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**ESCWA POLICY ON GENDER EQUALITY
AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN
(2014-2018)**



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Foreword

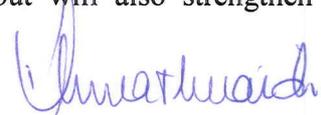
Gender equality and the empowerment of women are key priorities for the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA). They are at the heart of the Commission's daily work as driving forces for positive change, given that achieving gender equality is central to the full realization of major global and regional commitments, as well as inclusive sustainable development.

Since the launch of the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) in 2012, ESCWA has strengthened its commitment to advancing gender equality in all facets of its work. It has established a common understanding of the various elements contributing to the achievement of gender equality at the planning, operational and implementation stages.

Building on ESCWA and UN experiences, the ESCWA Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women establishes a roadmap for the Commission to institutionalize the mainstreaming of gender perspectives at all levels. It provides guidance on pursuing sound and evidence-based gender equality policies for the next five years.

This Policy further cements the Commission's staunch commitment to the principles of human rights in general and gender equality in particular, and strengthens the many institutional mechanisms recently put in place to advance gender equality. It is part of wider ESCWA efforts to advance gender equality and implement the policy of the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination on this issue.

ESCWA shares the firm belief that, by driving gender equality forward, it will not only promote a gender-sensitive organizational culture among staff, but will also strengthen its advancement in member States.



Rima Khalaf
Under-Secretary-General
Executive Secretary of ESCWA

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CEB	Chief Executives Board for Coordination
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EPM	ESCWA Performance Monitoring
GFPN	Gender Focal Points Network
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IMDIS	Integrated Monitoring and Document Information System
UN-SWAP	United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
SSS	Security and Safety Section

I. UNITED NATIONS MANDATE FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

The United Nations has established several international frameworks to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women through various international instruments including, but not limited to, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Millennium Declaration and a series of resolutions on the issue.

CEDAW,¹ a core international human rights instrument, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 and came into force in 1981. It lays the foundation for gender equality through a comprehensive framework which defines the various elements that constitute discrimination against women. It sets out an agenda for action that advocates and protects women's civil rights and legal status, human reproduction and the impact of culture on gender relations.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women,² held in 1995, reaffirmed that women's rights are an integral part of human rights. The Platform for Action established a detailed framework for the United Nations, Governments and non-governmental organizations to pledge action in 12 areas of concern, which are prerequisites for equality, development and peace. Most importantly, the Platform identified gender mainstreaming as a global strategy for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women.

At its 1997 substantive session, the United Nations Economic and Social Council adopted conclusions 1997/2, agreed upon by all United Nations agencies, which defined gender mainstreaming as "the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality".³ The Economic and Social Council further emphasized that gender neutrality should not be assumed and that accountability for outcomes should be ensured. The key gender mainstreaming principles adopted by the Economic and Social Council include the following: broadening women's participation at all levels; designing both women and gender-specific policies and programmes; and ensuring a political will to allocate human and financial resources for gender mainstreaming.

The Millennium Declaration,⁴ adopted in 2000, championed equal rights and opportunities for both men and women and considered equality as one of its fundamental values. The Millennium Development Goals clearly state that gender equality is both a goal in itself and a condition for the achievement of other goals.⁵

Security Council resolution 1325 on women and peace and security reaffirms the vital role of women in peacebuilding, including in the prevention, protection, peace negotiation and post-conflict phases. It promotes gender equality as a prerequisite for peace and development. It also requires the inclusion of protection measures for girls and women in peace agreements, particularly as they relate to constitutions.

The 2005 World Summit called upon the Secretary-General to take additional steps towards mainstreaming gender in all areas of United Nations work. In response, the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) issued a system-wide policy in 2006 on gender equality and the

¹ www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm.

² www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/.

³ Available from www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/ECOSOCAC1997.2.PDF.

⁴ www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm.

⁵ See www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2010/1/making-the-mdgs-work-better-for-women.

empowerment of women.⁶ CEB members committed themselves to achieving gender equality at all levels within the United Nations system and to providing sound leadership in that regard. The CEB policy included a clear strategy comprising the following six elements: accountability; results-based management for gender equality; oversight through monitoring, evaluation, auditing and reporting; human and financial resources; capacity development; and coherence, coordination, knowledge and information management.

In 2012, the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) was designed to operationalize the CEB policy. UN-SWAP is an accountability framework aimed at developing a common understanding and enhancing coherence within the system. It sets out 15 indicators, built around the six elements identified in the CEB policy. Each performance indicator is measured against a sliding scale of standards consisting of the following five ratings: missing; approaches requirements; meets requirements; exceeds requirements; and not applicable.

We strive to implement global commitments, as they provide the framework for our work.

In resolution 2012/24, the Economic and Social Council welcomed UN-SWAP and requested its full implementation. In resolution 2014/2, the Council reaffirmed the need to enhance gender mainstreaming by fully implementing UN-SWAP and ensuring 100 per cent reporting compliance by all entities to meet its performance indicators by 2017.⁷

This United Nations mandate is the basis for the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. It provides the necessary framework for ESCWA to shape its gender mainstreaming strategy and to underscore its internal gender mainstreaming functions.

