



# UNFPA GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

## 2018-2021

### I. A critical link: Gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights

Gender equality is unattainable unless the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and adolescent girls are realized. A woman's ability to control her own decisions about her sexual and reproductive health and rights is at the heart of other forms of empowerment, decision-making and participation at all levels. There is no gender equality without sexual and reproductive health and rights, and no sexual and reproductive health and rights without gender equality.

UNFPA has a leading role in advancing gender equality globally, regionally and at country and community levels, in collaboration with other United Nations entities. This work builds on a country-level presence in 150 countries and territories, and operational capacity in both humanitarian and development settings including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### The challenge is eliminating discrimination and violence:

 <p>200 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation</p>	 <p>3 times more hours are spent by women than men on domestic and care work</p>	 <p>Globally, women only make 77 cents for every dollar earned by men.</p>	 <p>One woman in three has experienced physical or sexual violence</p>
 <p>Only 57 per cent of women aged 15 to 49 married or in union make their own decisions about sexual relations and use of contraceptives and health services</p>	 <p>143 countries guarantee equality between men and women in their constitutions; many have yet to demonstrate equality on the ground</p>	 <p>More than 150 million girls will marry before their 18th birthday by 2030 if action is not taken, threatening their lives, well-being and future<sup>1</sup></p>	 <p>More than 800 women die every day from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth</p>

Sources: ILO, UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, WHO Global Health Observatory

### II. The UNFPA Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021

The Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021 was developed to complement the UNFPA Strategic Plan and guide operationalization of the gender and rights-related aspects of its results and resources framework. The Strategy uses a twin-track approach:

- mainstreaming gender throughout UNFPA's work, and
- having a dedicated outcome for gender equality and reproductive rights. UNFPA is accountable for progress on gender equality from a normative and a results-based institutional, programmatic and financial perspective.

Promoting gender equality is at the core of international agreements that underpin the Strategy, including the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Gender equality is also at the core of the three transformational results UNFPA is working to achieve by 2030: ending preventable maternal deaths; ending the unmet need for family planning; and ending gender-based violence and all harmful practices, including child marriage and female genital mutilation.

### III. Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development envisions “a world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed.” It further states that “Women and girls must enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political participation as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels.” Gender equality is reflected in 45 targets and 54 gender-specific indicators and is central to all 17 global goals—in particular Goal 3 to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, and Goal 5, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. In addition to SDG 3 targets 3.1 on ending maternal mortality, and 3.7 on universal access to sexual and reproductive health, SDG target 5.6 is at the heart of UNFPA’s work on gender equality.

The Gender Equality Strategy captures key structural constraints to gender equality addressed in the Sustainable Development Goals, such as discrimination, gender-based violence and

harmful practices, unpaid care work, lack of participation in decision-making, and poor access to sexual and reproductive health services and the realization of reproductive rights.



#### SDG Target 5.6

Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

#### Indicator 5.6.1

Proportion of women aged 15-49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care

#### Indicator 5.6.2

Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee women aged 15-49 years access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education

### IV. Priority areas for action to promote gender equality



#### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Strengthened legal, policy and accountability frameworks to advance gender equality and women and girls to exercise their reproductive rights**

UNFPA recognizes that gender equality and the prohibition of sex-based discrimination are core human rights. Applying a human rights-based approach to UNFPA’s work on gender equality underlines the importance of strengthening accountability for rights. This is accomplished by aligning policy and legal frameworks with international human rights standards; engaging with national human rights institutions, regional and international human rights mechanisms (e.g. treaty bodies,

special procedures and the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council) that monitor implementation of human rights obligations; and developing capacities of women to claim their rights and to access justice when their rights have been violated. A human rights-based approach also places focus on addressing entrenched gender discrimination and multiple forms of intersecting discrimination facing women and girls. These efforts complement and reinforce efforts to address social norms.



#### SOCIAL NORMS

**Strengthened civil society and community mobilization to eliminate discriminatory gender and sociocultural norms affecting women and girls**

UNFPA addresses empowerment as an investment in voice, choice and agency that enables women and girls to choose if and when they want to have children, marry, say “no” to violence and be able to claim a life of dignity. The social norms that support gender-discrimination, gender-based violence and harmful practices must be transformed.

groups and other individuals who are influential and have the power to make decisions. Norms change is brought about through many actions: gender-transformative programming, community mobilization and activism, and policies and protocols that engage men and boys and enable women’s decision-making to help foster transformative change. UNFPA works closely with partners to promote effective methodologies and approaches in a wide range of sociocultural settings.

