countries shift power structures and the economic, social, and political systems that perpetuate discrimination. This will help the world to make up lost ground to achieve the SDGs. Working with our close partners, including UN Women, UNDP will continue to place gender equality at the heart of all our efforts to expand people's choices and realize a just and sustainable world for all.



Photo: UNDP/Michael Atwood

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Achim Steiner".

**Achim Steiner**  
Administrator  
United Nations  
Development Programme

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2022/06/un-women-and-undp-report-five-lessons-from-covid-19-for-centering-gender-in-crisis>; <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressive-effects>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/dsgsm1756.doc.htm>

<sup>3</sup> [https://climatepromise.undp.org/sites/default/files/research\\_report\\_document/Climate%20Promise%20Global%20Progress%20Report%202022.pdf](https://climatepromise.undp.org/sites/default/files/research_report_document/Climate%20Promise%20Global%20Progress%20Report%202022.pdf)



# UNDP 2021 Highlights

## Unlocking Gender Equality Progress



**72 COUNTRIES**

strengthened support to women-led community-based associations



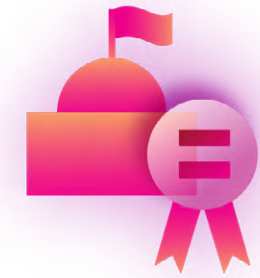
UNDP rated one of the **BEST-PERFORMING UN AGENCIES**

in the UN System-wide Action Plan



**241 PARTNERSHIPS**

established to tackle social norms that fuel gender discrimination



**83 UNDP COUNTRY OFFICES**

joined the 2021-2023 Gender Seal certification programme



**384 MEASURES**

put in place to boost women's participation and leadership



**96 COUNTRIES**

were supported to address gender-based violence



**75.7 MILLION WOMEN**

gained access to basic services, financial services and non-financial assets in 2018-2021



**4.4 MILLION WOMEN-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS**

accessed clean energy in 27 countries



**73 COUNTRIES**

scaled up gender-responsive social protection and care systems



UNDP worked in **40 COUNTRIES**

to mobilize finance for gender equality



**96% OF THE 117 COUNTRIES**

supported by UNDP's Climate Promise had gender provisions in their national climate action plans



**95 COUNTRIES**

strengthened women's leadership and decision-making in natural resource management and climate-resilient governance



# COVID-19 Recovery: Towards a Gender Equal World

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to take a toll on people's lives and livelihoods in 2021, exposing systemic gender inequalities and threatening gender equality gains. Women have been more likely to lose their jobs during the pandemic, while levels of gender-based violence have soared. Despite this, the COVID-19 response has been largely gender blind. The UNDP-UN Women [COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker](#) shows, for example, that less than 20 percent of national policy measures addressed women's economic insecurity and unpaid care work.

In 2021, UNDP ramped up its support to governments and other partners in the face of COVID-19's fallout. The pandemic has also continued to shift UNDP into different ways of thinking, working and reasserting its gender equality priorities.



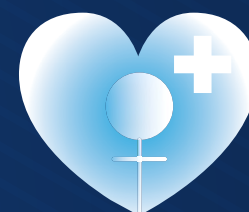
## Gender-based violence

UNDP stepped up efforts in 2021 as part of its governance work to address the pandemic-related surge in gender-based violence, expanding its support to 96 countries. Many of these initiatives were part of the [Spotlight Initiative](#), a European Union-UN partnership to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. In at least nine countries, UNDP contributed directly to the drafting or strengthening of 84 laws on gender-based violence. In **Mexico**, UNDP supported federal penal code reforms with a focus on femicide.



## Women's participation and leadership

The pandemic has highlighted how women are still missing from decision-making spaces, including in the COVID-19 recovery, where women lead only 18 percent of government COVID-19 task forces.<sup>4</sup> To boost women's participation and leadership, 384 measures – from electoral quotas to gender-smart business policies – were put in place in 2021 with UNDP support. In **Lesotho**, UNDP worked with the National Reforms Authority on bipartisan consultations, which resulted in constitutional amendments and 16 bills directly impacting gender equality.



