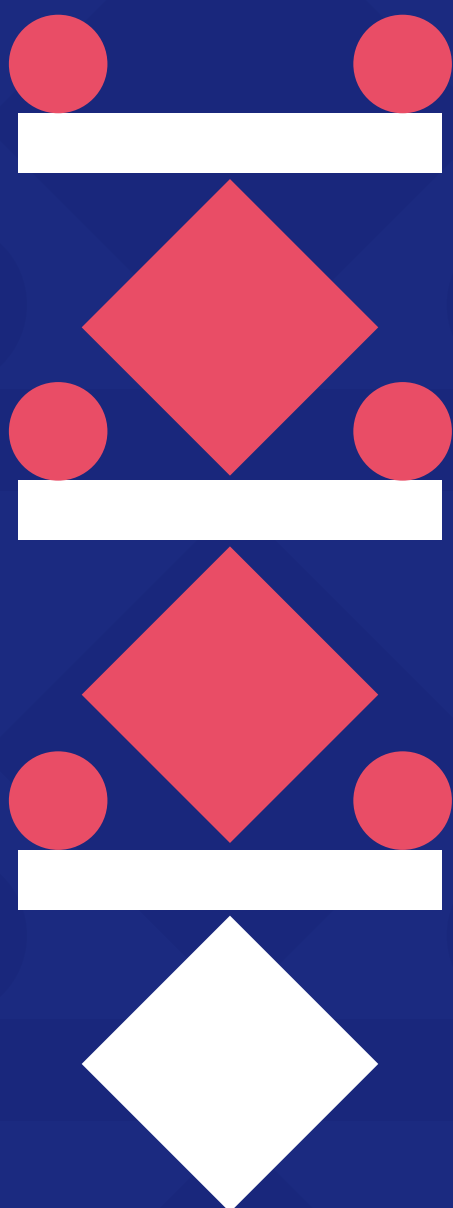




GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

2026 / 2029

Foreword

Development is defined by what we build. We cannot build lasting prosperity when half the population faces systemic barriers to opportunity, leadership, and decision-making. Investing in gender equality is one of the smartest investments a country can make - strengthening economies, institutions, and societies alike. This is why gender equality is central to the mission of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Today, that commitment is more urgent than ever. Conflict, climate change, economic uncertainty and rapid technological change are reshaping our world. Left unchecked, these forces will deepen inequalities. But with the right choices, they can also become an opportunity to build more resilient, more inclusive societies.

UNDP's 2026-2029 Gender Equality Strategy is about making those choices. Our focus is highly practical: expanding women's leadership, setting the conditions to create jobs and livelihoods, strengthening inclusive institutions, and ensuring that digital transformation and climate action work for everyone. And this commitment must extend to everyone pushed to the margins by gender discrimination, including LGBTIQ+ people. Our ambition is straightforward: turn global commitments into measurable results. More women leading. Stronger institutions delivering. Economies that work for everyone.

Lasting change is built together. It depends on partnerships – with governments, with women's movements, with men and boys working as allies, with our partners in the UN family, and

with everyone willing to speak up for equality and rights. But partnerships are measured by what they achieve. Development is measured by whether people can build better lives. Whether they can shape their own future. That is the standard we set for ourselves. Because if we want to build what lasts, gender equality cannot be an afterthought. It must shape every investment. Every partnership. And every decision we make.



Alexander De Croo,
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Executive Summary

This Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2029 is being launched at a time of profound global change. Democracies are under strain, inequalities are widening, and technological and economic transformations are reconfiguring societies faster than institutions can adapt. Across many countries, support for gender equality can no longer be taken for granted. This strategy responds to reflections around two key concerns. First, how can gender equality remain a driver of **progress in an increasingly resistant world?** Second, **what can UNDP best do in response?**

The answer begins with a recognition that gender equality is not only a matter of rights, but also a matter of how societies make decisions, distribute resources, and exercise power. This strategy describes the future direction of UNDP work on gender equality, complementing the UNDP Strategic Plan 2026-2029, which identifies gender equality as a central accelerator of human development. The challenge for the next four years will be to help countries confront the structural barriers that keep power unequally concentrated. In our view, progress depends not only on expanding opportunities, but also on strengthening agency. Women, and all those facing intersecting forms of discrimination, need not only opportunities, but the power, voice, and influence to make meaningful choices about their lives.

To translate this vision into action, **this Strategy moves beyond fragmented, compliance-driven mainstreaming toward deliberate, high-impact choices**, building on the lessons of the previous Strategy and consultations with more than 3,400 stakeholders worldwide. It establishes a clear framework for where UNDP will

concentrate its efforts and add value. UNDP will support governments to place gender equality **at the center of big development choices they make – in national plans, public institutions, budgets, climate commitments, crisis recovery, and governance systems including for digital transformation.**

Our focus is on transforming the foundational structures of society - from rethinking how care is organized and how public budgets are allocated, to reimagining how economies create wealth, and ensuring that crisis recovery, climate action, and digital transitions are designed for all from day one. We aim to fix the systems, not just the symptoms. UNDP acknowledges that **this ambition cannot be achieved in isolation and relies heavily on collaborative partnerships, using our country presence and the trust of our partners.**

This strategy also reflects a simple conviction: our internal way of work defines our external impact. UNDP's credibility and effectiveness on gender equality depend not only on what we support in countries, but also on how we work as an organization. This strategy proposes concrete actions for institutional transformation by strengthening leadership, accountability, resources, representation, and inclusion, drawing on the experience of the UNDP Gender Equality Seal. Meaningfully integrating gender equality is built through everyday decisions and behaviours. UNDP will succeed only if every person is respected, valued, feels safe and empowered, and is able to contribute fully.

1.

Global Context

The UNDP Strategic Plan 2026–2029 makes clear that we are living through times of extraordinary turbulence, marked by overlapping crises, conflict and disruption. This tests resilience and the capacity to adapt. With multilateralism and investments in global public goods facing intense scepticism and doubt, this Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2029 upholds a central truth: equal rights are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace—not for some people or societies, but for everyone.

The UNDP Executive Board by consensus recently approved the Strategic Plan which refers to gender equality as an accelerator of development. United Nations Member States have defined and agreed on the path to achieve gender equality. It includes commitments in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which frames gender equality and the

empowerment of women as mutually reinforcing objectives, as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security. Gender equality is a goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which states that all goals and targets depend on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

In line with these normative frameworks, this Strategy views gender equality and the empowerment of women as central and inseparable objectives. It seeks to advance gender equality as a whole-of-society priority, one benefiting people at large. It also maintains a deliberate focus on women's empowerment, recognizing that structural barriers and intersecting forms of discrimination require affirmative action to rectify power imbalances.



We are convinced that advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women, fundamental prerequisites for development and peace, is among the most important contributions UNDP can make.

For decades, feminist movements and leading thinkers have argued that inclusive and sustainable development requires rethinking macroeconomic policies, power dynamics and broader structural systems. Building on this perspective, the Strategy guides action on two fronts, combining longer-term efforts to reduce structural barriers with incremental changes that expand opportunities for individuals and communities.

