



Human Resources and  
Social Development

## **Gender Balance in Human Resources Management Guide**

Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (HRSD)  
Supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

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## Executive Summary

The Guide comes in fulfilment of the objectives of “Gender Balance in Civil Service” project as a part of “Empowering Women in the Civil Service and Strengthening Their Leadership Role” initiative. The Guide is supported by the flagship partnership between HRSD and UNDP. As an introductory to the Guide, the legislative frameworks regulating such work have been considered, including the Implementing Regulations for Human Resources in the Civil Service, to determine the gaps and come up with recommendations to stay in line with the ambitions that realize balance. The Guide is further based on the audit results and outputs generated by HRSD from a gender perspective, which aimed to monitor the extent to which balance was realized in internal policies, procedures and practices. Further, the Guide is inspired by many international best practices on HR procedures concerned with gender balance.

The Guide specifically aims to enable HR departments to plan and make decisions in so far as to consider the impact of policies and procedures on achieving gender balance, and to identify the necessary steps to achieve such balance by:

- Identifying and analyzing methodical barriers to balance and equal opportunity.
- Determining the objectives of balance, strategic approaches, and ways to mainstream gender balance in HR procedures and practices.
- Developing a plan to achieve balance, including identifying key outcomes, clarifying roles, responsibilities, timelines for completion, as well as necessary resources.
- Delivering an action plan, which should include a plan for training and capacity development, together with a plan for communication and partnerships.
- Designing a monitoring and evaluation framework, in addition to success criteria.

The Guide contains a checklist for balance assessment, together with recommendations and examples of balancing procedure in practice. The Guide comprises the following parts:

**Part I:** Definition of gender balance, which clarifies the concept and practical steps to realize such balance.

**Part II:** Practical steps on how to develop HR procedures and practices to achieve gender balance.

**Part II:** Concepts and mechanisms of integrating “gender” to achieve gender balance.

The key element in achieving gender balance is HR departments, due to their critical role as the backbone of any institution. Effective HR department often focuses on improving service delivery, efficiency, and promoting governance, accountability, and public ethics. However, one of the areas that has not been properly considered is gender-sensitive HR department that seeks to achieve gender balance. Therefore, balanced HR practices become essential, as the extent to which female and male employees are engaged and motivated, and the way they are managed daily, will make a difference in the ability to achieve fundamental and long-term changes in all other areas. The role of HR departments has been shifted from the traditional “recruitment” to a deeper role, focusing on another aspect e.g. enhancing employee and employee engagement and the most critical function – dealing with and managing relations of male and female employees to ensure equal opportunities to all. In other words, HR departments need to realize a greater outcome on investment in employees at their institutions.

### **Practical Steps to Realize Gender Balance Commitment**

In order to begin to overcome constraints and take necessary procedures to achieve balance at the strategic level (objectives, policies, procedures, practices), the following steps must be taken to help formulate an action plan to realize balance:

First step:	Analyze supporting/deterrent commitments and policies to achieve balance.
Second step:	Analyze senior management roles and orientations towards balance.
Third step:	Analyze recruitment policies and practices.
Fourth step:	Analyze a balance audit in employment data.
Fifth step:	Analyze wage.
Sixth step:	Analyze outreach materials.
Seventh step:	Prepare a report on results of analysis.
Eighth step:	Develop an action plan to realize balance.
Ninth step:	Disseminate and implement the action plan.

Tenth step:	Follow-up and evaluate the action plan.
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- **First Step: Analyze supporting/deterrent commitments and policies to achieve balance**

- A. **Conducting an institutional self-assessment of the extent to which balance has been achieved:**

A plan to achieve balance for HR Department cannot be developed without an analysis of current realities, existing advantages and gaps as a basis for the change action plan. One of the most effective ways to achieve the same is to audit the extent to which the workplace is balanced. Given the importance of commitments and policies to achieve balance, HR department must begin analyzing the same in addition to analyzing procedures, including accountability roles for achieving balance. The auditing can be classified in terms of purposes as an assessment study, as it seeks to audit and assess the reality of integrating gender balance into the labor market, from the prospective of audit sample categories. Besides, such audit can also be considered as a research for development and modernization purposes, since it seeks to develop the reality of integrating gender balance in the labor market in its various institutions, and to develop a set of appropriate recommendations in the light of feedback results. As for method of conducting the audit, it is a descriptive analytical survey that aims to identify the reality and impact of integrating gender balance in HRSD.