## Social protection

UNDP significantly increased its commitments on social protection, as women and girls continue to face disproportionate socioeconomic impacts from the pandemic. In 2021, UNDP's work on gender-responsive social protection reached a record 73 countries, an increase from 20 in 2019. This work included collaborations with governments to develop gender-responsive social protection strategies and action plans and empowering women-led businesses through digital skills and income support, while ensuring social security.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.undp.org/publications/covid-19-global-gender-response-tracker-fact-sheets>

## Data For Policy Change: COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker

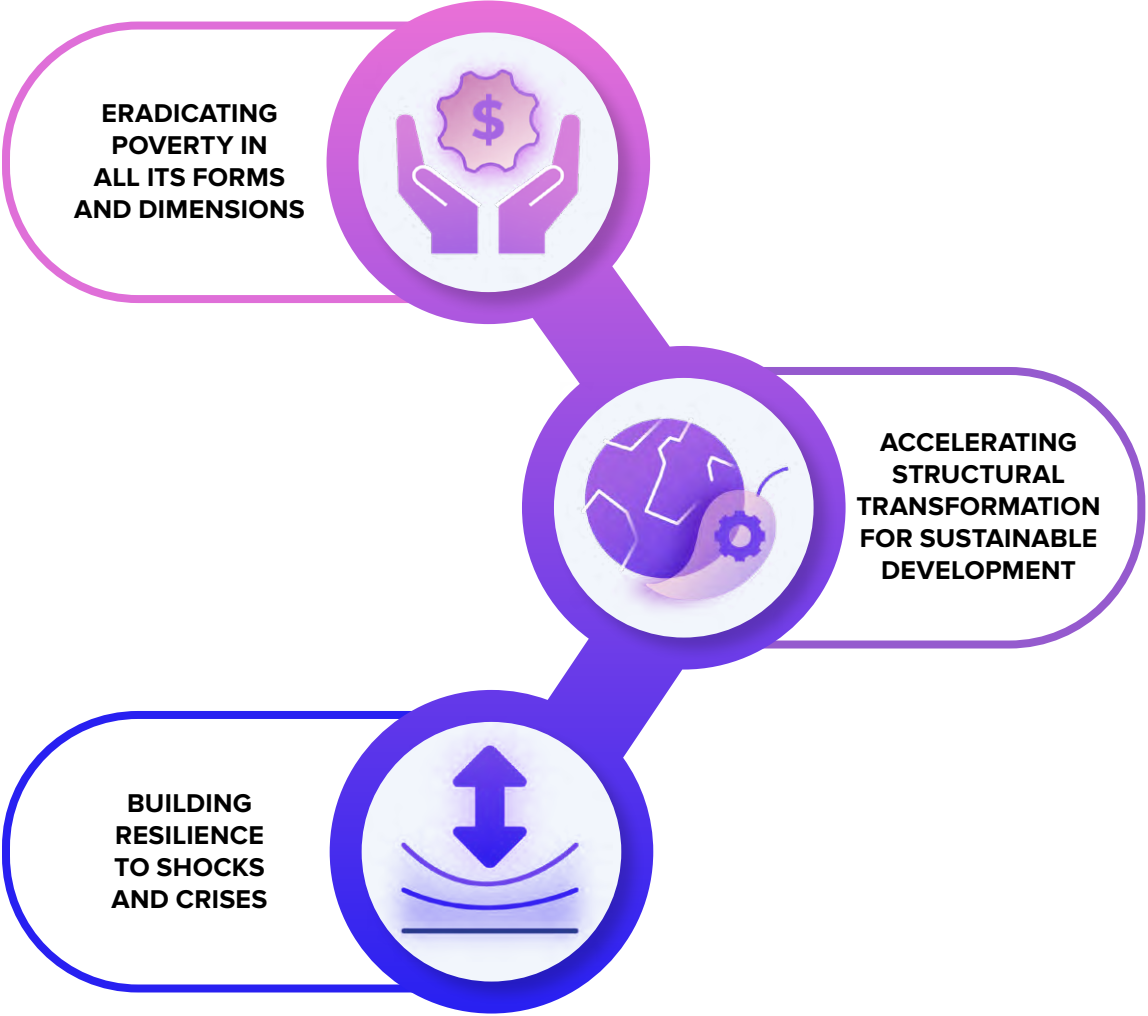
The UNDP-UN Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker expanded in 2021 to include nearly 5,000 policy measures from 221 countries and territories, and data on women's representation in 431 national COVID-19 task forces. This data has informed policymakers, including the [G7 Gender Equality Advisory Committee](#), and supported UNDP country offices and development partners in gender analysis, resource mobilization, reporting and advocacy. The tracker was [rated](#) among the top three of the world's most significant policy tracker initiatives.