Data makes it clear that a better path is still possible. Shifting resources and policy choices to achieve gender equality accelerates gains for economies, governance, the environment and peace. This multiplier effect appears across the UNDP Strategic Plan. For example, under the prosperity pillar, investing in men as caregivers can help balance unpaid care responsibilities and is associated with higher women's employment.¹ Under governance, women's representation corresponds to lower corruption and stronger institutional performance. For the planet, gender-equitable participation strengthens climate and biodiversity outcomes.²

Pursuit of these gains now unfolds in a difficult global environment. The global economy has entered a phase of constant crisis management and shrinking fiscal space is reshaping what is politically and financially possible. If current

trends continue, the world in 2030 will have 351 million women and girls still living in extreme poverty,³ while unequal care responsibilities keep 708 million women and 40 million men out of the labour force.⁴ Gender inequality and negative social norms also take a toll on men by compelling risky behaviours that result in violence, poor health and lower life expectancy for men. Moreover, boys are increasingly at greater risk of repeating grades and failing to complete their education. In crisis settings, the 2025 United Nations Secretary-General's Report on Women, Peace and Security warns that conflict-related sexual violence increased by 87 per cent between 2022 and 2024.⁵

UNDP recognizes that realizing gender equality remains a fundamental question of rebalancing power. In 2026, men held 72.5 per cent of seats across all national legislative chambers, compared to 27.5 per cent held by women.⁶ In 2024, a quarter of governments worldwide reported backlash against gender equality and women's rights alongside a growing distrust in governments, sense of unfairness, and deterioration in the quality of democracies.⁷ Human rights violations linked to sexual orientation and gender identity continue to threaten people's inclusion and lives, with lack of personal safety and protection from violence as core barriers to achieving equal rights.⁸

Rapid digital transitions create opportunities; yet, rapid digitalization and uptake of artificial intelligence are amplifying biases and exposing more women to online misogyny and technology-facilitated violence. Gender-based

1 See https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/paid-leave-for-fathers_07442bed-en.html.

2 See <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>.

3 United Nations Organization for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) (2024).

4 See https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/GEDI-STAT%20brief_formatted_28.10.24_final.pdf.

5 See <https://docs.un.org/en/S/2025/556>.

6 UN Women and UN DESA (2024), based on inputs from 159 governments.

7 Ibid.

8 See <https://www.undp.org/publications/2024-lgbti-inclusion-index-report-pilot-implementation>.

violence remains pervasive: 12.5 per cent of women aged 15–49 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner.⁹

This Strategy recognizes that advancing gender equality depends on a coherent and impact-focused multilateral response. The UNDP contribution has always been built together with governments, United Nations partners, civil society and communities. Over the past 60 years, UNDP has earned credibility and trust by realizing development results in 170 countries and territories. This reach gives UNDP the responsibility of connecting actors, scaling shared priorities and implementation, and delivering tangible results for people.

⁹ UN Women and UN DESA (2024).

2.

**Learning and
leaning forward**

The 2026-2029 UNDP Gender Equality Strategy builds on lessons of the previous Strategy. It reflects insights from 95 assessments and evaluations, as well as comprehensive consultations with over 3,400 people.

Important lessons inform the Strategy:

- **Consciously design programmes to shift power dynamics.** UNDP stands out for its systems approach and multidisciplinary work. Evaluations, however, show it often responds to symptoms rather than the roots of disparities. Consciously acting on how power relations shape institutions and controlling resources to generate stronger contributions can help achieve gender equality and other development goals.
- **Strengthen action to leave no one behind.** Although the Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025 rightly elevated the agenda to leave no one behind, evaluations show UNDP habitually treats women as a single, homogeneous group, or folds them into broad categories of “vulnerable populations.” This masks specific forms of exclusion where gender intersects with poverty, disability, age, ethnicity, race, migration status, sexual orientation or location. UNDP will labour to systematically identify who faces the highest risks of experiencing lost rights and limited services.
- **Intensify specialization.** Shifting underlying systems and power structures requires visioning across sociopolitical contexts and understanding deep connections between gender equality and other dimensions of development. Initiatives, such as the Global Learning Lab on Inclusive Economies, have demonstrated how focused investments in UNDP expertise strengthen policy support and improve the quality of results. A broader

pool of first-class experts will help make the case and deliver high-quality advice.

- **Integrated programming scales up impact, but should not happen everywhere.** Attempts to advance gender equality on all fronts pose risks that include stretched capacities, diluted resources, and the likelihood of superficial engagement or declining relevance. The past four years have shown the value of moving beyond superficial gender mainstreaming to make clear-eyed strategic choices towards investments that yield the greatest gains.
- **Regular (core) resources are the backbone of successful work on gender equality.** Sharp declines in these resources limit the ability to remain flexible and pursue integrated solutions and evaluations show the lasting value of strategically investing regular resources. Regional Bureaux, for instance, invested 15 per cent of TRAC 2 resources in country offices as seed funding. This helped generate demand, demonstrate proof of concept, and attract investment. Securing sustainable regular resources must remain a priority for the implementation of this Strategy.

3.

Partnerships for progress

No country or institution will realize gender equality and the empowerment of women in isolation. Only an ecosystem approach to partnerships can shift systems to equitably distribute power. UNDP partnerships uphold principles of equality and mutual benefit, as well as prioritize collaborative leadership, diverse sources of knowledge, and creative and analytically sound collaboration.

Renewal and reform in the United Nations system. UNDP operates in line with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development, offering its expertise, networks and worldwide presence to realize collective United Nations results. All priorities in this Strategy are based on UNDP comparative advantages and complement those of the United Nations system. With a call to action that is more urgent than ever, UNDP is committed to building a stronger United Nations

where reform and renewal make lasting gains in the lives of people, everywhere.

At the country level, UNDP will continue, under the leadership of Resident Coordinators and UN Women, to support the integration of gender equality and the empowerment of women in all common country analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. With UN Women, UNDP will advocate expanded use of the Gender Equality Scorecard of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, including more ambitious requirements to apply the Gender Equality Marker. As the largest participant of United Nations joint programmes, UNDP will continue delivering more far-reaching gains. It will continue collaborating globally through the System-wide Action Plan Network and Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality.



UN Women will remain the main partner of UNDP especially on legal and policy reforms, women's access to justice, and women's political participation and economic empowerment. This collaboration builds on successful flagship initiatives, including the \$22 million Spotlight Initiative African Regional Programme on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls. Through partnerships with specialized agencies, UNDP will add value by linking its focus on systems and advance the larger scaling of initiatives. Examples include working with UNFPA on gender-based violence and harmful practices across the humanitarian-peace-development nexus, the International Labour Organization (ILO) on jobs, livelihoods and social protection, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on climate change and biodiversity, and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation on knowledge exchange. Partnerships with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank will broker fiscal policy reforms. Stronger collaboration with regional organizations, such as the African Union, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and United Nations regional economic and social commissions, will encompass responses to growing cross-border challenges. UNDP will pursue joint programmes with UN Women, UNFPA and the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), and also work with UNV to reinforce inclusive community-based implementation of this Strategy through the deployment of volunteers across contexts.