The Policy consists of eight sections. Section I summarizes the United Nations mandate and global commitment to gender equality, including key milestones. Section II sets out the Policy statement and guiding principles. Section III explains how a gender perspective will be integrated into the ESCWA strategic framework. Section IV outlines the accountability framework for the promotion of gender equality at ESCWA. Section V describes how ESCWA will bridge its current gender parity gap. Section VI addresses financial and human resources and the capacity elements related to the promotion of gender equality. Section VII explains how ESCWA will promote coherence and information management through cross-agency learning. Section VIII explains how ESCWA will monitor and follow up on the implementation of the Policy.

II. ESCWA POLICY ON GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

The ESCWA Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women is central to achieving the overall goal of the ESCWA strategic framework for 2016-2017, which aims to “foster comprehensive, equitable, integrated and sustainable development through effective economic and social cooperation in the region, and to maintain and strengthen economic relations between member States”.⁸ The Policy aims to provide strategic guidance to scale up efforts on gender equality and the empowerment of women. It has been approved and signed by the ESCWA Executive

Advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women is at the heart of our normative work.

⁶ Available from www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/gm/UN_system_wide_P_S_CEB_Statement_2006.pdf.

⁷ See www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Media/Stories/en/unswap-brochure.pdf.

⁸ ESCWA, *Proposed ESCWA strategic framework for the biennium 2016-2017* (2013), p. 3. Available from <http://css.escwa.org.lb/OES/3291/TCVIII4.pdf>.

Secretary and disseminated to all internal divisions. It is also publicly available on the ESCWA official website. The Policy will be revised and updated every five years to reflect new developments and mandates.

A. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES

The ESCWA Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women is based on the following guiding principles and approaches:

- (a) Gender mainstreaming at all levels;
- (b) Promotion of gender parity;
- (c) Promotion of gender sensitive budgeting;
- (d) Promotion of ownership and sustainability.

B. POLICY STATEMENT

ESCWA is committed to achieving gender equality in all aspects of its work, including normative work, extra budgetary activities and technical assistance provided to member States. It is also committed to achieving gender equality internally by ensuring equal representation of women, especially at senior levels. Gender budgeting is also crucial to measuring the impact of work undertaken by ESCWA on men and women, so as to address inequalities.

The ESCWA Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women is timely for several reasons. Firstly, the Strategy on Mainstreaming Gender at ESCWA was last updated in 2009. It therefore fails to account for many of the developments that took place since that year, most importantly UN-SWAP (see annex I to the present document). Secondly, the Policy reflects the lessons learned from piloting UN-SWAP and implementing it since 2012. Thirdly, the Policy benefited from the findings of the first participatory gender audit recently conducted by ESCWA. Fourthly, it provides an integrated approach to gender equality in view of the 15 UN-SWAP performance indicators.

The Policy has been designed in accordance with the guidance of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on the development of gender equality and the empowerment of women policies.⁹ It builds on United Nations mandates related to gender equality and on previous and current efforts by ESCWA to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women.

III. POLICY DIRECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION

ESCWA recognizes the importance of integrating gender equality and the empowerment of women in its strategic framework to ensure that this priority area is an overarching goal for the Commission and provide clarity on the role of gender in its overall work.

The “overall orientation” section of the ESCWA strategic framework emphasizes the need to mainstream a gender perspective in all aspects of ESCWA work and explains how gender equality and the empowerment of women are promoted at ESCWA and in member States. It affirms that gender is a cross-cutting theme in the work of the ESCWA seven subprogrammes and sets out a list of indicators to measure ESCWA performance in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women within member States.

The strategic framework is guided by UN-SWAP and commits ESCWA to fully achieving all 15 UN-SWAP performance indicators by the 2017 deadline set by CEB. It makes reference to the possibility of exceeding requirements on certain indicators in an effort to bolster efforts to achieve gender equality.

⁹ Available from www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/how%20we%20work/unsystemcoordination/guidance-development-gender-policies.pdf.

The strategic framework presents a twin-track approach to achieving gender equality. Firstly, it reiterates the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all ESCWA subprogrammes to ensure gender-sensitive methodologies and approaches, including inclusive development and rights-based approaches. Secondly, it highlights the objective of the ESCWA gender-specific subprogramme “to reduce gender imbalances, encourage exchange of lessons learned among member States and contribute to increased respect for the rights of women in line with international conventions and conferences”.¹⁰

ESCWA will double its efforts to ensure that the strategic framework is implemented from a gender perspective. One of the key measures will include the development of a gender-sensitive publications strategy that builds on the practical outcomes of the staff survey on the quality of the publications produced by ESCWA, and the subsequent work on excellence in publications. Additional measures will entail reviewing the current ESCWA system for engendering its outputs and publications to ensure coherence and consistency.

IV. ACCOUNTABILITY

ESCWA has adopted an accountability framework based on the principles of transparency, information disclosure and a motivation system. The ESCWA Executive Secretary will oversee the application of the Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, supported by the Senior UN-SWAP Coordinator on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The ESCWA Centre for Women, directors of divisions and members of the Gender Focal Points Network (GFPN) will play a role in supporting the Executive Secretary in implementing and following the Policy.

The ESCWA Senior Manager’s Compact includes an objective to accelerate efforts to advance the agenda for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women.¹¹ It identifies a performance measure for full compliance with the UN-SWAP baseline reporting requirement. Progress in implementing the various objectives of the Compact is reported in the annual performance assessment and submitted to the Management Board. In addition, ESCWA division directors have a goal in their annual performance review related to mainstreaming gender perspectives into their substantive work area; obstacles to achieving gender equality are analysed and remedial plans put in place.