# 2021 Progress on the Gender Equality Strategy

UNDP's [Gender Equality Strategy](#), aligned with its [Strategic Plan 2018-2021](#), focused on three development outcomes:



Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises in 2021, such as the climate emergency and increasing conflicts like that emerging in Ukraine, UNDP still made strong progress implementing the Gender Equality Strategy. Here are some highlights under each of the three development outcomes.





# Eradicating Poverty

Multidimensional poverty cannot be ended without tackling the persistent gender inequalities that hold back half the world's population. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the situation for many women and girls, pushing more women into poverty and crushing female-dominated industries. Women have been nearly twice as likely to lose their jobs as men during the pandemic, for example.<sup>5</sup>

In 2021 UNDP continued its focus on dismantling structural barriers to women's economic empowerment, from supporting unpaid care work and women-led businesses as engines for gender-equitable economies, to addressing gender-based violence and expanding equitable access to energy. As part of this, UNDP pushed for recognition of unpaid care work, supporting governments to promote the care economy and address growing care needs. With UNDP support, in **Peru** a framework for the national care system was developed with the Ministry of Women, and in **North Macedonia** caregivers' capacities were strengthened in the 2021 Operational Plan on Employment.

UNDP also boosted efforts to tackle the pandemic-related rise in gender-based violence, including through the Spotlight Initiative, working in 96 countries. In **Papua New Guinea**, UNDP support resulted in the first-ever dedicated allocation in the national budget for gender-based violence. UNDP also enhanced linkages between gender-based violence, climate change, poverty reduction and more representative decision-making, such as in **Lebanon**, where gender-based violence prevention was incorporated into livelihoods programming.

## 2021 Highlights



UNDP supported 67 countries to address gender-based violence in the context of HIV/AIDS. In countries such as **Djibouti**, UNDP partnered with UNAIDS to train health providers while supporting women to lead in fighting HIV-related stigma.



4.4 million women-headed households accessed clean energy in 27 countries with UNDP support. The new UNDP Sustainable Energy Hub is committed to supporting over 100 countries in equitable transition to renewable energy.



UNDP partnered with UN Women in 16 countries on integrated national financing frameworks as part of its work on financing for gender equality. UNDP and UN Women also expanded their joint work on gender-responsive budgeting to 25 countries.



From 2018-2021, UNDP enabled 75.7 million women to gain access to basic services such as health and education, financial services, including bank accounts and credit, and non-financial assets.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressive-effects>

## Boosting Gender-Equitable Relationships in Conflict Settings

In **Iraq**, integrating activities to prevent and respond to gender-based violence into a broader economic recovery programme reduced the dropout rate of women participants by almost half. Married couples participating in the livelihood components of the UNDP project were invited to attend biweekly couples' sessions that encouraged healthy and equitable relationships. The pilot project, funded by the Government of the Republic of Korea, will inform future adaptations of the UNDP's economic recovery work.





# Lasting Structural Transformation

The pandemic has made visible the structural barriers to gender equality, including gaps in women's participation and decision-making and discriminatory laws, norms and practices. While women's participation and leadership is critical, women are often left out of decision-making roles. The UNDP-UN Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker shows, for example, that women make up just 24 percent of national COVID-19 task forces members.

In 2021, UNDP worked to transform the structural drivers of gender inequalities. Despite political turbulence, democratic governance continued to be UNDP's most transformative area of work. UNDP helps to ensure that women have seats at the table, making their voices heard in decisions that impact their lives and communities. In 2021, 384 related measures were put into place, with nearly half supporting women's political participation. To secure women's equal representation on electoral lists, for example, UNDP provided technical assistance to countries including **Armenia, Lebanon, Rwanda, Somalia** and **Timor-Leste** to introduce temporary special measures, including quotas.

UNDP also promotes gender equality in natural resource management and climate action initiatives. In 2021, 96 percent of the 117 countries supported by the [UNDP Climate Promise](#) added gender considerations to their nationally determined contributions. UNDP also almost doubled its engagement with women's organizations, which are on the frontlines of climate action. In 2021, UNDP's environment, climate and energy portfolio supported women-led community-based associations in 72 countries.