Civil society partnerships built on trust. UNDP will redefine its civil society relationships, moving away from transactional models. This involves building a commitment to transparency and responsive interaction from local communities to the global stage. Collaboration with feminist, women's and community organizations will recast diverse expertise into opportunities that influence decisions and set development

agendas. UNDP will expand platforms for joint analysis, thought leadership and co-designed solutions, particularly in governance, environmental sustainability, economic justice and digital rights. It will invest in the agency and effectiveness of women's movements and local women's organizations, prioritizing their access to resources, presence in feminist forums and support to cross-movement coalitions. Moreover, UNDP will also ensure alignment with the upcoming United Nations system-wide funding framework for women's organizations and civil society organizations.

Mobilizing the private sector. The private sector plays a decisive role in development through investment, availability and quality of employment, technological innovation or the green transition. UNDP will work with governments to strengthen the rules, incentives and institutions that guide markets towards public goals, including better jobs, more equitable access to economic opportunities for women and men. UNDP will partner with businesses, unions, civil society and public institutions to expand women's access to finance, decent work, digital opportunities and leadership, and promote private sector practices and investments that advance gender equality.

Broadening collaboration. UNDP will tap into a spectrum of partners who can trigger shifts in norms and behaviours across societies, including in the digital world to support gender equality and the empowerment of women. It will collaborate with universities on data collection, analysis and research to develop high-impact communications and advocacy that target decision-makers. Partnerships with faith-based organizations and social media influencers will help reach diverse constituencies and develop persuasive arguments around the shared economic and social benefits of equality.

4.

Strategic objectives

Human development and why it matters

The UNDP Gender Equality Strategy is grounded in a simple proposition: human development advances when people have both capabilities and agency. Capabilities are the opportunities that people can access, such as services, skills, income and infrastructure. Agency is the power to act on those opportunities by making choices, influencing decisions and controlling resources. Evidence shows that progress in human development has not automatically translated into empowerment for women, as structural barriers continue to limit their capabilities and agency, even if education and health outcomes improve. This Strategy recognizes that gender inequality is sustained not only by gaps in access or opportunities but by unequal power relations and discriminatory norms, institutions, policy and financing choices, which reproduce exclusion over time. The Strategy, therefore, focuses on priorities that combine actions to remove structural barriers with efforts to reach those who face the greatest constraints. The UNDP Strategic Plan 2026–2029 has four strategic objectives, supported by three accelerators of progress to deliver impact and advance human development (see Figure 1). This Strategy is structured around those objectives and accelerators. It recognizes that gender equality is not just a standalone workstream but an accelerator across portfolios. The below priorities are not exhaustive, but reflect areas where UNDP has the strongest comparative advantage and solutions can be scaled.

Implementation remains grounded in country realities, and national development choices will frame country programmes to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women.

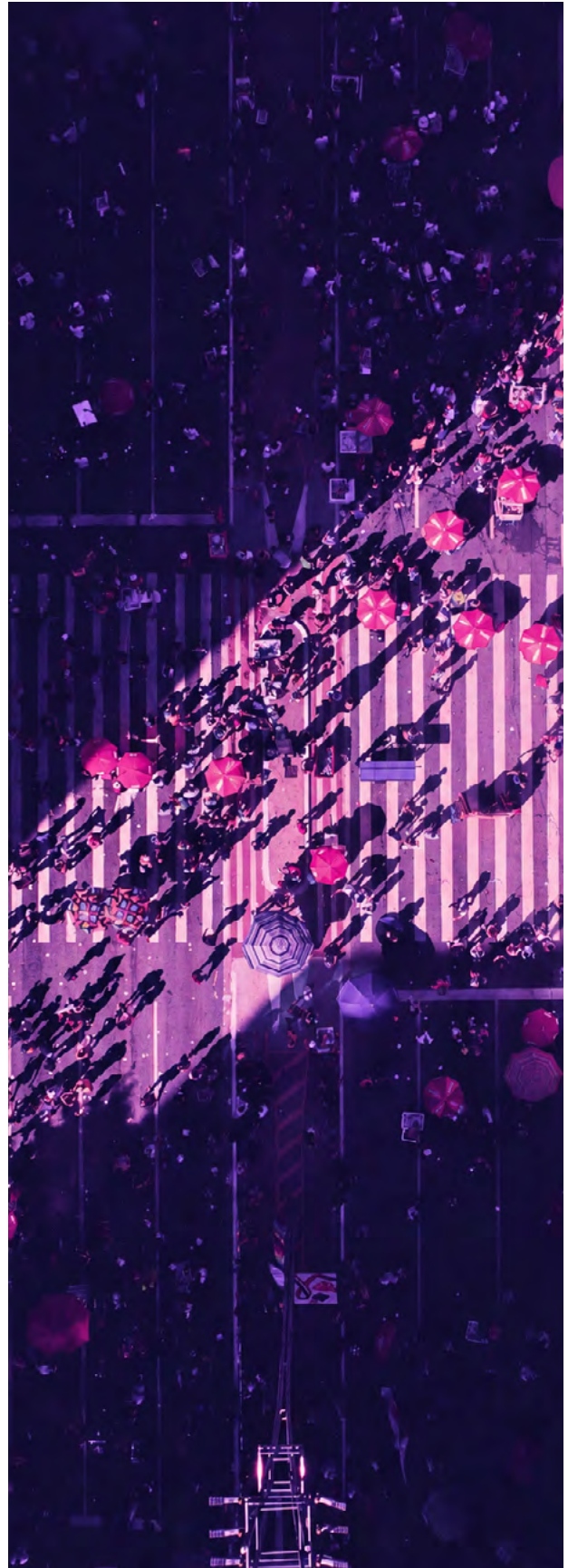
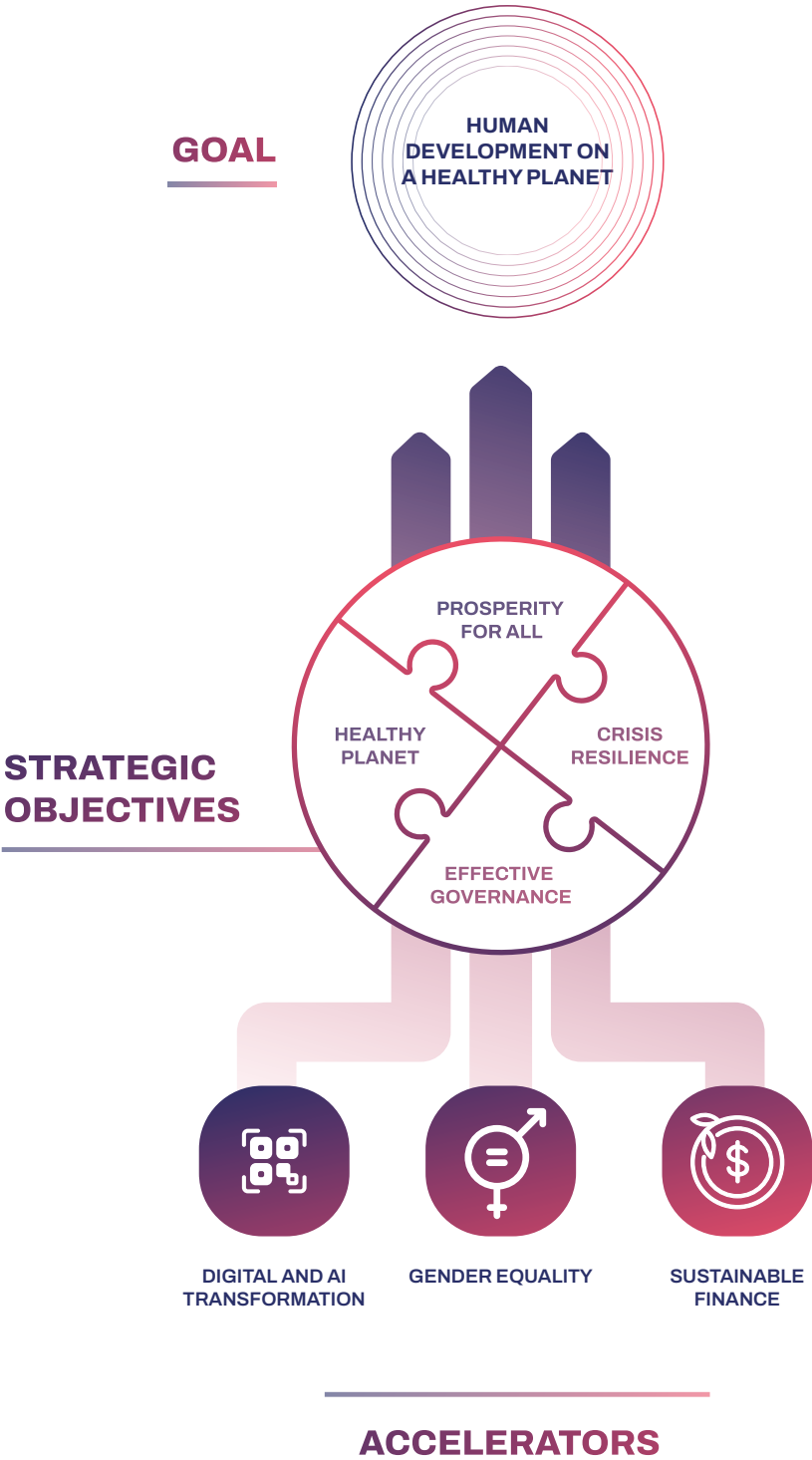