To enhance accountability on gender equality and to maintain a motivation system, ESCWA will continue to administer its Award on Advancing Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women biennially to recognize outstanding and innovative work in this priority area. In addition to a letter of appreciation, three certificates – gold, silver and bronze – will be granted to the Award winners who are selected through a competitive process. The biennial Award system is in line with Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/36 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. In this resolution, the Council calls on the United Nations to strengthen accountability systems for both management and staff, through, *inter alia*, the inclusion of objectives and results related to gender mainstreaming in personnel work-plans and appraisals. The Award system is also at the heart of the United Nations accountability framework¹² that encourages the establishment of a reward and sanction system.

¹⁰ ESCWA (2013), p. 17.

¹¹ As per the report entitled *UN System-wide Action Plan for Implementation of the CEB Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women* (p. 11), “Senior Manager’s Compact is an accountability tool used by the Secretary-General to communicate the priorities of the Organization and of individual senior managers during a given year and to evaluate senior managers’ performance at the end of each compact cycle”. Available from www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/how%20we%20work/unsystemcoordination/un-swap-technical-notes.ashx.

¹² United Nations, *Towards an accountability system in the United Nations Secretariat: Report of the Secretary-General* (2010). Available from www.un.org/en/strengtheningtheun/pdf/A-64-640.pdf.

V. GENDER PARITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

ESCWA will intensify efforts to achieve equal representation at all levels. This will be done by implementing the targets set out in its Human Resources Action Plan Towards Gender Parity (set out in annex II to the present document) and ensuring the implementation of special measures on outreach, recruitment and selection; staff retention; and staff development levels.

ESCWA recognizes the importance of an organizational culture conducive to the balancing of work-life responsibilities. To that end, ESCWA will continue to apply facilitative policies to provide maternity, paternity and family leave, as well as sick and annual leave. It will also continue to implement a flexible working arrangement policy by promoting flexibility within the day and week, and by providing flexibility for learning. Flexible working arrangements are monitored through an internal online tracking system that provides sex and grade disaggregated data.

ESCWA promotes an organizational culture based on integrity, accountability, transparency and respect. Sharing these common values is facilitated through mandatory training on both ethics and the prevention of harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority in the workplace.

Regular staff surveys will be conducted to systematically capture organizational culture issues that undermine the achievements of gender parity at ESCWA.

VI. RESOURCES AND CAPACITY

ESCWA is fully resourced to promote gender equality within the organization and in member States. The ESCWA Centre for Women employs professional and general service staff to respond to regional trends and country demands for technical assistance, so as to formulate gender-sensitive and inclusive national plans and policies. It is also equipped to tackle multiple dimensions of gender inequality through a comprehensive focus on social structures, power relations, access and control over resources and decision-making processes.

To accelerate the ESCWA implementation of UN-SWAP and to ensure that internal efforts to mainstream gender are aligned with its requirements, the ESCWA Senior SWAP Coordinator serves as a resource person to mainstream gender perspectives in the work of substantive divisions and to promote an organizational culture that favours gender equality.

The ESCWA Gender Focal Points Network comprises a member and an alternate from each division. Network members will continue to receive annual capacity development training tailored to their needs to enhance the outputs of their respective divisions. Monthly Network meetings serve as a learning forum to exchange information and knowledge and to discuss efforts and challenges. Network members will also hold quarterly meetings with the ESCWA Executive Secretary to discuss key obstacles and identify potential solutions.

ESCWA realizes the importance of capacity development as one of the United Nations country programming principles.¹³ Capacity assessment and development to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women is an ESCWA priority. ESCWA conducted an assessment in 2013 and will do so every three years. Results of the assessment will feed into capacity-building development plans. In addition to the mandatory training course entitled “Prevention of harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority in the workplace”, ESCWA will continue to administrate the mandatory gender training course entitled “I know gender” to strengthen understanding of gender equality and the empowerment of women among all ESCWA staff. ESCWA will enhance its compliance with the mandatory training packages and

¹³ The five key principles for United Nations country programming are capacity development, a human rights-based approach, gender equality, environmental sustainability and results-based management.

will put in place corrective measures for staff members who do not comply with these requirements. Furthermore, specialized training packages will be developed, upon request, to train staff on technical aspects of gender mainstreaming in their substantive work areas (see annex III to the present document).

VII. COHERENCE AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

ESCWA will intensify its efforts to adopt a systematic approach to data collection and gender-based analysis. It will continue to play an active role in interagency networks on women and gender equality as the key forums for effective coordination. It will enhance the internal system for the exchange and cross-fertilization of ideas on gender mainstreaming, on the basis of internal and external lessons learned and good practice. The experiences of the United Nations and those of the private sector and non-governmental organizations will be shared with relevant staff members and discussion forums will be held when necessary. ESCWA will expand electronic knowledge networks on gender equality in general and gender mainstreaming in particular, to ensure the systematic exchange of relevant resources. Selected documents will be publically shared on the ESCWA website and Intranet and others will be shared with all staff or select groups, such as GFPN members.

In an effort to promote cross-agency learning on accountability mechanisms and functions, ESCWA will regularly conduct entity peer reviews to assess the UN-SWAP process within other United Nations entities, including constraints and opportunities; experiences on accountability for gender equality and the empowerment of women within the United Nations system; and lessons learned.