## 2021 Highlights



UNDP supported 95 countries to advance women's leadership in natural resource management. In **Angola, Namibia** and **South Africa**, UNDP supported the launch of a gender policy and action plan to ensure the inclusion of gender equality in transboundary governance structures in the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem.



With UNDP support, 12.7 million women accessed justice in 38 countries, including through legal aid and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.



50 percent of all registered voters supported by UNDP in 42 countries were women. In **the Gambia**, UNDP supported voter registration efforts for the 2021 presidential election that resulted in women making up 57 percent of registered voters.

## The Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions

In 2021, UNDP launched the Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions programme in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Africa to support public institutions to achieve global standards on gender equality. Forty-one public institutions in **Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Panama, Paraguay** and **Peru** enrolled in the programme, and 196 public officials participated in an online course on 'Keys for Gender Equality'. In the **Dominican Republic**, UNDP and the Ministry of Women created a community of practice, including a repository of national policies and regulations.





# Building Resilient Societies

From COVID-19 and a climate emergency to armed conflicts and violent extremism, crises grew exponentially in 2021. The impacts of these shocks are never gender neutral. The emergence of new conflicts, including in Ukraine, for example, has further increased the risk of conflict-related sexual violence.<sup>6</sup> Adolescent girls in conflict zones are 90 percent more likely to be out of school compared to girls in conflict-free countries. At the same time, women play a key role in ensuring the well-being of their families and communities.

UNDP supports countries and communities to build resilience to diverse shocks and crises, ensuring that women and girls aren't left behind. These efforts include improving livelihood and employment opportunities for women, developing a gender-responsive crisis response, preventing violent extremism and strengthening women's resilience and participation in economic recovery. In 2021, UNDP worked in 28 countries to ensure that 1.4 million women gained access to jobs and improved livelihoods in crisis or post-crisis settings.

Advancing women's leadership in crisis settings is improving but remains a structural challenge, especially with the pandemic. In 2021, the share of women holding leadership positions in social dialogue and reconciliation mechanisms in 17 countries reached 34 percent and women accounted for 41 percent of leadership positions in prevention and recovery mechanisms. To create further change, UNDP is looking to recommendations of the evaluation of UNDP support to conflict-affected countries as well as the UNDP 'Gender and Recovery Toolkit: Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Crisis and Recovery Settings'.

## 2021 Highlights



The UNDP Global Programme on Strengthening the Rule of Law and Human Rights supported over 48 conflict and crisis-affected contexts.



A new gender justice platform developed by UNDP and UN Women helped provide access to justice and services for over 34,000 people in 14 conflict-affected countries, nearly 90 percent of whom were women and girls.



UNDP supported women-led initiatives to promote social cohesion, tolerance and dialogue by, for example, creating the Women's Rapid Action and Mobilization Platform in **the Philippines**, a network of grassroots women mediators that brought together community members and promoted peaceful conflict resolution.



Women made up 54 percent of those supported by UNDP's recovery work, including in crisis and fragile settings.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/dsgsm1756.doc.htm>

## UNDP Gender and Crisis Facility

In 2021 UNDP boosted its gender equality and crisis and recovery work. The recently created Gender and Crisis Facility supported UNDP's early crisis response in **Afghanistan, Haiti, and Libya** by providing programme design guidance and supporting the inclusion of gender experts in SURGE missions. The facility also partnered with UN Women to roll out two gender-responsive conflict analyses in **Myanmar** and **Sudan**. The Myanmar findings are now being integrated into programming guidance.



# Collaboration for Change

Strong partnerships are central to achieving gender equality and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, especially in these turbulent times. In 2021, UNDP further expanded its joint collaborations and established 241 partnerships to address negative social norms that perpetuate gender discrimination.

UN Women remains UNDP's main partner in these efforts, working together in 102 countries in 2021. The largest areas of collaboration are advancing legal and policy reforms, women's political participation and economic empowerment.

## FEMINIST ACTION FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE COALITION

At the global level, as a co-leader of the Feminist Action for Climate Justice Action Coalition, UNDP committed to the five-year Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality to drive gender-responsive climate action. As part of its collective commitments, UNDP, UN Women and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development will expand the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker to add a 'green lens' in 2022 to support gender-responsive green recovery.