Figure 1. Gender Strategy 2026-2029,
strategic objectives



Prosperity for all

Ending poverty requires a major shift in economic thinking and a reconfiguration of economic power relations amid the rapid technological change that is reshaping work and production. Income and multidimensional poverty remain stubbornly persistent, and disproportionately affect women. UNDP will continue contributing to the economic autonomy of women by helping meet basic needs and expand agency while also helping countries to reduce structural barriers in economies that keep women, men, and excluded groups behind. For example, it will build on existing portfolios and its relationships with finance ministries in 86 countries through existing, integrated national financing frameworks.

Social protection and care services as social and economic infrastructure. Ageing populations and lack of early childcare services are increasing care needs, while rising informality and precarious work are weakening incomes, especially for women. UNDP will support governments to establish and expand gender-responsive social protection systems and community models. It will help countries map care needs and develop integrated care systems that link childcare, eldercare and disability services with social protection, labour and health policies. Efforts to build on what works will encompass expanding local care services and support for caregivers, including community childcare centres, home-based care for older people, and measures such as paid paternity leave that encourage a more equal sharing of care responsibilities. Together, with United Nations partners, UNDP will help integrate these “care components” into economic and social policies.

Discrimination, stigma and violence also limit access to health and social services. UNDP will continue promoting social protection and access to health services for populations where intersecting vulnerabilities such as living with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), being an indigenous person or refugee, being displaced or having migratory status, or those facing other multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Fiscal policies drive prosperity for all. Fiscal policies shape whether economic growth expands opportunities or reinforces inequalities. Through initiatives such as Equanomics, UNDP will strengthen its support to ministries of finance, central banks and public development banks to reform fiscal policies, including on taxation, public expenditure and debt management, so economic systems work better for women and men. Through distributional analyses and other methods that assess who benefits from, and bears the costs of, fiscal policies, UNDP will help to inform policy choices. Additionally, UNDP will draw on existing trade portfolios— including to implement the African Continental Free Trade Agreement—and on financial sector policies to strengthen women’s access to markets and support women-owned enterprises.

Women’s access to finance, jobs, productive assets and essential services. Ending multidimensional poverty and advancing upward mobility depends on access to employment, assets and essential services; yet, many women, especially those facing multiple forms of discrimination, remain excluded from these. UNDP will help to dismantle legal, policy and social barriers limiting women’s access to finance, digital connectivity, land and other productive assets. It will promote

innovative business for informal workers and entrepreneurs, including business incubators and grants with mentoring components. Further support to expand access to health and other essential services will enhance the participation of all people in social and economic life including in future labour markets.

Partnerships that contribute to this strategic objective: UN Women, ILO, UNICEF, the Global Alliance on Care, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), international financial institutions, development banks and private sector partners, women's organizations and feminist economists.



Effective governance

Evidence shows the multiple benefits of gender equality and women's empowerment in governance systems. Building States for equality calls for institutions that uphold justice for all, deliver quality public services and dismantle structural barriers. UNDP will help realize this vision by strengthening public institutions and advancing women's leadership, as well as equal access to justice and the rule of law, leveraging existing support in over 100 countries.

States deliver for all citizens. With the social contract under strain and governments facing increasingly difficult choices about how to allocate limited resources, public institutions are on the front line in delivering services, upholding rights and preserving State legitimacy. UNDP will continue supporting public policies and services that benefit all citizens. It will work with parliamentarians and members of public administrations, including locally, and focus on partners most relevant to advancing economic, justice, digital and environmental agendas. The UNDP Gender Equality Seal Certification for public institutions will bank on current successes to spark the next generation of institutions and policies that break down discriminatory norms and advance gender-responsive public policies. Under the previous Strategy, the Seal strengthened the capacities of more than 100 public institutions.

Advance women's leadership and participation in decision-making. These are foundational pillars of agency and UNDP will concentrate on what it does best: using its global governance portfolio to support women's participation across political systems and institutions, removing legal and financial barriers where possible. UNDP will help countries review discriminatory laws and work with electoral

bodies, political parties and security institutions to make participation in democratic processes safe and inclusive. It will invest in women's coalitions and leadership networks, using e-participation platforms, and help them to remain in decision-making. As the custodian for SDG indicators 16.7.1b and 16.7.1c, UNDP will strengthen data measurement and use of data on women's representation in decision making across governance bodies including judiciary, economic and financial institutions.

Equal access to justice. The UNDP Global Programme on the Rule of Law, Human Rights and Justice for Peace, Security and Development works with countries to keep justice systems functioning, even under extreme pressure. The Gender Justice Platform, a collaboration with UN Women, is operational in over 40 countries, and it will continue to provide technical, financial and policy assistance across the full justice chain, spanning both formal and informal justice systems to expand women's legal protection, access to legal aid, and strengthen justice institutions. UNDP will continue supporting reform across the justice and security architecture, while promoting reforms that consider how trauma, stigma and social fragmentation shape access to institutions and trust in the rule of law.

Partnerships that contribute to this strategic objective include: the Inter-Parliamentary Union, UN Women, United Nations Department of Political Affairs, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and various regional normative bodies, civil society organizations, and values-based coalitions.