VIII. MONITORING, EVALUATING AND PERFORMANCE REPORTING

ESCWA will ensure the activation of a solid quality control system to monitor its gender mainstreaming performance in its various activities (projects, publications and meetings). Furthermore, ESCWA will develop an annual action plan detailing action items for all areas of UN-SWAP. The annual plan will include specific objectives, related actions and timeframes to facilitate the follow-up process.

In addition, information on the ESCWA Performance Monitor (EPM) report will be cross-checked and validated with the data available on the Integrated Monitoring and Document Information System (IMDIS) to ensure data accuracy. Upon replacing IMDIS by Umoja, ESCWA will work towards tracking the integration budgets allocated for gender mainstreaming. Progress in implementing this policy, which is based on the 15 UN-SWAP performance indicators, will continue to be reported to the Executive Board in an ESCWA annual report. Progress is also reported in an UN-SWAP report submitted annually to UN-Women. To ensure information disclosure and full transparency, ESCWA will upload its UN-SWAP work plan and annual report on its website.

The ESCWA revised evaluation policy¹⁴ is fully in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group guidance document.¹⁵ Gender equality is one of the key guiding principles of the ESCWA evaluation policy. All evaluations, whether discretionary or mandatory, including evaluations of subprogrammes, Development Account projects and extrabudgetary activities, will adhere to the revised evaluation policy. This will include developing consultant terms of reference and adopting a gender analysis approach in the evaluation report.

ESCWA is committed to reviewing its Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women every five years to ensure it is up to date and aligned with new United Nations mandates. Progress in implementing the Policy will be monitored regularly and reported on annually through UN-SWAP.

¹⁴ Available from <http://css.escwa.org.lb/pptcd/EvaluationPolicyJuly2014.pdf>.

¹⁵ United Nations Evaluation Group, *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation – Towards UNEG Guidance* (2011). Available from www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/980.

Annex I

GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AT ESCWA

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) developed its Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender at ESCWA in July 2005, which assessed the gender situation at the Commission and identified key achievements realized prior to its implementation, including a commitment to gender mainstreaming; the establishment of the Women and Development Unit that was upgraded to the Centre for Women in 2003; the appointment of gender focal points in all divisions; and the partial inclusion of a gender perspective in the work of some divisions. The Strategy also identified the following challenges: lack of capacity building on gender issues; absence of accountability; resistance towards mainstreaming gender in the work of ESCWA; and absence of financial and human resources. In bridge these gaps, the Strategy identified seven key elements to guide ESCWA work, namely leadership and commitment; policy; capacity-building; institutional arrangements; communication; monitoring and evaluation; and institutional learning.

In 2009, ESCWA assessed and updated its 2005 Strategy in the light of new United Nations mandates, such as the Secretary General's bulletin on departmental focal points for women in the Secretariat.¹ In response, the updated 2009 Strategy proposed specific recommendations, including senior management formally endorsing and activating the Strategy; developing a policy for gender equality and the empowerment of women to guide ESCWA work; allocating human and financial resources to the Centre for Women; providing mandatory gender training to all staff; appointing gender focal points in all divisions; appointing departmental focal point for women in response to the new United Nations mandate; and continuing to disseminate gender focused newsletter.

Since 2009, significant progress has been achieved in monitoring, assessing and addressing gender equality issues. A key achievement in this area was the piloting and rolling out of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) in 2011/2012. Piloting UN-SWAP entailed reviewing all ESCWA activities vis-à-vis its 15 indicators to establish a baseline with respect to gender mainstreaming. The piloting exercise, based on extensive internal consultation, revealed that ESCWA had mainstreamed gender in its activities with varying degrees of success. Results revealed a leadership commitment to ensure the institutionalization of gender at the Commission, which led to the reactivation of the Gender Focal Points Network (GFPN) in July 2011, emphasizing the need to consider gender issues as a priority. Gaps and challenges at both the planning and implementation levels were also identified. Key challenges included the absence of an accountability framework for senior managers, the absence of gender analysis and sex disaggregated data across the ESCWA strategic framework, inconformity of the ESCWA evaluation policy with the United Nations Evaluation Group guidelines,² and the lack of a financial tracking system to determine the disbursement of funds to promote gender equality.

The UN-SWAP reporting for 2012 and 2013 reflected achievements in advancing gender equality, especially with respect to mainstreaming a gender perspective in central strategic planning. Notable progress was also achieved in the area of programme review through the launch of the ESCWA Performance Monitor (EPM) report that classifies all ESCWA activities according to three levels of engendering. ESCWA also maintained good practices in the area of capacity assessment by conducting an all-staff survey to evaluate staff knowledge of gender mainstreaming and their capacity to conduct gender analysis. Results of the staff assessment survey informed the formulation of a capacity development plan on gender mainstreaming. By doing so, ESCWA created a niche for itself in an area of weakness across the United Nations system where only 24 per cent of entities met this requirement in 2013.

¹ Available from www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/stsgeb2008121Aug2008.pdf.

² United Nations Evaluation Group, *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation – Towards UNEG Guidance* (2011). Available from www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/980.

In 2013, ESCWA continued to demonstrate improvement in advancing gender equality and women empowerment as reflected in its UN-SWAP performance, where its “meets requirement” rating increased to 40 per cent, compared to only 13 per cent in 2012. This placed ESCWA within the average of the Secretariat performance, meeting or exceeding requirements in 41 per cent of UN-SWAP performance indicators; and the average of the United Nations system, meeting or exceeding requirements in 42 per cent of those indicators.