## PARTNERSHIPS TO MAINSTREAM GENDER

UNDP and UN Women launched the '[Technical Note on Gender Mainstreaming in the \[United Nations country team\] \(UNCT\) COVID-19 Response](#),' which guides UNCTs on how to mainstream gender equality considerations into their COVID-19 recovery planning and programming work. UNDP also contributed to the development of the 'Gender Theme Groups: Standards and Procedures,' launched in January 2022.

## WOMEN-LED COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

In 2021, UNDP supported women-led community-based associations in 72 countries. For instance, in **Rwanda** UNDP strengthened gender mainstreaming in the work of 34 civil society organizations that provide essential support to women and girls.

## STEM4ALL

At the regional level, the UNDP Europe and Central Asia digital platform '[STEM4ALL](#)' expanded its reach and partnerships through a multisectoral global network of 'STEMinists,' with over 80 members in 34 countries. A UNDP partnership with the UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia enhanced the platform.

## LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

UNDP continued to work with partners to advance the rights of persons with disabilities. For example, UNDP worked with the Blind and Deaf Society of **Turkmenistan** to increase employment opportunities for women with disabilities. In **Kenya**, UNDP supported 11 women-led disability organizations to carry out economic empowerment activities.

## PARTNERSHIPS WITH ACADEMIA

UNDP and the Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures at the University of Denver partnered to strengthen the gender analysis of COVID-19 impacts. UNDP and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative published a report, '[Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021: Unmasking disparities by ethnicity, caste, and gender](#),' which provides a comprehensive overview of multidimensional poverty in 109 countries. UNDP also partnered with local universities and networks to advance gender equality through the development of university courses targeting women. In **Sri Lanka**, for example, UNDP worked with Uva Wellassa University to develop a diploma in community leadership and development for women elected officials and councillors.

## Global Report on Gender Equality in Public Administration

In 2021, UNDP and the University of Pittsburgh published the '[Global Report on Gender Equality in Public Administration](#),' which examines women's representation and leadership in public administration. The report resulted in dialogues with policymakers and practitioners around the world, contributed to bridging data gaps and provided guidance on strengthening the capacities of public institutions to produce and track sex-disaggregated data related to Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.



# #NextGenUNDP to Accelerate Gender Equality

#NextGenUNDP is powering progress towards sustainable development, including on gender equality. Advancing gender equality requires innovative approaches, from community conversations and behaviour change campaigns to unlocking the potential of data and breaking traditional patriarchal supply chains of information, resources and power. During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNDP has been reinventing the ways in which it thinks and works, creating innovative solutions in at least 41 countries.

Examples of innovative practices in 2021 include:

## UNDP'S ACCELERATOR LABS



In **El Salvador**, the Accelerator Lab and the Ministry of Tourism promoted inclusive digitization of women-run microenterprises. In **Niger**, through a partnership with UN Women and the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Accelerator Lab contributed to establishing and disseminating a 'data-powered positive deviance' method to support women traders.

## DATA-DRIVEN E-GOVERNANCE



In **São Tomé and Príncipe**, UNDP supported the creation of the first government data centre and within the justice modernization programme, partnered with leading universities to train doctors, nurses, prosecutors and judicial police in collecting and analysing evidence in sexual violence cases.

## SHIFTING SOCIAL NORMS



UNDP supported programming and campaigns to shift social norms that underpin the unequal division of labour in over 37 countries. In **India**, for example, a UNDP behavioural insights pilot used communication and training tools to encourage men and boys to participate in unpaid care.

## PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM



As the largest contributor to UN efforts to prevent violent extremism, UNDP partnered with UN Women in the **Maldives** and **Sri Lanka** to pilot a nonviolent communication training programme among local community and religious leaders, shifting participants' behaviours away from violent extremism.



## Women Innovators in the Arab States

UNDP launched the Women Innovators Programme in 2021 in partnership with GSMA (the global mobile operators' association), which provides one-on-one mentorship for women-led digital social enterprises in 12 Arab States. The programme tapped the expertise of the GSMA start-up platform '4YFN' (Four Years from Now) and the UNDP Crowdfunding Academy, empowering women to improve their businesses and networks.