Crisis resilience

Crises today are no longer isolated shocks. Yet, resilience cannot be built if large shares of women and other excluded groups are shut-out of decision making processes. Long-term resilience calls for putting decisions in people's hands, and today, no country has fully solved this problem. Half of UNDP expenditure goes to 60 fragile contexts and supports 84 countries on conflict prevention and peace. UNDP will use this broad footprint to ensure women, men and excluded groups fully participate in, and benefit from, durable solutions to crises on equal terms. This requires a developmental approach across conflict prevention, crisis response, economic recovery, and peacebuilding.

Resilient economic recovery that advances gender equality and women's empowerment. Recovery provides a critical opportunity to rebuild economic and governance systems

that promote the equal participation of women and men. With women disproportionately concentrated in informal work in fragile contexts, recovery can help them gain from large-scale employment and infrastructure investments. Through its programmes, UNDP will ensure equal benefit from restoration of livelihoods, basic services and social protection, while using livelihood programmes to reduce the risks of gender-based violence. It will help remove structural obstacles and expand women's access to land, finance, credit, technologies, and other productive resources. Recovery measures will promote restoring and expanding care services, and mental health and psychosocial support given the different pressures and traumas women and men experience during a crisis.

Equal and meaningful participation in peace and recovery. Greater equality is associated with a lower propensity for conflict, between and within states; yet, women only accounted for seven per cent of negotiators, and 14 per cent



of mediators in 2024.¹⁰ UNDP will help ensure mission transitions integrate the priorities of the women, peace and security agenda. Under the leadership of UN Women, UNDP will invest in capacity and coalition building to help women move from informal peace spheres to political ones. It will partner with grassroots leaders and local organizations, fostering networks to influence, design and implement peace and recovery processes, and expanding insider mediator methodology that has proven to help, including for resolving natural resource conflicts.

Advance equality in forced displacement situations. Forcibly displaced populations that include internally displaced persons, refugees, and host and return communities, comprised especially of women and girls, face distinct but connected challenges: the disproportionate loss of income and assets, increased exposure to gender-based violence and exploitation, restricted mobility, legal and documentation barriers, housing and land issues, and greater unpaid care responsibilities amid overstretched services. UNDP will address forced displacement as a development and governance challenge, supporting public systems to respond to risks and structural inequalities. In tandem, UNDP will help strengthen women's access to justice, to their economic security, and leadership in rebuilding their communities.

Partnerships that contribute to this strategic objective: UN Women, UNFPA, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, United Nations Department of Peace Operations, United Nations Development Coordination

Office, United Nations country teams, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Food and Agriculture Organization, UNCDF and the International Organization for Migration.

Healthy planet

Current models of consumption and production place unsustainable pressure on the planet. The resulting harm disproportionately falls on marginalized people-many of whom have contributed least to the crisis. Projections indicate 236 million more women and girls, and an additional 131 million men and boys, will face food insecurity by 2050.¹¹ Since a healthy planet is inseparable from gender equality, the Strategy builds on UNDP climate, nature and energy portfolios, such as the Climate Promise, which benefits 2.2 billion people in 80 countries.

Placing gender equality at the centre of policies and institutions on climate, nature, chemicals and energy. UNDP will support governments to integrate gender equality into implementation architecture that drives environmental transitions. This includes nationally determined contributions, national biodiversity strategies and action plans, and national adaptation plans. UNDP will also help strengthen public institutions so they can better produce and use sex-disaggregated data, coordinate across sectors, and engage women in decision-making roles rather than only as beneficiaries. It involves promoting frameworks that improve women's livelihoods and economic security, and addresses unpaid care, gender-based violence, and health. Based on good practices, UNDP will work with countries to close gaps in land and resource rights, especially for Indigenous women, women from local communities, and women land rights holders. UNDP will advance

¹⁰ See <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/report/united-nations-security-council-women-and-peace-and-security-report-of-the-secretary-general/n2523645-1.pdf>.

¹¹ UN Women and UN DESA (2023).

work through flagship initiatives such as the Climate Promise, Nature Pledge and Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions.

Champion women's leadership and agency. Effective environmental action relies on local knowledge, community cooperation and sustainable management of natural resources. Although women and men play critical roles, women's leadership and contributions remain underrecognized and insufficiently funded. UNDP calls for greater presence and leadership of women in driving environmental solutions and sustainable transitions, including shifts to green and blue economies. It will strengthen support for women environmental defenders and Indigenous women as central actors in community resilience, environmental protection through sustainable livelihoods, and equitable access to green jobs and digital and financial services.

Unlock investment in climate, energy and nature. Global investment in climate action now exceeds \$1.2 trillion annually.¹² If it does not address structural inequalities, the risk of new patterns of exclusion in emerging green economies will be high. UNDP will work with partners, including through BIOFIN, to design and implement investments for gender equality, including strengthening the capacities of women's organizations to access finance and influence investment decisions.

Contributing partners to this strategic objective include UNEP, FAO, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, relevant United Nations Frameworks Conventions and other specialized partners working on energy, and financial institutions.



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¹² See <https://www.climatepolicyinitiative.org/publication/global-landscape-of-climate-finance-2023/>.

Three gender equality accelerators

The gender equality accelerator works across all strategic objectives by addressing underlying structural factors that can either slow down or speed up progress. It focuses on the conditions most critical for accelerating lasting change across all portfolios.

Women's collective mobilization and voice. Women's organizations and movements stand up for rights, shape public debate and help hold institutions accountable; however, many face restrictions on civic space and gaps in protection and resources. Along with UN Women, UNDP will help expand feminist civic space and strengthen the capacities of urban and rural women-led civil society organizations, with a focus on young women. Together with UN Women and UNFPA, UNDP will advocate for laws, regulations and policies that guarantee space for civil society to function effectively, including in crises. All country offices will develop strategies to expand protections for women's movements, rights defenders and community-based organizations.

Sustain and advance gender equality in contested contexts. In line with the United Nations Gender Equality Acceleration Plan, UNDP will conduct regular political economy and risk analyses of regulatory constraints, civic space dynamics and language sensitivities to quickly adapt programmes according to context. UNDP will continue to explore using artificial intelligence and options such as early-warning systems to monitor backlash and backsliding, especially when it pertains to the erosion of public policies. Because technology can amplify

misogyny, and violence, UNDP will increase understanding and investments in strategic communications and the evidence base to counter misinformation and demonstrate development returns.

Change negative social norms. The UNDP Gender Social Norms index revealed approximately half of the global population perceives men to be better political leaders. Discriminatory norms influence choices and opportunities, often reinforcing formal barriers embedded in laws and institutions. UNDP will support shifting negative attitudes such as in relation to care work, women's leadership, asset ownership and digital participation. It will integrate social norms change into policy and programme portfolios by combining behavioural insights, community engagement and innovative practices that have shown notable impact. Applying the Gender Social Norms Index in countries will generate evidence on attitudes and behaviours to inform policy decisions. UNDP will also work with governments to engage men and boys, and collaborate with educators, faith leaders, media and youth networks, to challenge harmful stereotypes.

