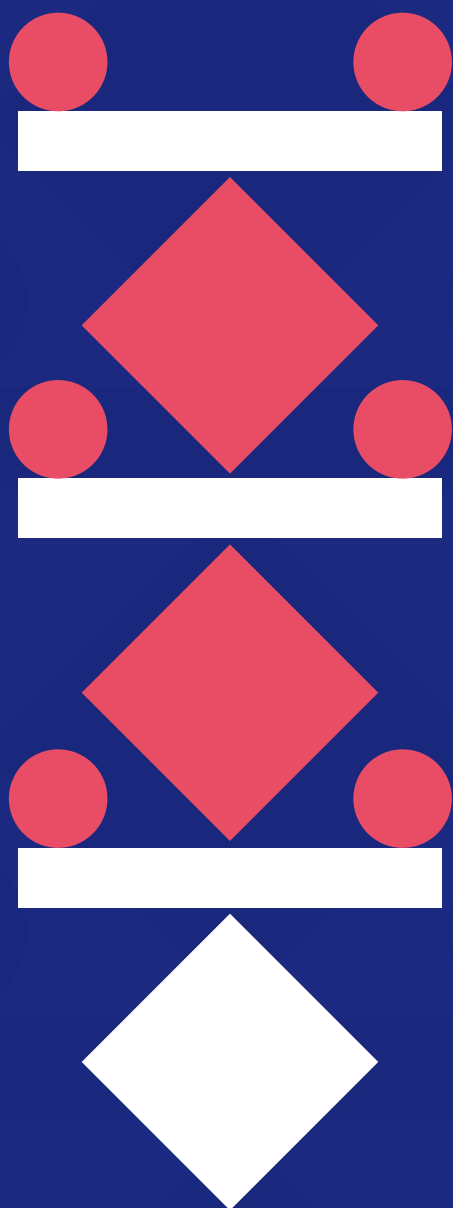




Summary version

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,
Administrator, United Nations
Development Programme (UNDP)

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 global context

We are living through times of extraordinary turbulence and intense pressure on multilateralism. In this difficult global environment, the UNDP 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 Strategy responds to:



The Gender Equality Strategy focuses on changing the systems and power structures that drive gender inequalities. Over the next four years, it calls on UNDP to help governments put gender equality at the heart of political, economic and environmental decisions.

UNDP acknowledges that gender equality remains, fundamentally, a question of rebalancing power. Building on decades of feminist thinking and advocacy, it combines long-term efforts to remove structural barriers with practical steps that expand opportunities for all.

What we have learned

The 2026-2029 UNDP Gender Equality Strategy builds on the 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 include:

- 1** Consciously design programmes to shift power dynamics.
- 2** Strengthen action to leave no one behind.
- 3** Intensify specialization and expertise.
- 4** Integrated programming scales up impact but cannot happen everywhere: prioritization is a critical factor to succeed.
- 5** Regular (core) resources are the backbone of successful work on gender equality.

Partnerships for progress

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

1

Renewal and reform in the United Nations system are commitments running through all UNDP priorities. UN Women will remain the main partner on gender equality.

2

Mobilizing the private sector will entail working with governments to guide markets, and with businesses, unions and civil society to expand access to finance, decent work and digital opportunities.

3

Broadening collaboration will tap a spectrum of partners who can trigger shifts in norms and behaviours, including universities, faith-based organizations and social media influencers.

4

Civil society partnerships built on trust will centre on collaboration with feminist, women's and community organizations to bring forward diverse experiences in setting development agendas.

UNDP stands out on gender equality: Here's why

UNDP partners affirm that its work on advancing gender equality is among the most effective and consequential contributions that it makes to development. UNDP's unique value lies in:

Policy and operational support



UNDP implements and scales up what works, and bridges local, national and international policy processes.

An anchor in crisis



UNDP connects actors across the humanitarian-development-peace spectrum for longer-term development focused on gender equality from day one.

Makes connections



UNDP links gender equality to all Strategic Plan outcomes, and forges deep relationships with national ministries working on social, economic and environmental issues.

Convening power



UNDP convenes diverse partners to realize shared goals and benefits through development results for gender equality.

Trusted listener



In navigating difficult issues, UNDP has the confidence of diverse actors. It listens, remains impartial, applies agreed international norms and provides requested expertise.

Human development and why it matters

The Gender Equality Strategy is grounded in a simple proposition: Human development advances when people have both capabilities and agency. Capabilities are opportunities that people can access. Agency is the power to act on those opportunities. For women, human development progress has not automatically translated into empowerment because structural barriers limit their capabilities and agency.