- B. **Role of HR Department in the Auditing Process:** HR department is not required to be "experts in the auditing process" of the extent to which gender is incorporated into policies, procedures and practices. Data is usually collected from multiple sources, including qualitative data through interviews, focus groups and document reviews. In addition, the audit process is not a statistical assessment tool, but rather includes a number of quantitative measures that act as the core data. HR Department is not also required to conduct the audit process itself, and usually such process is conducted by experts/female experts. Moreover, HR department is required to participate in assessment in terms of providing documentation, information and knowledge expertise, in addition to understanding gender concepts and discrimination, and then fulfilling recommendations for policy formulation and modification of procedures and practices. There is a need to form a committee to achieve balance that is responsible to senior management and to successfully lead and provide audit as well as to provide the necessary control to realize balance. The formation of the committee must include a broad representation of people of both genders who will be charged with overseeing and managing the balance because they have direct and different experiences of the organizational effects of policies and practices.

- **Second Step: Analyze senior management roles and orientations towards balance**

- A. **Analyzing senior management orientations to realize balance:** The decision of senior management is a necessary precondition if change efforts are to be circulated throughout HRSD and have a lasting impact. Therefore, a key step in the balancing process is for the senior management to adopt a comprehensive and long-term decision to achieve balance. By requesting the results of balance audit periodically, senior management makes clear that its decision must be implemented and lead to concrete actions. HRSD does not often have proactive strategies to recruit and promote women to senior management, leadership, decision-making positions and equal opportunities at all levels. HR Team should examine the commitment of senior management to gender balance and the extent to which this is included in the planning process and design and implementation of policies and procedures, which underscores the importance of finding common ground of knowledge with senior management. Besides, assigning a leader with the responsibility for issues of balance can help ensure that these issues remain on the agenda. This step analyzes leadership roles to provide an accurate picture of gender balance at all levels of management, including senior management. The analysis of leadership roles must also be included within the different committees.

- B. **How HR Department deals to request support from senior management to achieve balance:**

The approach of senior management in mainstreaming gender balance issues and setting priorities may vary across ministries and institutions of public sector. There are different forms of senior management's possible orientations and its commitment to balance. To realize the balance, HR managers need to know collaboration methods and steps that can be taken to successfully influence

views and commitments of HRSD leadership and key influencers to support the balance. Furthermore, there are also possible ways for HR departments to influence senior management orientations such as seizing opportunities to adapt to national-level developments on gender balance or benefiting from international practices and UN balance-supporting organizations.

- C. **Seize opportunities to adapt to national-level developments on gender balance:** Measures to promote greater gender balance in public sector jobs are often implemented in the context of complementary developments nationally. Such measures may be, for example, national initiatives or developments in higher education or private sector employment that may be complementary to gender balance objectives, such as quality enhancements, etc. While gender balance is a goal in itself, HR may find that it is very useful to seize opportunities provided by these developments for further gender balance goals, especially if there is no enough support from senior management.
- D. **Benefiting from international practices and UN balance-supporting organizations:** In some national contexts, key influencers such as international organizations prompt the agenda for greater gender balance in the labor market, which is reinforced by internationally recognized agreements and conventions such as those of the International Labor Organization. Besides, collaboration can be achieved through engagement with other players with common goals, for example, enabling HR departments to advance the agenda of change internally by engaging with external drivers. In addition, there is a need to forward momentum for change as far as possible in a strategic way that is in line with the efforts of international organizations, for example, in cooperation with UN agencies, which are recognized and valued by government authorities. Therefore, the motivation is not just a "something new for our employees" but is recognized worldwide. Collaboration being created through this type of engagement can enhance the work and impact of HR departments by placing them at the heart of strategic planning within HRSD.

- **Third Step: Analyze recruitment policies and practices**

After identifying policy challenges and opportunities and if there is support from senior management to achieve balance in the first and second steps, we should analyze whether recruitment procedures and practices are an impediment to women's leadership or presence in all sectors. For example, although the public sector is a major female employer, women participation in decision-making positions, i.e. in senior managements, is low, albeit somewhat improved over the past years. This step includes an inventory of all procedures that can influence acquisition, guidance, recruitment, retention, promotion, complaint resolution and termination of employment services of employees and female employees. This step also includes harassment and discrimination policies and any documents that may be linked to balance, in addition to an analysis of the impact of workplace practices on the achievement of balance.