# Walking the Talk

UNDP also works to advance gender equality within the organization. In 2021, UNDP once again was rated as one of the best-performing agencies in the UN system, meeting or exceeding requirements for 88 percent of relevant indicators in the United Nations System-wide Action Plan 2.0 (UN-SWAP). UNDP was also awarded the EDGE 'Move' Certificate by the Economic Dividends for Gender Equality (EDGE) organization, recognizing its significant progress in ensuring gender equality and commitment to an inclusive workplace. The EDGE Move award is the second highest level of certification, and UNDP is only the second UN entity to receive it.

## ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT

A culture of accountability for gender equality is cultivated at UNDP's highest levels through the Gender Steering and Implementation Committee, which meets twice a year to discuss UNDP's performance on gender equality and gender parity. In 2021, UNDP bureau directors reported achievements on leadership, resources and programming. With one of the strongest institutional results reporting and monitoring systems in the UN system, UNDP also continues to sharpen its focus on gender-responsive results, including in its Strategic Plan 2022-2025.



## HIGH-LEVEL LEADERSHIP

UNDP's senior leadership continues to champion gender equality. In 2021, 62 percent of the UNDP Administrator's public speeches and statements explicitly advanced gender equality. The Administrator also chaired the two annual meetings of the Gender Steering and Implementation Committee.



## GENDER-RESPONSIVE POLICY, PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

UNDP significantly improved integration of gender equality into its policies and programming in 2021. 80 percent of UNDP country offices reported having a gender equality strategy and action plan, and 92 percent of the 24 approved country programme documents that were assessed for quality assurance in 2021 integrated a satisfactory gender analysis.



## FINANCING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

UNDP invests more in gender equality on average than other development actors, with a steady increase of resources for gender equality. UNDP investments in programming where gender equality was a principal or significant objective rose from 55.4 to 64.9 percent between 2018 and 2021. However, UNDP recognizes that more financial investments and stronger architecture are needed to achieve even better results.

## GENDER PARITY

UNDP continues to be a 50:50 gender-balanced organization overall, including among its senior management. To further this success, UNDP is building a pipeline of strong women candidates for future leadership roles through programmes such as the Women Mentoring Programme, launched in 2021 by the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, and the second cohort of the African Young Women Leaders Fellowship Programme, implemented by UNDP and the African Union Commission.



## INCLUSIVE AND SAFE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

UNDP has a comprehensive policy to enable work-life balance while continuing to build on lessons learned from the pandemic. To tackle sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse, all bureaux and offices submitted sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse action plans and the annual certifications of implementation for 2021 to the Administrator. Around 1,200 UNDP personnel participated in trainings on sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. UNDP also launched a podcast on reporting and workplace culture and worked with five UN agencies to pilot a new electronic incident reporting form to centralize data and for better coordination.



## Gender Equality Seal: Transforming UNDP Country Offices

UNDP's flagship Gender Seal programme supports transformational gender equality results, building on more than 10 years of experience in improving standards. In 2021, UNDP hosted an awards ceremony to recognize the strong performance of 31 UNDP country offices participating in 2018-2020 round of the Gender Seal. Almost 1,000 participants joined the virtual event, which was opened by the President of the Executive Board, with UNDP's Administrator presenting the awards. A record 83 (64 percent of) UNDP country offices have joined the 2021-2023 Gender Seal certification programme, with 15 participating in a dedicated Gender Seal crisis track.



# Global Gender Expertise

Working together and leveraging expertise is more important than ever as the world, and development, face continuous and emerging crises and risks. In 2021, UNDP continued to invest in expanding knowledge sharing within its organization and the wider development community, with gender equality as a key development solution at the forefront of these initiatives.

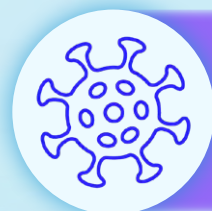
UNDP has gender expertise across the organization, in every region of the world, including multidisciplinary gender focal teams in country offices, a Gender Team in headquarters and regional hub teams focused on gender equality. In 2021, 83 percent of UNDP country offices had a multidisciplinary gender focal team led by a senior manager, and 68 percent had gender advisers and/or gender specialists.

Many of these gender specialists are part of UNDP's Global Policy Network (GPN), a network of experts that fosters knowledge sharing and collaboration across thematic areas and provides support to country offices to help them achieve development breakthroughs. In 2021, the GPN communities of practice strengthened its use of the platform SparkBlue, a tool for virtual engagement, with 30 webinars that brought together 2,300 participants. The gender community of practice has over 2,500 UNDP members.