A key achievement at ESCWA was the allocation of human resources for the promotion of gender equality within the organization through the appointment of a Senior SWAP Coordinator with direct reporting lines to the Executive Secretary. This accelerated and strengthened accountability and assisted in achieving paradigm shifts.

Furthermore, ESCWA launched an electronic tracking system for flexible working arrangements with the aim of supporting staff in achieving work-life balance and promoting gender equality at the organization. The tracking system was introduced through e-STAD to identify and address resistance to the implementation of the flexible working arrangements policy.

ESCWA also implemented its first participatory gender audit in 2014 to provide detailed information on how gender is mainstreamed at the planning, implementation and evaluation levels at ESCWA. The gender audit also established a baseline performance and set benchmarks for measuring progress. Its results identified progress in certain areas, including leadership commitment and the existence of operating mechanisms to facilitate the integration of gender in all organizational outputs. It also identified gaps in capacity development, the availability of financial resources and gender equality and the empowerment of women; and shed light on the importance of developing the ESCWA Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women Policy to replace the ESCWA Gender Mainstreaming Strategy to ensure conformity with UN-SWAP requirements.

The ESCWA Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women addresses all the above-mentioned gaps and builds on ESCWA achievements.

Annex II

ESCWA HUMAN RESOURCES ACTION PLAN: TOWARDS GENDER PARITY (2014-2017)

I. BACKGROUND

The United Nations first called for gender parity in 1970, when the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the employment of women at senior and professional levels. It also requested all United Nations bodies to take measures to ensure equal employment opportunities for qualified women at senior and professional levels.¹ This was followed by the adoption of a series of resolutions aimed at achieving gender parity. In 1986, the General Assembly reaffirmed the need to increase the overall participation of women in the United Nations system. It set the target at 30 per cent of all posts, subject to geographical distribution, to be reached by 1990.² In 1990, this target was increased to 35 per cent of posts, subject to geographical distribution, particularly in senior policy-level and decision-making posts, to be reached by 1995. Moreover, a goal of 25 per cent for D1 levels and above was also set for the year 1995.³ In 1995, the General Assembly called on the Secretary-General to ensure that women held 50 per cent of managerial and decision-making positions by 2000.⁴ This goal was reaffirmed⁵ and redefined⁶ to include 50/50 gender distribution by 2000 in all categories of posts, especially at the D1 level and above, with full respect for the principle of equitable geographical distribution, and also taking into account the under-representation of women from certain countries, in particular from developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The General Assembly has also stressed the need to respond to the lack of women's representation by developing innovative recruitment strategies to identify and attract suitably qualified women candidates.⁷

In 1999, the Under-Secretary-General for Management issued a series of measures⁸ on recruitment, promotion and placement, with a view to achieving gender parity at all levels and developing an implementation and monitoring mechanism. This was followed by a gender balance strategy for the United Nations Secretariat⁹ that set out a framework for achieving the above-mentioned mandate of the Secretary-General on gender parity. It proposed reforms at various levels to increase awareness among staff; improve recruitment and selection processes; provide increased opportunities for career development; facilitate spousal employment; increase flexible working arrangements; and provide day-care facilities.

In 2006, the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) issued a United Nations system-wide policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women,¹⁰ in which members of CEB committed themselves to advancing gender equality within the United Nations system at all levels. In 2012, the United Nations System Wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) was designed as a tool to implement the CEB policy.

¹ General Assembly resolution 2715 (XXV) on the employment of qualified women in senior and other professional positions by the secretariats of organizations in the United Nations system.

² General Assembly resolution 41/206 on personnel questions.

³ General Assembly resolution 45/239 on personnel questions.

⁴ General Assembly resolution 50/164 on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat.

⁵ General Assembly resolution 51/67 on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat.

⁶ General Assembly resolution 52/96 on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat.

⁷ General Assembly resolution 59/164 on the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system.

⁸ United Nations, *Special measures for the achievement of gender equality* (1999). Available from http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:OuzgivoT3aEJ:https://www.unodc.org/hrsa/staff_assistance/pdf/career/ai1999gendereq.doc+&cd=5&hl=en&ct=clnk.

⁹ Available from www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/ianwge/NEW%20Gender%20Balance%20Strategy_march%202010_Anex%206.pdf.

¹⁰ Available from www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/gm/UN_system_wide_P_S_CEB_Statement_2006.pdf.

UN-SWAP set the target to achieve gender parity within the United Nations system by 2017. The Economic and Social Council welcomed its development and called on the United Nations system to actively engage in its roll-out.¹¹

Several UN-SWAP indicators, on which organizations are required to report annually, refer to the management of human resources. The indicator on “gender architecture” requires United Nations entities to reach equal representation of women at the general service level and at the P4 and above levels. To achieve this target, UN-SWAP requires all United Nations entities to develop a realistic human resources plan, including an assessment of staff and special measures to fill the gap in women’s representation. The present document sets out a human resources action plan for the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to respond to UN-SWAP requirements. It presents the current situation at ESCWA in terms of human resources and proposes possible measures to achieve the goal of gender parity and the advancement of women.