- **Fourth Step: Analyze a balance audit in employment data:**

It is important to verify the employment data to realize the extent to which gender balance is achieved. This step represents data analysis to identify the existing gaps and determine how social roles and stereotypes affect recruitment and promotion practices as well as implications of applying policies and procedures in addition to concluding recommendations to bridge such gaps that assist in decision-making process and formulation of a strategy to achieve balance (for example, who provides the service, who is the beneficiary, who lacks to opportunities, how the budget is allocated and data covering other factors such as age, marital status, disability or other characteristics). Some areas of analysis include: data-related recruitment, appointment and promotion; Senior management representation data by gender; Labour force statistics to identify places of underrepresentation on the basis of gender in different sectors, categories and grades; Labour force statistics to determine job retention on the basis of gender; Interview data with job applicants to determine who is applying and the success rate by gender; Data of participants in activities, training and development courses.

- **Fifth Step: Analyze wage:** HR departments shall aim to ensure that individuals, women and men, are enjoying balanced rights as well as the same wages for the same nature of work performed in the

same work category regarding work of equal value. Male and female employees who occupy the same site shall have the same benefits. Besides, the gap between both genders' wages is due to many factors, including occupational segregation, bias against working mothers, and direct discrimination in wages. In addition, discrimination, disability, access to education and age are all deemed as factors contributing to a gap in wages, and different groups of women therefore face very different gaps in wages.

- **Sixth Step: Analyze outreach materials:** HR departments shall use outreach materials for a variety of purposes including employment advertisements. Methods can range from Internet and television advertisements to billboards and radio. In order to determine the effectiveness of the awareness messages files, their language and images they contain shall be analyzed. For example, negative stereotypes enhance the message that HR departments do not welcome women (see employment advertisements section). This also means fair portrayal of both genders in the news, use of neutral and gender non-related language. It is necessary to promote gender balance, both within the work environment and with respect to women representation. HR departments must initiate discussion and highlight the need to strike a balance to better inform society and overcome stereotypes.
- **Seventh Step: Prepare a report on results of analysis:** In this step, the collected data, both qualitative and quantitative, shall be summarized in a report that identifies barriers and opportunities for creating a gender-balanced workforce at all levels of HRSD. These recommendations must include future accountability roles, policies, remuneration harmonization, and data collection protocol. This report will form the basis of the Gender Balance Action Plan.
- **Eighth Step: Develop an action plan to realize balance:** To realize gender balance, HR departments shall formulate a vision based on the audit findings for the extent to which gender balance has been achieved, in addition to developing a policy to achieve balance together with a detailed action plan with short, medium and long-term goals.
- **Ninth Step: Disseminate and implement the action plan:** After developing an action plan, implementation mechanisms shall be established and developed in consultation with representatives of male and female employees at various levels.
- **Tenth Step: Follow-up and evaluate the action plan:** After implementing the action plan, it is important to review and evaluate progress regularly. There is also a need for periodic follow-up, which helps direct the necessary adjustments, and enhances accountability for results and achievements. In addition, surveys on work environment and other mechanisms of feedback can be useful by providing information on the level of progress towards balance achievement and regular evaluations will help determine the degree of achievement by realizing goals.

### **Conclusion:**

Several studies have indicated the gap that still exists between policies and practices. Despite the adoption of many policies and laws supporting the realization of balance; however, there is still a lack of balance in results of balance achievement throughout sectors, levels and countries. This has an accumulated effect to professions, since more women are discharged along career sub paths and in the main transitional phases, so that women shall remain over-represented in entry-level jobs, and under-represented in senior positions, and are more likely to be members of a project team but not among the project main team leaders, apply for promotion less than men, as well as to be underrepresented in decision-making roles at all levels of institutions.

Strategies for addressing gender imbalances in jobs generally tend to adopt one or more of the three main approaches:

- Ensure compliance with legal commitments that prevent direct discrimination instead of including positive obligations to achieve gender balance and address unconscious or indirect discrimination.
- Take measures to promote career advancement for women leaders;
- Develop initiatives at structural levels of institutions through temporary positive discrimination or quotas to bridge the gap between both genders.