# Cutting-Edge Thought Leadership and External Engagement

UNDP remains a prominent thought leader on gender equality, helping to shape global public discourse and policy debates. UNDP works with UN partners, academia and think tanks across the world to produce evidence-based research and policy guidance. In 2021, UNDP produced numerous flagship publications and data to push for gender equality and to highlight the linkages between gender equality and improved development outcomes, including an expanded version of the UNDP-UN Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker.

Examples of UNDP's 2021 publications on gender equality include:



At the global level, UNDP produced '*Protecting Women's Livelihoods in Times of Pandemic: Temporary Basic Income and the Road to Gender Equality*,' which calls for helping the world's poorest women to cope with the effects of the pandemic.



To support gender-responsive economic recovery, UNDP, UN Women and the International Monetary Fund published the brief '*Gender Equality and COVID-19: Policies and Institutions for Mitigating the Crisis*'.



The '*Global Report on Gender Equality in Public Administration*,' launched by UNDP and the University of Pittsburgh, examines women's representation and leadership in public administration.



Regionally, UNDP flagged the urgency of scaled-up innovative approaches to address gender inequalities in the labour market in a joint report with the International Labour Organization, '*Informality and Social Protection in African Countries: A Forward-looking Assessment of Contributory Schemes*'.



As part of the Youth Co:Lab initiative, co-led by UNDP and the Citi Foundation, a joint report was published by UNDP and UNICEF, '*Addressing Gender Barriers to Entrepreneurship and Leadership Among Girls and Young Women in South-East Asia*,' strengthening evidence to address gender barriers.



UNDP country offices also produced numerous new analytical tools and insights. For example, UNDP launched a tool on 'Gender Mainstreaming for Integrated Nature, Climate and Energy Programming,' which was piloted in nine countries.

UNDP also invested in external engagement for advocacy and to raise awareness of gender equality issues. UNDP tweets in 2021 about gender reached 57.6 million Twitter subscribers and were viewed 897 million times across all languages. This work also engaged UNDP Goodwill Ambassadors, who, for example, underscored the important role women play in the COVID-19 recovery through initiatives such as the women-led vaccine equity campaign #AShotForAll, featuring Goodwill Ambassadors Padma Lakshmi, Yemi Alade, Michelle Yeoh and Connie Britton.



# The Path Ahead

2021 marked the last year of the Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021. While there has been significant progress in advancing gender equality during this time, there have also been alarming global backlashes against women's rights, and COVID-19 and other crises continue to disproportionately affect women and girls.

To determine the path ahead, in 2021 UNDP carried out an analysis of key evaluations and reports of its gender equality work, including a paper by the Independent Evaluation Office. The findings show a growing demand for UNDP to help countries go further in shifting power relations and cutting the deep roots of gender inequalities. UNDP also learned how certain areas of work, such as in crisis and post-crisis contexts, sustainable environment and energy, and women's economic empowerment, would benefit from better integrating gender-responsive approaches, considering social norms and structures of inequality, and improving women's decision-making roles.

Other learnings include:

## GREATER CAPACITIES AND GENDER ANALYSIS

More capacities and sound gender analysis are needed for a deeper understanding of intersecting forms of discrimination. Evaluations show that women are often put in the same category as other vulnerable groups, a disservice to both gender equality and to the specific needs of other uniquely vulnerable groups.

## STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

Diversified partnerships and multi-stakeholder platforms accelerate gender equality and women's empowerment. Looking ahead, UNDP will continue to nurture its relationships to build national, regional and global platforms for policy and social change.

## CRISIS SETTINGS

Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment should be the cornerstone of the UNDP crisis response. When social and cultural norms allow, women are key players in humanitarian crisis prevention, response and recovery. UNDP remains committed to increasing resources and ensuring that its programming helps improve women's status.

The new [Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025](#) incorporates these lessons and elevates UNDP's ambitions to help transform the structural causes of gender inequalities. It lays out new ways of working such as through integrated approaches, urges investments in data and analytics and solutions to transform social norms, and re-envision partnerships. UNDP will continue to move towards a more transformative approach to achieve the 2030 Agenda and to create a sustainable and gender-equal world.







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