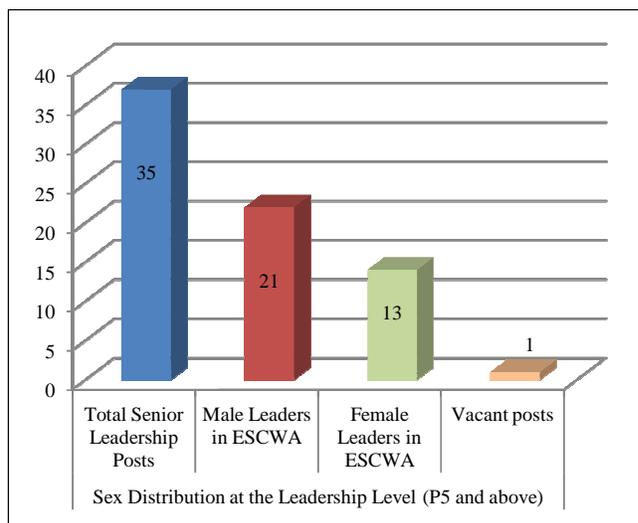
II. STATUS QUO AND ESCWA OPERATING CONTEXT

Human resources data cannot be considered separately from the context in which an organization operates, given that its mandate, geographic location and organizational culture are all factors that influence staff composition. It is therefore difficult to compare staff composition across different organizations or even different offices within the United Nations system. Nevertheless, for the purpose of improving gender equality, it is instructive to look at staffing data and, taking into account specific circumstances relevant to ESCWA, draw conclusions and propose measures that work in its context. Women’s representation at ESCWA as of June 2014 is presented in the following section.

A. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AT THE SENIOR LEVELS

Figure I shows that ESCWA has 35 posts at the senior levels (P5 and above) of which one is vacant at the D2 level. Of the 34 occupied posts, 13 are held by women (38.2 per cent) and 21 are held by men (61.8 per cent).

Figure I. Representation of women at the senior levels



The relatively low number of women in leadership positions is a challenge faced by agencies throughout the United Nations system. With very few exceptions, most agencies fall short of achieving gender parity in this category and ESCWA is no exception.

¹¹ Economic and Social Council resolution 2012/24 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system.

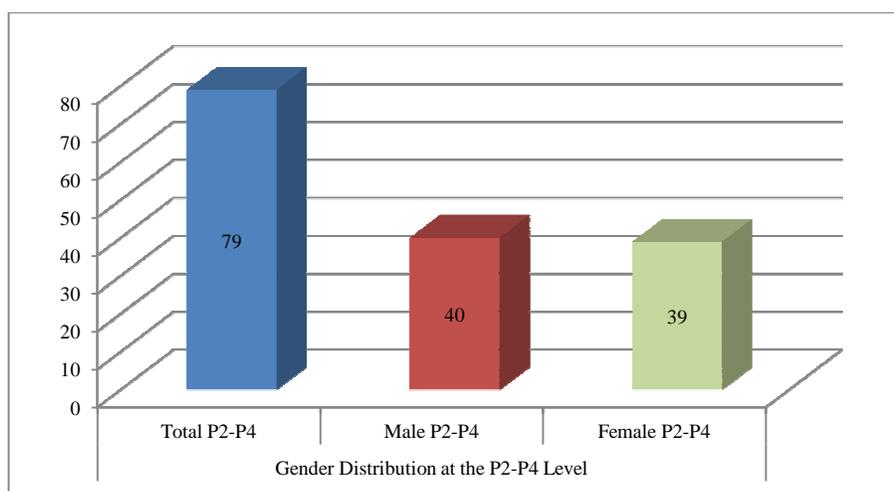
TABLE 1. SENIOR-LEVEL DATA DISAGGREGATED BY GRADE

Grade	Total	Vacant		Men		Women	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
P5	25	0	0	14	56	11	44
D1	8	0	0	6	75	2	25
D2	2	1	50	1	50	0	0
Total	35	1		21		13	

B. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AT THE JUNIOR AND MID-LEVELS

Figure II shows that women are underrepresented at the junior and mid-levels (P2-P4) at ESCWA.

Figure II. Representation of women at the junior and mid-levels at ESCWA



In the United Nations system, the category of junior and mid-level professionals (P1-P4) is not homogenous. There is a marked difference between the P1-P3 levels and the P4 level. At the P1-P3 level, women are usually equally represented or even overrepresented. This however changes at the P4 level, where women's representation is significantly lower.

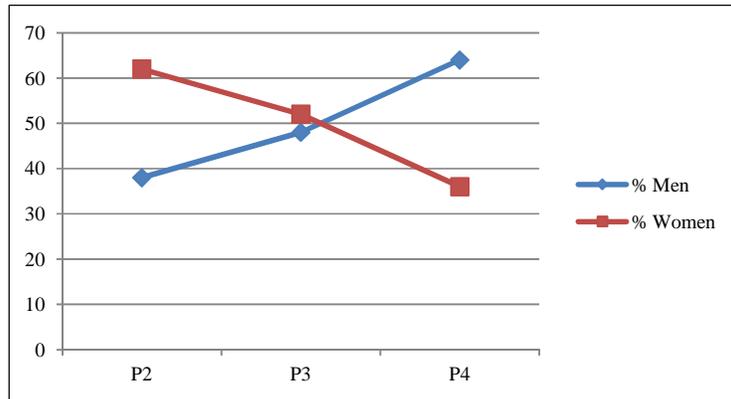
Table 2 shows that women's representation drops significantly at the P4 grade at ESCWA. There are 79 posts at the P2 to P4 grades, of which 40 are occupied by men (50.7 per cent) and 39 by women (49.4 per cent). At the P2 and P3 levels, 27 of 46 posts filled by women (55 per cent). This number drops to 12 of 33 (36 per cent) at the P4 level.

