



# UN-SWAP

A plan to improve gender equality and the empowerment of women across the UN system

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United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women



# WHAT IS THE UN-SWAP?

The UN-SWAP (UN system-wide Action Plan) is a UN system-wide accountability framework designed to measure, monitor and drive progress towards a common set of standards to which to aspire and adhere for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It applies to all entities, departments and offices of the UN system.

## GOAL

The UN-SWAP will enhance the UN system's ability to hold itself accountable for and deliver in a unified and more comprehensive manner in support of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Regular and consistent reporting on the implementation of the UN-SWAP is an essential component to strengthen accountability for gender equality.

## HOW IT WORKS

The UN-SWAP includes a set of 15 Performance Indicators that establish

- A **common understanding** of gender equality and the empowerment of women
- A **common method** to advance towards this goal
- A **common and progressive sliding scale** against which to monitor progress and towards which to aspire at the corporate level

➔ UN entities are to meet all of the UN-SWAP performance standards by 2017. Those with a mainly technical focus may meet them by 2019.

In Resolution E/2012/24, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC):

“Welcomes the development of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, under the leadership of UN Women, and its adoption by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on 13 April 2012, as an accountability framework to be fully implemented by the United Nations system, and calls upon the United Nations system to actively engage in its roll-out”

## UN-SWAP REPORTING FRAMEWORK

The 15 UN-SWAP Performance Indicators are organized around the six elements of the 2006 United Nations system-wide policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women (CEB/2006/2).

### Strengthening accountability

1. Policy and plan
2. Gender responsive performance management

### Enhancing results-based management

3. Strategic planning
4. Monitoring and reporting

### Establishing oversight through monitoring, evaluation and reporting

5. Evaluation
6. Gender responsive auditing
7. Programme review

### Allocating sufficient human and financial resources

8. Financial resource tracking
9. Financial resource allocation
10. Gender architecture
11. Organizational culture

### Developing and/or strengthening staff capacity and competency in gender mainstreaming

12. Assessment
13. Development

### Ensuring coherence/coordination and knowledge information management at the global, regional and national level

14. Knowledge generation and communication
15. Coherence

# UN-SWAP RATING SYSTEM

The UN-SWAP's sliding scale of standards consists of five levels of gradation or rating for each Performance Indicator:

- Exceeds requirements
- Meets requirements
- Approaches requirements
- Missing
- Not applicable

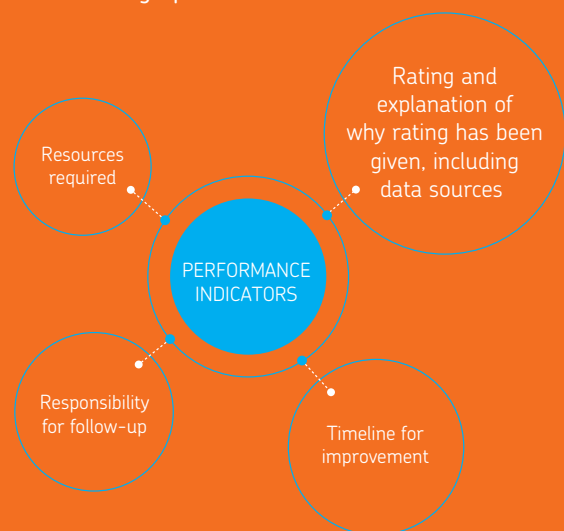
The 'meets requirements' rating is set as a minimum for UN entity performance, based on UN inter-governmental mandates on gender equality and women's empowerment.

'Missing' is applied when the Performance Indicator is relevant to an entity, but the 'approaches expectations' rating is not met.

'Not applicable' is applied where the Performance Indicator is not relevant to an entity.

These ratings allow the entity to self-assess and report on their standing with respect to the indicator.

The components of the reporting framework are illustrated in the below graph.



“In its current modus operandi, the gender equality framework may become a mirage for expert review within the United Nations, if due consideration is not concurrently given to organizational culture change.”

Pierre Sob, Adviser on Gender Integration,  
Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights,  
May 2013



“The SWAP has been both a pretext and an unprecedented driving force to push gender integration one step further in the Human Rights Office. The most striking has been to see its ‘contagion’ outside the usual circle of convinced advocates to spark discussions on gender among colleagues working on finance, travel, IT or even procurement.”