In this context, the Guide sought to suggest innovative, locally appropriate and sustainable strategies/mechanisms for integrating structural and cultural change in the public sector to better support



gender balance and equal opportunities in career advancement for men and women. More specifically, in the field of career transitions, the Guide sought to: positively promote selection processes related to gender balance in employment, promotion, advancement and support for professionals in the labor market; development of procedures and practices that enhance presence of women in leadership and senior positions in the labor market. Measures, actions and interventions can contribute to addressing gender imbalance in labor market jobs. Moreover, monitoring gender imbalance is a key component of any strategy in this area. For example, systematic monitoring of applicants, interviewees, appointments and promotions is the first step in implementing policies that support balancing. It is required to work based on the data being collected, monitored and analyzed to create equal opportunities in order to prevent faltering of equal opportunities policies, in addition to identifying gaps and taking necessary measures to remedy imbalances, including, for example, promoting fairness culture to avoid the prevailing culture in which men and women are judged according to different standards and are rewarded differently for the same accomplishments.

## Development of Human Resources Procedures and Practices to Achieve Gender Balance

The Guide shall cover the following aspects:

- 1. Enabling Environment to achieve balance – Level of Procedures and Practices**
  - a. Steps to be adopted to create a possible environment for balance achievement
- 2. Job description and job advertisement**
  - a. Steps to be adopted to start the selection process by the manager who request for the job circular.
  - b. Steps to be adopted to formulate job description, selection criteria and job advertisement.
  - c. Steps to be adopted to eliminate discrimination in job descriptions.
  - d. Steps to be adopted to verify the pronouns used in the job description.
  - e. Steps to be adopted to avoid using linguistic gender bias in job descriptions.
  - f. Steps to be adopted when publishing request for employment.
- 3. Managing Recruitment and Job Interviews for Balance**
  - a. Steps to be adopted to form an appointment committee.
  - b. Steps to be adopted to prepare a shortlist of the most qualified candidates.
  - c. Steps to be adopted to interview job candidates by the committee.
  - d. Steps to be adopted to prepare the evaluation document of applicants most qualified for the position by the committee.
  - e. Steps to be adopted to submit the contract proposal to the successful male or female candidate, which is then negotiated, and accordingly the job offer is accepted or rejected.
- 4. Managing promotion and career progression to achieve balance**
  - a. Steps to be adopted at the level of the enabling environment.
  - b. Steps to be adopted at the institutional level.
  - c. Steps to be adopted at the individual level.
- 5. Managing training and development to achieve balance**
  - a. HR department's role in integrating gender balance in training and development.
  - b. Steps to be adopted at the level of the enabling environment.
  - c. Steps to be adopted at the institutional level.
  - d. Steps to be adopted at the individual level.
- 6. Sexual harassment in the workplace**
  - a. Executive Summary.
  - b. Definition of sexual harassment.
  - c. Types of sexual harassment.
  - d. Why do HR departments need to confront sexual harassment?
  - e. Means of harassment investigation.
  - f. Procedures for handling harassment cases.  
Steps to be taken to address harassment cases.

- g. Informal reporting procedures.  
Steps to be taken in the informal reporting procedures.
- h. Formal reporting procedures.  
Steps to be followed in the formal reporting procedures.
- i. Disciplinary measures.  
Steps to be adopted in disciplinary measures.
- j. Confidentiality of the harassment case management process.  
Steps to be followed to ensure confidentiality of harassment cases management.
- k. Prevention of harassment.  
Steps to be adopted to prevent harassment.

**7. Performance management to achieve balance**

- a. Steps to be adopted in performance appraisal management methodology.
- b. Steps to be adopted to enhance awareness and overcome implicit discrimination in performance appraisal and the role of incentives to achieve balance.
- c. Steps to be adopted in development and training to evaluate performance that takes into account achieving balance.
- d. Steps to be adopted to create a positive work culture to improve performance.

**8. Incentive management to achieve balance**

- a. The role of incentives to promote balance.
- b. Types of incentives.
- c. Designing of rewards and incentives program.
- d. Steps to be adopted in managing incentives to achieve balance.

**9. Flexible working procedures**

- a. Advantages of flexible work in achieving balance.
- b. Steps to be taken in flexible work procedures to achieve balance.

**10. Analyzing data for the purposes of follow-up and evaluating how far HR Department realized gender balance**

- a. Steps to be adopted within the follow-up and evaluation of how far gender balance is realized.