The 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 that reproduce exclusion over time. It focuses on actions both to remove structural barriers and reach people facing the greatest constraints.

Strategic objectives

The UNDP Strategic Plan 2026–2029 has four strategic objectives, supported by three accelerators of progress. This Gender Equality Strategy is structured around those objectives and accelerators, where gender equality is not a standalone workstream but an accelerator across portfolios. The Strategy defines priorities that are not exhaustive but reflect areas where UNDP has the strongest comparative advantage and solutions can be scaled up. Diverse country realities will ground implementation, based on country programmes guided by national development choices.

Strategic objective 1:
Prosperity for all

Strategic objective 2:
Effective governance

Strategic objective 3:
Crisis resilience

Strategic objective 4:
Healthy planet

Prosperity for all

Increasing women's economic autonomy while reducing structural barriers in economies

- Social protection and care services as social and economic infrastructure
- Women's access to finance, jobs, productive assets and essential services
- Fiscal policies drive prosperity for all

Effective governance

Strengthening public institutions, advancing women's leadership, realizing equal access to justice

- States deliver for all citizens
- Advance women's leadership and participation in decision-making
- Equal access to justice

Crisis resilience

Applying a development approach, achieving equal benefits from durable solutions

- Resilient economic recovery that advances gender equality and women's empowerment
- Equal and meaningful participation in peace and recovery
- Advance equality in forced displacement situations

Healthy planet

Building on inseparable gender equality links to climate, nature and energy

- Placing gender equality at the centre of policies and institutions on climate, nature, chemicals and energy
- Champion women's leadership and agency
- Unlock investment in climate, energy and nature

Three accelerators

Aligned with UNDP's Strategic Plan, three accelerators are applied across the strategic objectives.

1. Gender equality

Across all strategic objectives, addressing underlying structural factors that influence progress, and focusing on conditions most critical for lasting change: women's collective mobilization and voice, sustaining and advancing gender equality in contested contexts, changing negative social norms, preventing and responding to gender-based violence, and better data and analysis

2. Digitalization and artificial intelligence transformation

Supporting national digital and AI strategies that deliver for gender equality, and strengthening governance and regulations of digital and AI systems

3. Sustainable finance

Mobilizing private investment in women's enterprises and inclusive market opportunities while bolstering public finance to deliver gender equality

Institutional transformation

Institutional transformation at UNDP is deeply connected to the recognition that external impact and delivery depends on our internal policies, structures, culture and ways of working. Building on the previous Gender Equality Strategy, UNDP will invest in several

connected building blocks. For country offices, the UNDP Gender Equality Seal will remain the primary global initiative to operationalize the Strategy, connecting individual and organizational change to long-term development goals.

Leadership

Skilled in making principled decisions and communicating how choices advance gender equality, and prepared to model power-sharing.

Integration

Prioritizing high-impact reforms and investments across portfolios, and moving beyond silos and the simple inclusion of women as participants.

Gender architecture and specialization

Realizing an optimal gender architecture with standalone gender teams and sector-specific experts, access to leadership, and deepening expertise in areas of comparative advantage.

An equal and inclusive culture

Creating a fair, effective organization where everyone feels valued, has a voice and can contribute fully to the mission.

Financial resources

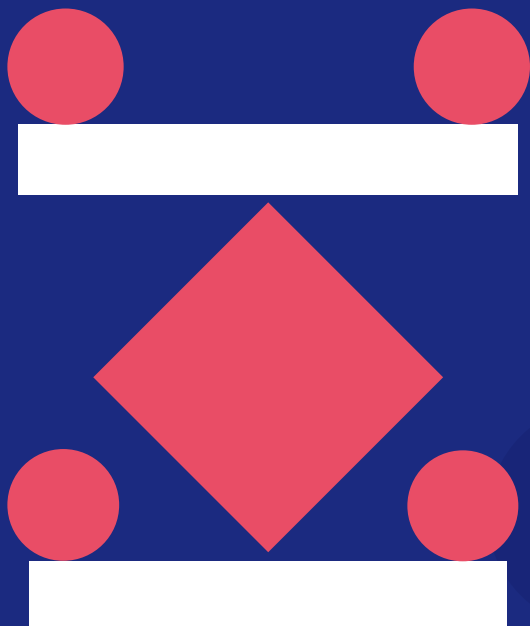
Developing a more diversified funding model and a broader, more predictable funding base.

Accountability

Sustaining a solid chain of accountability for results linking the Office of the Administrator, bureau directors and country representatives.

Communication for advocacy

Supporting advocacy goals with key messages and branding, and through allies, tools and targeted actions.



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