Preventing and responding to gender-based violence. Today, 87 per cent of countries have domestic violence legislation, but still even the most extreme forms of violence, including femicide, go often unpunished.¹³ UNDP will help governments to develop policy, legal reforms and national programmes, and invest in institutional capacity to prevent violence and ensure access to justice and protection. It will expand its work with men and boys to challenge norms that sustain violence, and will support especially women facing multiple disadvantages such as women living with disabilities or HIV, Indigenous women, migrants or survivors

¹³ UN Women and UN DESA (2024).

of sexual exploitation. Aligned with Human Rights Council resolution 32/2, UNDP will help countries address all forms of violence and discrimination, aiming to reach everyone who experiences them. UNDP will help prevent, and respond to, political and online violence against women, especially human rights defenders, women politicians, journalists and activists. This work will be integrated across programme portfolios such as elections, economic recovery, livelihoods, and climate change. UNDP will closely coordinate with UN Women, UNFPA and civil society organizations.

Better data and analysis for policy evidence.

Data helps governments allocate resources more effectively, prioritize high-impact reforms, and strengthen the credibility and durability of legislative and policy changes, especially in contested environments. UNDP will support national statistical systems, observatories, sector ministries and local governments to strengthen administrative data and generate policy-relevant analyses with UN Women and other United Nations organizations. It will bring a unique toolbox that includes Human Development Report analytics and indices. Practical tools to inform policy trade-offs and budget choices will range from time-use and time-poverty surveys to digital platforms for disaggregated data such as KoboToolbox.

Digitalization and artificial intelligence transformation

Consultations for this Strategy consistently highlighted digital and artificial intelligence transformation as areas where countries expect UNDP to expand support. Both are becoming central to reshaping how power is distributed, economies function and decisions are made. Yet, the digital world remains deeply unequal: in 2025, about 280 million more men than women used the Internet worldwide.¹⁴ UNDP will continue to build support for national digital strategies in 90 countries, accompanying them to lead inclusive futures for all.

National digital and artificial intelligence strategies that deliver for gender equality. UNDP will work with partners to place measurable objectives at the centre of national digital and artificial intelligence strategies to close gender gaps in access to devices, connectivity, digital skills, data, and digital services. Related efforts will support women to meaningfully use and make decisions over digital technology by addressing social norms, institutional barriers and safety risks that constrain the use of digital tools, even with formal access. Drawing on its experience in supporting digital transformation in more than 120 countries, UNDP will expand opportunities for women to access jobs through digital entrepreneurship, e-commerce and technology-enabled value chains.

Strengthen the governance and regulations of digital and artificial intelligence systems. UNDP will help countries improve digital and artificial intelligence system regulation, as well as data

¹⁴ See <https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/facts-figures-2024/>.

governance and transparency, grounding them in human rights and ethical standards. Action will also support legal frameworks that mitigate risks such as algorithmic bias. Since effective digital governance requires broad collaboration, UNDP will assist governments in engaging civil society, women's rights movements, technical experts and the private sector to inform policies, standards and oversight mechanisms. Preventing and responding to technology-facilitated gender-based violence, online harassment and disinformation, will be addressed through stronger protection and accountability mechanisms centred on survivors.

Global partners contributing to this accelerator are UN Women, the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, other United Nations entities, women's rights organizations and digital rights advocates, technology companies, digital platforms, fintech actors, and research institutions and universities.

Sustainable finance

The development-financing gap reflects a misalignment of capital flows with sustainable development priorities. Private financial flows for gender equality are largely untracked, and only 31 countries have robust systems to monitor public allocations for gender equality. Building on efforts to align \$430 billion in public, and \$380 billion in private, financing with sustainable development, UNDP will support governments in translating national policy commitments into coherent financing strategies that channel public and private finance towards gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

Mobilize private finance investments for women's enterprises and inclusive market opportunities. Private capital along with inclusive financial markets and regulatory frameworks are decisive in shaping economic opportunities, but financial governance often fails to account for social and gender disparities. UNDP will work with partners to reshape incentives and regulations so capital flows towards women's enterprises and supports the creation of inclusive financial markets. It will help develop pipelines of bankable projects plus blended finance and risk-sharing mechanisms. Collaboration with the Financial Centres for Sustainability will strengthen financial regulation and oversight, and expand digital financial services.

Strengthen public finance to deliver on gender equality. Public finance remains the primary lever for governments to shape development priorities.

UNDP will support fiscal reforms that eliminate discrimination in taxation, public expenditure and debt management, and translate into tangible improvements in women's lives, from lower incidences of poverty to greater enterprise leadership opportunities and participation in labour markets. A *whole-of-fiscal-system* approach will guide efforts anchored in the integrated national financing frameworks and the Public Finance for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) portfolio, and flagship initiatives such as Equanomics.

Global partners that contribute to this accelerator include ministries of finance, central banks, financial regulators, UN Women, international and private financial institutions, civil society organizations, fintech firms, the Financial Centres for Sustainability, and UNCDF.

5.

Regional perspectives

This Strategy is grounded in broad-based consultations that reflect realities around the world. Gender equality gaps and opportunities vary significantly across countries and regions, as do the policies to address them. In Africa, rapid population growth, urbanization and widespread informality intersect with climate shocks, food insecurity and displacement. In Asia and the Pacific, countries face highly diverse development levels alongside systemic issues associated with ageing, widening care gaps and accelerating digital transformation. The Arab States region continues to navigate conflict, displacement and constrained labour markets while in Latin America and the Caribbean, inequality persists and political polarization and violence are increasing. In Europe and Central Asia, pressures to democratic systems, energy transitions and geopolitical tensions shape reform trajectories.

UNDP regional priorities reflect development needs and organizational comparative strengths. In Africa, priorities include expanding women's access to finance and markets, strengthening women-led enterprises, and integrating gender equality into economic resilience and governance systems. In Asia and the Pacific, UNDP will emphasize care systems, digital inclusion and climate-resilient livelihoods. In the Arab States, UNDP will focus on women's livelihoods, economic enterprises, access to finance and markets, legal reform and access to justice, and raising resilience in contexts affected by conflict and climate change. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP action will accelerate care systems, promote women's decisionmaking, address gender-based violence, and embed gender equality in economic, climate and digital transitions. In Europe and Central Asia, UNDP will expand women's participation in green and digital economies, strengthen social protection systems, and reinforce institutional resilience during economic and geopolitical transitions.



6.

**UNDP stands
out on gender
equality:
Here's why**

UNDP partners consider its role and position on advancing gender equality to be one of its most effective and consequential contributions to development. The differentiated value of UNDP lies in:

- a. Policy and operational support.** UNDP scales what works – it is the implementor – and bridges local, national and international policy processes. Global reach local impact.
- b. An anchor in crisis.** UNDP stays and delivers in crises by connecting actors across the humanitarian-development-peace spectrum on longer-term development that focuses on gender equality from day one.
- c. Makes connections.** UNDP operates across development dimensions with a proficiency for connecting gender equality

to all outcomes in its Strategic Plan and forging deep relationships with national ministries working on social, economic and environmental issues.

- d. Convening power.** UNDP convenes diverse partners and brings them together to realize shared goals and benefits through development results for gender equality.
- e. Trusted listener.** Navigating difficult issues such as backlash, often depends on dialogues and alliances. UNDP has gained the confidence of diverse actors because of its ability to listen, remain impartial, apply agreed international norms and provide requested expertise.