TABLE 2. JUNIOR AND MID-LEVEL DATA DISAGGREGATED BY GRADE

Grade	Total	Men	Women
P2-P3	46	19	27
P4	33	21	12
Total	79	40	39

Figure III shows that women's representation is much higher at the P2 and P3 levels, compared to the P4 level.

Figure III. Representation of women at the P2 to P4 levels

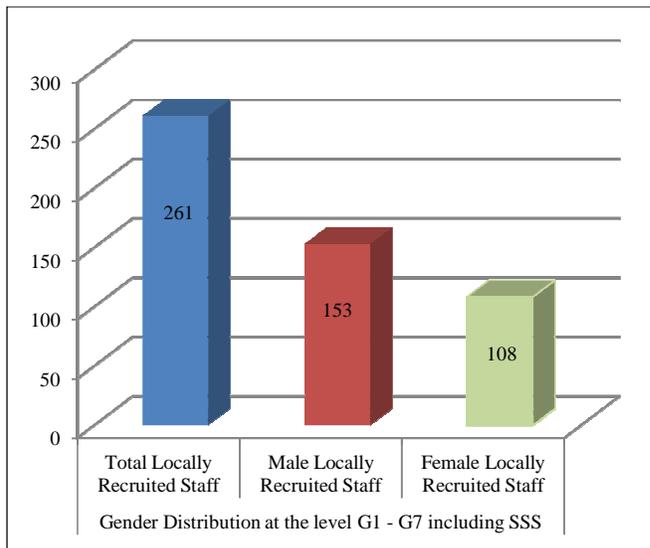


This drop in the number of women at the P4 level and above indicates that they are not progressing into senior positions either because there are issues with their career progression, i.e. women **getting stuck** at the junior level; or because of problems with the retention of women at the organization, i.e. they are **dropping out** of the workforce before progressing to the P4 level.

C. WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION AT THE GENERAL SERVICE LEVEL

The analysis of gender distribution at the general service level must take into account that ESCWA has an unusually high number of security personnel, who are predominantly men. Figure IV shows the distribution of staff by sex, including the Security and Safety Section (SSS). It shows that ESCWA has 261 staff members at the general service level, of which 153 (59 per cent) are men and 108 (41 per cent) are women.

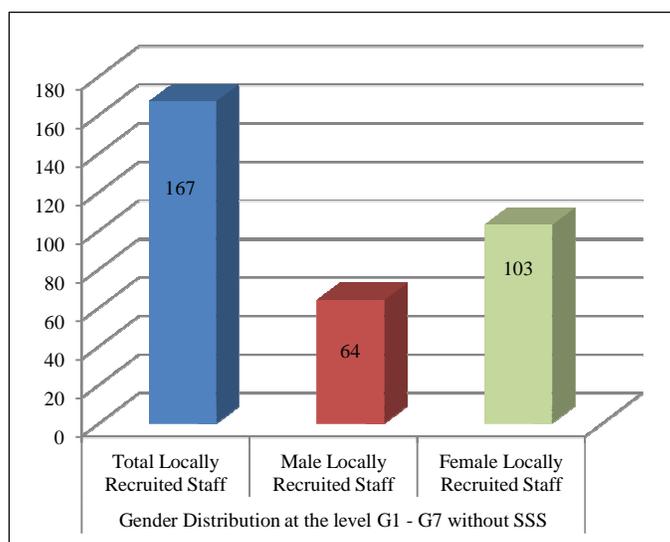
Figure IV. Representation of women at the general service level, including SSS



Women’s representation in the local staff category is usually significantly higher than that of men throughout the United Nations system. However, at ESCWA, because of the high number of predominantly male security staff, the sex distribution of local staff is inverted.

Figure V shows the distribution of staff by sex without SSS, reflecting the high number of women at the general service level. Of 167 staff members, 64 (38 per cent) are men and 103 (62 per cent) are women.

Figure V. Representation of women at the general service level, excluding SSS



The above numbers reveal that there is room for improvement at all levels and special measures should be taken to achieve gender parity.

In terms of human resources rules, policies and practices, ESCWA operates within the broader framework of the United Nations Secretariat rules, where a number of measures are prescribed to achieve equal representation of women. Within this framework, ESCWA should establish practices to increase women's representation at all levels, while ensuring that relevant rules are followed.

III. PROPOSED ACTIONS TO PROMOTE GENDER PARITY AT ESCWA

To promote gender parity in all staff categories, the following measures are proposed for ESCWA.