Changing social norms entails working through multiple channels to create a social movement and mobilizing people among practicing



#### GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

**Increased multisectoral capacity to prevent and address gender-based violence using a continuum approach in all contexts**

UNFPA works to prevent, mitigate and respond to gender-based violence while building resilience, with interventions across the spectrum of its programming. Increasingly, where traditional lines no longer apply, UNFPA takes a continuum approach to address disasters and complex emergencies, demographic changes, urbanization, migration, climate change and new and emerging challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. For example UNFPA supports policy and legislative reform dialogues, advocacy and education of all actors and stakeholders, capacity building of health service providers (including for psychosocial support and case management), health systems strengthening, and improved data collection and analysis.

In emergency contexts, UNFPA advocates for the integration of gender-based violence risk mitigation and support for victims and survivors across sectors throughout the humanitarian response. Sole leadership of the gender-based violence area of responsibility (AoR) at the global level provides an opportunity for UNFPA to significantly scale up programme and coordination efforts in all humanitarian contexts. Ongoing investments include strengthening gender-based violence surge capacity, capacity development and application of the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) and other tools in crisis situations.



## Strengthened response to eliminate harmful practices, including child marriage, female genital mutilation and son preference

UNFPA works to end harmful practices by working closely with governments, development partners, and civil society to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women and adolescent girls. UNFPA supports many different initiatives that promote autonomy of women girls: advocacy, awareness-raising, training, comprehensive sexuality education, youth-friendly adolescent sexual and reproductive

health information and services, mobilizing communities and civil society organizations, and strengthening policies and laws. By amplifying positive social norms, UNFPA works to create a movement of individuals who support the abandonment of harmful practices including female genital mutilation, child marriage and son preference.



## Strengthened capacities on developing gender-responsive data, gender statistics, evidence-based advocacy and dialogues

UNFPA supports efforts to collect and analyze sex-disaggregated data for use in evidence-based advocacy to realize the rights of women and girls, focusing on the barriers faced by marginalized groups in access to sexual and reproductive health. UNFPA takes a lead role on data in the United Nations system to ensure a systematic gender mainstreaming approach, and integrates key gender-related indicators into the organization's policies, programmes, advocacy and reporting frameworks.

To build capacity for a gender-responsive approach, UNFPA strengthens collaboration between population and development units and monitoring and evaluation teams. At country level, UNFPA advances gender considerations in census work, Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, Demographic and Health Surveys, and civil registration and vital statistics, as well as supporting violence against women prevalence surveys and studies in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals.

## V. UNFPA's own commitment to gender equality

The UNFPA Gender Equality Strategy measures its results against a strategic goal: "Gender equality, with a focus on women's and adolescent girls' empowerment in all UNFPA's programmatic and intitutional engagements enhanced."

### The Gender SWAP

The UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) ensures greater coherence and accountability in the gender-related work of all UN entities. UNFPA has been implementing the UN-SWAP since 2012, and UN-SWAP 2.0 since 2018. Through this work, UNFPA has ensured the Gender Equality Strategy is "fit for purpose" and responds to the 2030 Agenda, and that progress is measured, evaluated, reported and communicated at all levels. The UN-SWAP provides performance indicators to measure progress across all institutional operations and strengthen coherence across the United Nations system.

### Gender Equality Scorecard

UNFPA supports implementation of the UNCT-SWAP Scorecard, which is a standardized assessment of UN country-level gender mainstreaming practices and performance that is aimed at ensuring accountability of senior managers and improving UNCT performance. UNFPA as part of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) uses the gender equality scorecard, which is premised on a set of 18 standard performance indicators and applies common assessment criteria, which allows for regional and country comparisons.

### Gender Marker

UNFPA uses a gender marker to track and monitor the gender-responsiveness of all its financial activities. The gender marker serves as an indicative tool for measuring financial investment, and as a capacity development tool for use in UNFPA programming. It is a mandated aspect of UNFPA's work plan creation. UNFPA has been using the gender marker, which is coded in annual work plans and validated by a quality assurance process, since 2014.

## VI. Key partnerships

UNFPA works closely with governments and partners to achieve progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women. This requires collaboration with others in the United Nations system, donors, civil society and the private sector. Through its lead role in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action, UNFPA has invested in long-standing partnerships with civil society organizations, women's groups, youth networks, faith-based and community-based organizations, persons with disabilities, organizations that engage men and boys, opinion leaders, indigenous populations and humanitarian actors.

UNFPA will continue to build on the networks it has developed, and continue to coordinate and work with partners to address underlying conditions that impact achievement of gender equality. Emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic underscore the value of working with trusted partners in all stages of preparedness, response, recovery and development. UNFPA and partners together will implement the UNFPA Gender Equality Strategy through an integrated approach that is rights-based, participatory and people-centred to achieve transformative results for women and girls.



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For more information:

www.unfpa.org/publications/unfpa-gender-equality-strategy  
Outcomes and outputs at www.unfpa.org/strategic-plan-2018-2021