7.

Institutional transformation

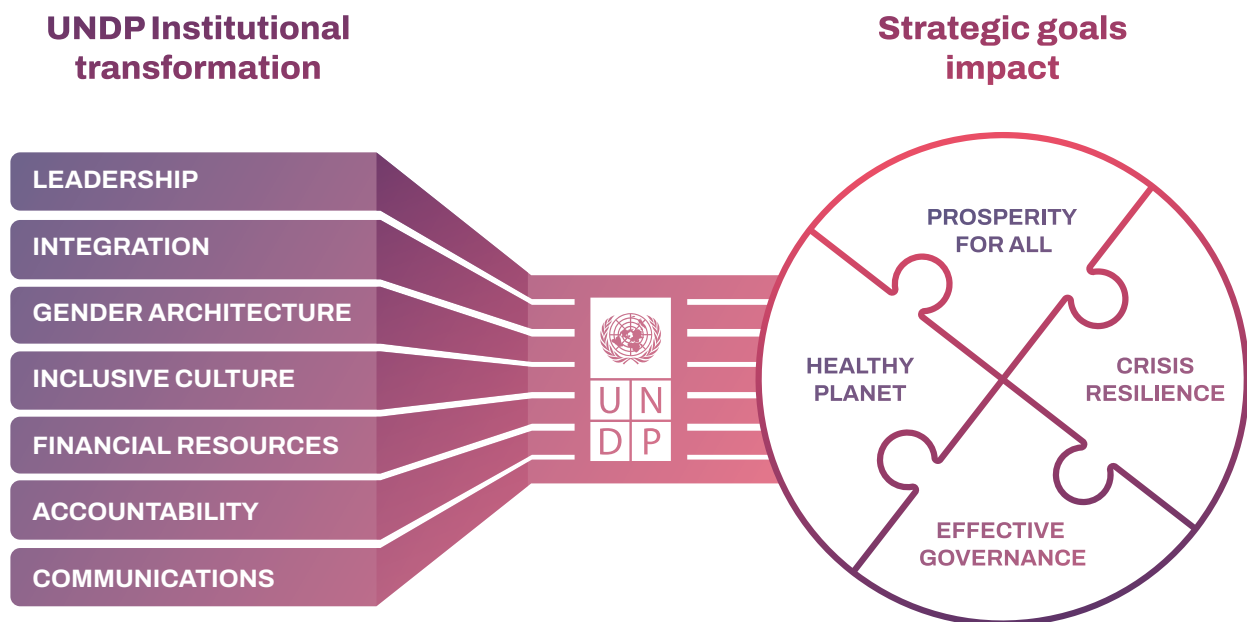
Institutional transformation and consistently advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women, across portfolios, comes from day-to-day decisions about what an organization prioritizes, funds, measures and manages. The goal of transformation is deeply connected to the recognition that external impact and delivery are allied to our internal policies, structures, culture and ways of working.

This section aligns and responds to the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN SWAP 3.0) and Gender Equality Acceleration Plan.

UNDP and its senior leadership remain committed to the full implementation of and annual reporting on both.

UNDP will build on the previous Strategy and invest in several connected building blocks (see Figure 2): leadership, integration, gender architecture and specialization, culture, funding, accountability and communication. The UNDP Gender Equality Seal for country offices will remain the primary global initiative that will operationalize this Strategy, and will continue helping to connect individual and organizational change to long-term development goals.

Figure 2. Institutional transformation and strategic goals, 2026-2029



Leadership: personal responsibility and decision-making

Today more than ever, UNDP will invest in leaders with the skills to make principled decisions, even when they involve difficult trade-offs. Leadership must be equipped to clearly explain how their choices advance gender equality, who may be affected, and model power-sharing in practice.

The Leadership for Gender Equality Certificate for Resident Representatives, implemented during the previous cycle, has proven valuable in opening spaces for self-reflection around the changes that gender equality requires. It ranks as one of the most valued courses at UNDP.

In the following years, UNDP will expand this initiative to Assistant Secretaries-General, Deputy Resident Representatives, and UNDP middle management.

Senior managers will routinely advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment in public speeches, statements, internal communication and advocacy. They will aim for gender parity in meetings and UNDP-hosted events, as per the United Nations Secretary-General's commitment. Where possible, senior managers will continue to meet with women's civil society organizations.

Integration: The core of our work

The new UNDP Strategic Plan doubles its efforts to support human development through a clear and focused set of priorities and integrated results. The primary value of UNDP is its ability to move beyond sector-specific projects to address the intersections of complex global crises, such as linking gender equality with poverty, climate change, and conflicts and peacebuilding.

In this Strategy, integration means prioritizing high-impact reforms and investments across prosperity, governance, planet and crisis portfolios. It requires moving beyond silos and simply including women as participants. To operationalize this, UNDP country programmes and regional and global flagships will select high-impact initiatives that intentionally meet three standards: invest in fixing structural problems, select priorities that solve more than one challenge at a time, and support governments to put gender equality at the centre of national priorities to advance ownership and political buy-in.

Participatory portfolio reviews will support the shift from a "checklist" mentality to systems thinking. The Strategic Innovation Unit and Gender Equality Seal will continue helping country offices and partners to connect and integrate diverse interventions to achieve broader gender equality goals, and optimize the programmatic, human and financial architecture for gender equality. Shared budgets, capacities, and joint workplans will strengthen incentives for integrated action.

Gender architecture and specialization

The right gender architecture aligned to the UN SWAP and GEAP

Integration requires having the right gender architecture in place. Evidence has shown that the optimal gender architecture at UNDP involves standalone gender teams that work alongside sector-specific experts in others. UNDP will help secure access to decision-making to strategically orchestrate work across teams and coordinate efforts to implement this Strategy.

Country offices are encouraged to hire and retain experienced gender specialists, integrate them into management mechanisms, and with full access to decision-making spaces. To inform and influence decisions, the oversight of gender specialists should fall under senior management and their central backstopping functions preserved. In crisis countries, it will be mandatory to recruit at least one full-time gender specialist as per Security Council Resolution 1325.

UNDP has successfully navigated internal restructuring while preserving its gender architecture over time. The global gender team will continue overseeing this Strategy and providing strategic direction. It will be composed of a stand-alone gender team in headquarters and stand-alone gender teams in each regional hub. UNDP will also develop a costing for an optimal architecture. The head of the gender team will participate in senior management meetings and report directly to UNDP senior leadership to meet UN SWAP 3.0 standards.

Each regional director will be responsible for developing a regional gender equality strategy and/or action plan. Resident and Deputy Resident Representatives will establish country-level plans and ensure the full integration of gender equality in country programme documents, backed by adequate funding.