Saori Terada, Human Rights Officer and  
Gender Advisor, Office of the United Nations High  
Commissioner for Human Rights, May 2013

## FAQs

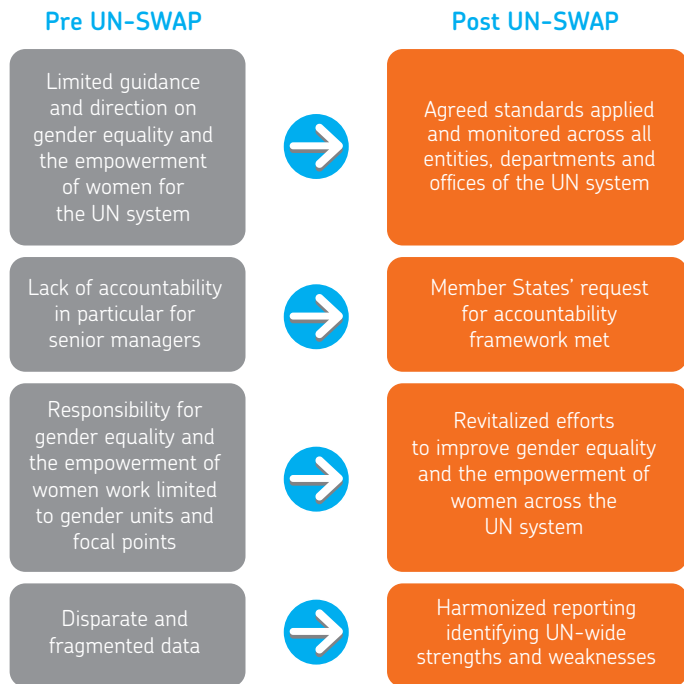
A comprehensive list of frequently asked questions about the UN-SWAP can be found at:  
[www.bit.ly/unswap\\_faqs](http://www.bit.ly/unswap_faqs)

“It is with deep satisfaction and indeed great enthusiasm that I can say that the System Wide Action Plan, that has been developed under the auspices of UN Women... represents an enormous step forward... and is an example of how an institution could facilitate and convene a whole system of funds, agencies and programmes to develop this common framework... I think that it has provided all of us with a common agenda and above all a common framework in which we can work in the years that lie ahead.”

Achim Stenier, Under-Secretary-General, UNEP,  
Special Message, November 2012

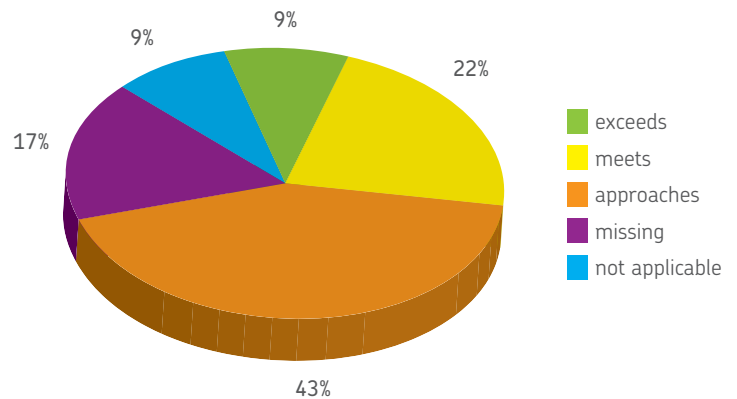
# WHAT HAS THE UN-SWAP ACHIEVED TO DATE?

As the first UN system-wide accountability framework for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, the UN-SWAP has resulted in several significant and immediate shifts in how the UN system approaches work related to gender equality and the empowerment of women.



# KEY FINDINGS FROM THE FIRST YEAR OF REPORTING

- The UN system as a whole **exceeded** minimum requirements in only **9%** of all ratings for Performance Indicators, demonstrating that while it evidences some good practice, there is still much improvement needed on most fronts.



Overall UN system

- The importance of a majority of entities rating themselves as “**approaches requirements**” should not be underestimated; the UN is at a pivotal moment, and can either achieve the inter-governmental mandates on which the UN-SWAP Performance Indicators are based, or be perceived to fail in the critical endeavour of advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- Specialized agencies\***: 48% of individual ratings on Performance Indicators meeting/exceeding requirements, suggests that this group will be the first to meet the UN-SWAP target.

\*Specialized agencies: FAO, ILO, ITC-ILO, UNESCO, WHO

**Considerable improvement is required if the UN-SWAP Performance Indicators are to be met by 2017.**

## MOST CRITICAL FACTORS TO PROGRESS:

- Commitment** of senior management
- Endorsement and implementation of a **gender equality policy**
- Adequate staffing**, resources and capacity for promoting gender equality
- Clarity of responsibility and accountability** for the work of the organization on gender equality and the empowerment of women

# STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

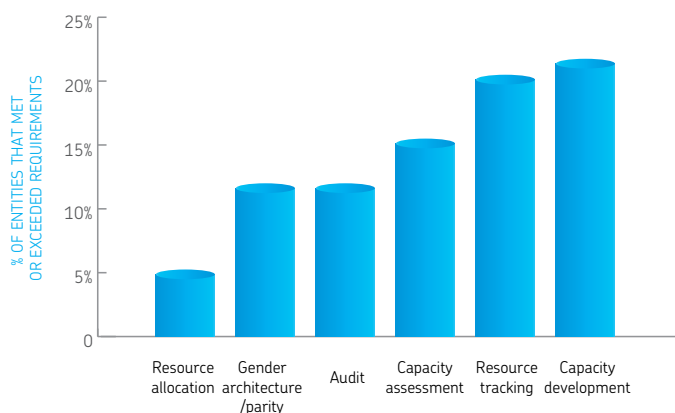
## Strengths

Performance Indicators rating the strongest were:



## Weaknesses

Performance Indicators rating the lowest were:



- ➔ All areas of weakness (and several of the areas of strength, e.g. strategic planning and gender policy) require urgent attention across the UN system.
- ➔ Urgent action is particularly needed for improvement in the area of gender parity; 78 per cent of entities had not achieved parity at the P-4 levels and above. This raises concern in view of numerous General Assembly resolutions (65/191, 64/141), which have called for urgent action to meet the goal of 50/50 gender balance in the UN system, especially at senior and policymaking levels.

## Correlations:

Entities that met/exceeded requirements for the following Performance Indicators **Policy, Strategic Planning, Gender Architecture/parity and Capacity development** performed better overall on the other UN-SWAP Performance Indicators than those that did not meet requirements

# REMEDIAL ACTION PLANS

Where indicators are not met, UN-SWAP reporting requires the submission of remedial plans including timelines, resources and responsibility for follow-up action.

Entities reported a total of 127 activities that will be undertaken mainly as a result of the UN-SWAP, with the top areas being gender equality policy development and implementation, capacity assessment and development, and financial resource tracking and allocation. Remedial plans for each entity offer multiple opportunities for improvement across the UN system; they provide data on how close individual entities and the system is to meeting/exceeding requirements by indicator, and thus the areas where entities need to focus attention and the system needs to invest.

The main areas identified for additional resource requirements are:

- Development and implementation of policies
- Gender architecture/parity
- Capacity development



“UN-SWAP is a very helpful comparative instrument for ILO to rate its performance on promoting gender equality in the world of work. It has inspired us to do better and highlights where we need to focus our efforts in the future.”

Jane Hodges, Chief,  
Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch,  
Conditions of Work and Equality Department,  
International Labour Office, May 2013

# ORIGIN OF THE UN-SWAP

**1997** - The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 1997/2 concluded that “All entities of the United Nations system, should institutionalize mainstreaming of a gender perspective at all levels through specific steps”, including: “The establishment of instruments and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation...” [and]... “The creation of accountability mechanisms for gender mainstreaming.”

**2006** - In response to the ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/2 on “Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system”, the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in October 2006, endorsed a UN system-Wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (CEB/2006/2).

**2011-2012** - UN Women took up the matter and coordinated the development of the UN-SWAP framework.

The development of the UN-SWAP involved an extensive consultative process involving over 50 entities, Secretariat Departments, Offices and Commissions and was piloted by 8 entities – ESCWA, IAEA, IOM, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF.

**April 2012** - On 13 April 2012, the CEB endorsed the UN-SWAP for application throughout the UN system.

**July 2012** - In its resolution E/RES/2012/24 of 27 July 2012, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) welcomed the UN-SWAP and called upon the United Nations system to actively engage in its roll-out and report on the implementation of the resolution at its substantive session in 2013.

**December 2012** - The quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) resolution A/RES/67/226 was adopted by the General Assembly and welcomes the development of the UN-SWAP “to be fully implemented by the United Nations development system” and “Requests the Joint Inspection Unit to undertake a system-wide evaluation of the effectiveness, value added and impact... as a tool for performance monitoring and accountability for submission to the General Assembly following its full implementation.”

# NEXT STEPS

The evidence from UN-SWAP baseline reporting provides clear direction for next steps, both commonly for the UN system and for individual entities:

- **Continued development** of UN-SWAP aligned gender equality and the empowerment of women **policies**.
- **Focused technical support** for parts of the UN system that lag behind UN system averages in many of the UN-SWAP Performance Indicators.
- **Ongoing inter-agency workshops** on specific Performance Indicators where the UN system as a whole is performing less well, in particular attaining and sustaining the equal representation of women, developing and implementing gender markers, and capacity development.
- **Development of clear plans of action** for the attainment of the equal representation of women at all levels.
- **Resource mobilization** to support system-wide improvement in performance.
- **Promotion and support** for UN-SWAP peer reviews, which will increase accountability, coherence, and cross-entity learning.
- Development of a more effective and comprehensive **communication plan** is required. Products for dissemination include: factsheets, identification of **good practices** outlined for each Performance Indicator, enhanced website content, interviews, and promotion through internal/external social media.
- Increased **entity partnerships** for the creation of Centres of Good Practice for the implementation of Performance Indicators.
- Development of an introductory, interactive and self-paced **e-course** on gender equality and the empowerment of women to be offered to all staff across the UN system. To include agreed mandatory modules and satellite modules by UN entities on specific topics.



For any queries please contact the UN-SWAP Help Desk:

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