Strategic use of expertise and learning

UNDP should not be an expert on everything. In line with ambitions laid out in the Secretary-General's UN80 Initiative, notably work package number eight on Expertise on Demand, UNDP will use UN expertise more strategically and intentionally to avoid duplication of capacity and competition for resources, particularly with UN Women, while deepening its expertise in the areas where it has a comparative advantage:

- i. UNDP will leverage the expertise of UN Women on policy and normative work from Beijing areas.
- ii. The UNDP Equanomics Global Learning Lab on Inclusive Economies will continue to be the main platform for connecting UNDP country offices and partners with the best external experts, including on green and digital transitions, and sustainable finance.
- iii. In governance, UNDP will consolidate expertise in coordination with UN Women when strengthening women's state and institutional leadership, using global initiatives such as the Electoral Support and Parliamentary Development programmes.
- iv. In areas where capacities vary, such as the planet agenda, UNDP will rely on service-oriented platforms, including the BRIDGE Helpdesk, to provide rapid support to country offices.

- V.** UNDP will advance specializations in frontier areas, such as digital transitions and artificial intelligence, through partnerships with United Nations organizations, leading universities, and others.

UNDP will use artificial intelligence-driven solutions, such as LOLA and SAGE, to strengthen quality assurance and decision-making processes.

An equal and inclusive culture: the internal foundation

UNDP seeks a culture where every person can work with dignity, safety and equal opportunities. It will uphold United Nations non-discrimination standards, in line with ST/SGB/2019/8, including protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, alongside race, sex, disability, age, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion and other statuses. UNDP is also committed to internally implement the United Nations Secretariat Strategy on the

Protection from Violence and Discrimination of LGBTIQ+ Persons.

An equal and inclusive work culture is linked to transformative gender equality outcomes. How teams collaborate, systems support people and enable inclusive dialogue all shape UNDP results. Opening spaces for collective action through the UNDP Gender Equality Seal will continue to help personnel question and shift individual values and beliefs that reinforce discriminatory norms, and reflect on power and privilege.

Aligned with the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan, UNDP will provide an internal gender power analysis framework to help country offices and teams discuss and address bias, stereotypes and power dynamics that influence decisions and workplace culture. The goal is simple: create a more inclusive, fair, and effective organization where everyone feels valued, has a voice, and can contribute fully to our mission.

Mobilizing men for gender equality remains a relevant goal. With a global workforce of over 20,000 staff—53 per cent of whom are men—



UNDP has a responsibility and opportunity to incentivize men to fully engage in achieving gender equality. This applies both to its programmes and workforce development.

Zero tolerance of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse means that UNDP will not allow those behaviours in its workplace or in work with partners and communities. UNDP will continue building a culture of trust and accountability through strengthened reporting mechanisms, safe spaces and institutional infrastructure that supports timely, effective responses. Reinforcing training on the prevention of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse, and providing survivor-centered approaches while fostering an environment where staff feel safe to speak up, is critical to an equitable workplace. This cannot be done without leadership prioritization.

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 for 2022–2025. This requires special focus on conflict and post-conflict contexts. Building on the success of the SPARK Programme and regional mentoring initiatives, UNDP will continue providing targeted support to crisis duty stations to address persistent middle-management bottlenecks. Overall, UNDP will bolster family-friendly policies, flexible arrangements and management accountability for healthier workloads.

Financial resources

The UNDP Strategic Plan explicitly states that funding will remain under pressure. A key risk is that the gender equality architecture is disproportionately dependent on core resources at a time when flexible funding is tightening. To manage this risk, the Strategy proposes a more diversified model while meeting standards set out in UN SWAP 3.0.

The gender marker will remain the main tool to track budgets and expenditures. UNDP will sustain the target of 70 per cent share of overall allocations for advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEN 2 and GEN 3 combined),¹⁵ and will progressively eliminate allocations with no noticeable contribution to gender equality (GEN 0). UNDP Track 3 and Track 2 funding, as well as country offices, will continue to progressively achieve an allocation of 15 per cent of expenditures qualified as GEN 3. All new programmes, projects and proposals for resource mobilization will include a gender analysis and at least one stand-alone gender-specific component, with no less than 15 per cent of total resources allocated to it -and which should be understood as outputs of project documents. The Funding Windows will include a 15 per cent allocation for gender equality.

Financing this Strategy will require a broad and more predictable funding base. This means combining pooled funding, multi-year partnerships and practical cost-sharing across portfolios so gender expertise can be sustained and deployed where it can unlock reforms at scale. Cross-portfolio cost-sharing would help major programmes maintain shared gender capacities, bringing resources closely in line with demand. Good practices already exist,

¹⁵ GEN 3 refers to having gender equality and/or the empowerment of women and girls as the primary or principal objective. GEN 2 indicates making a significant contribution to gender equality and/or the empowerment of women and girls.

including the Pro-PALOP TL¹⁶ model that shows how shared financing can strengthen collective delivery.

UNDP will also offer more standardized technical services with cost-recovery or fee-for-service arrangements, where appropriate, as seen with the Panama Regional Hub gender team. Country offices are encouraged to explore options, such as pooled internal funds across portfolios, to finance gender capacities and strengthen programming. Additionally, UNDP will develop flagship initiatives to attract additional funding and partnerships.

Accountability

UNDP will maintain its solid chain of accountability for gender equality. Implementation of this Strategy begins with the Office of the Administrator before continuing to the bureau directors and country representatives who are 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 its annual progress to the Board.
- c.** To increase transparency, UNDP will establish a mechanism comprising members of external experts and civil society to guide the implementation of this Strategy.

d. UNDP will ensure performance assessment criteria for all senior and middle managers include implementation of the Strategy.

e. UNDP corporate results-based management system and monitoring tools will continue to integrate gender equality. All UNDP evaluations will be implemented in accordance with United Nations systems gender standards for evaluation.

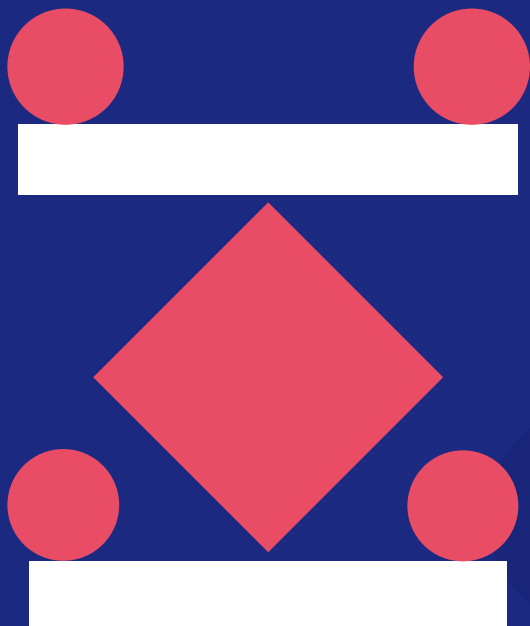
f. A data powerhouse will be maintained.

Communication for advocacy

UNDP will define key messages and branding for the present Strategy, and identify allies, tools and targeted actions in support of advocacy goals. It will build strategic relationships, gather and build evidence, frame innovative solutions, and seize emerging opportunities. Country offices are expected to use communication for advocacy across their portfolios—including when identifying their policy goals—and to develop accessible messages that foster dialogues with stakeholders.

UNDP will pursue long-term engagement with media networks and also 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 storytelling 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 communication teams will help drive this agenda.

¹⁶ See <https://www.undp.org/angola/news/pro-palop-tl-technical-mission-boosts-gender-responsive-public-finance-angola>.



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