A. RECRUITMENT

The following are possible areas of action at the recruitment level:

(a) *Outreach/recruitment*

In order to shortlist and select qualified women candidates, they must first be encouraged to apply to ESCWA positions. ESCWA should therefore take proactive steps to attract qualified women candidates, by identifying sources where such candidates can be approached and by strengthening existing partnerships with government entities and universities to increase the pool of women applicants. The following measures should be considered:

- Creating an inventory of potential sources where qualified female candidates can be approached, in collaboration with the ESCWA Strategic Directions and Partnerships Section. This should include universities, research institutes, Governments, non-governmental organizations and regional and international recruitment websites;
- Creating/updating the distribution list of partners, conducting outreach missions and holding events. The list should be used to create long-term collaborations in the area of talent sourcing. Vacancies should regularly be distributed to partners and visits should be organized to market ESCWA in these institutions as an employer of women;

- Placing targeted advertisements in different outlets to increase ESCWA visibility;
- Emphasizing on the Commission's website and in advertisements that ESCWA and the United Nations are family-friendly employers. This may require a revamp of the employment page, which could be done in collaboration with the ESCWA Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Policy Section;
- Explicitly encouraging women to apply to vacancy announcements by adding a relevant statement in them;
- Actively monitoring and managing the existing Inspira (United Nations job listings) pools. Qualified female candidates who were not selected for posts should be added to a female talent pool that the Human Resources Management Services can refer to for similar vacancies. They might not apply a second time because they were discouraged by failing once, but if approached, they might still be interested;
- Using existing materials and tools of the Office of Human Resources Management outreach unit, such as presentations and social media.

(b) *Selection process*

The selection process at the United Nations Secretariat is designed to ensure that the most qualified candidate is selected for any given vacancy. Nevertheless, biases can affect the ultimate outcome. For example, the number of female applicants is generally significantly lower than the number of male applicants (usually by 50 per cent at ESCWA) and selection panels are dominated by men (currently ESCWA requires the presence of at least one woman). This may lead to biased results in favour of male candidates. Moreover, certain fields, such as ICT, tend to be predominantly male staffed, which might also discourage women from applying for such jobs. It is therefore important to ensure that a sufficient number of female candidates apply for each post, so that the hiring manager has a balanced pool. Furthermore, the selection panels should be more evenly balanced, both in terms of gender and geographic distribution. The following measures should be considered:

- Extending vacancy closing dates by two additional weeks when the number of women applicants is below 30 per cent at the original closing date;
- Providing support and encouragement to hiring managers so that they identify at least one woman on the shortlist for each selection process. If a woman cannot be identified, justification from the hiring manager should be provided;
- Requiring a justification from the hiring manager to the Executive Secretary if a suitable woman candidate is not selected;
- Ensuring an equal number of men and women on each selection panel.

B. STAFF RETENTION

Throughout the United Nations system, it appears that women are not retained at the same rate as men. At the stage where they should enter the more senior ranks of professional staff, many women drop out of the system. The following measures should be considered to retain female staff at ESCWA:

- Promoting flexible working arrangements to ensure a work-life balance;
- Conducting exit interviews to assess whether the reasons for leaving are related to work-life issues or perceived disadvantages for female staff. Results of exit interviews will feed into the development of new measures to ensure the retention of qualified women;
- Updating the human resources plan every five years to respond to new developments in the organization.

C. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

As the above figures show, the number of women in senior positions is significantly lower than that of men, and that this imbalance does not exist at the junior professional levels (P1-P3). At ESCWA, as in most other United Nations entities, the striking deterioration of female representation occurs at the career progression from P3 to P4.

The phenomenon of women either dropping out or getting stuck can be addressed through the following measures:

- Providing leadership training opportunities for women: In many respects the workplace challenges faced by women are different from those of men. A multitude of targeted personal development and training programmes have been developed and are used widely in international organizations. They can be useful to help talented women obtain or retain leadership roles;
- Advertising and enforcing work-life policies for all: Effective work-life policies benefit mainly women who often carry out double duties as working mothers. The United Nations Secretariat has a number of such policies in place but they are not consistently applied. ESCWA will promote work-life balance policies to ensure that all staff – men and women – have equal access to them;
- Establishing a mentoring programme and targeted career counselling for female professionals at ESCWA: Aspiring female leaders may benefit from the experience of more senior women already in leadership positions. Sharing their experiences could help develop the careers of younger women;
- Designing and administering mandatory gender training for all staff to re-enforce gender awareness and interaction between male and female leaders;
- Disseminating the ESCWA Human Resources Action Plan widely within the Commission to encourage women employees to benefit from the special measures proposed. This will contribute to an organizational culture that welcomes women's participation in senior positions.

IV. PROPOSED TARGETS

To implement the action plan and allow ESCWA to track its success, the following targets shall be applicable for the period 2014-2017.

TABLE 3. TARGETS AT THE SENIOR LEVELS

	Status quo		Target 2017		Target female staff 2014	Target female staff 2015	Target female staff 2016	Target female staff 2017
	Female	Male	Female	Male				
P5, D1, D2	13	21	18	19	14	15	16	18

TABLE 4. TARGETS AT THE MID-LEVEL

	Status quo		Target 2017		Target female staff 2014	Target female staff 2015	Target female staff 2016	Target female staff 2017
	Female	Male	Female	Male				
P4	12	21	16	17	13	14	15	16

Achieving the above targets will depend on a number of factors, some of which are not under ESCSWA control. While vacancy rates are predictable between 2014 and 2017 (approximately four at the levels P5 and above and seven at the P4 level), turnover rates are more difficult to estimate. Increasing the

number of women requires a corresponding reduction in the number of men. However, this is only possible if the turnover rate of men is higher than that of women, as replacing women with women will not increase the overall number of female staff. Therefore, to achieve the targets, it is necessary to reduce the dropout rate of women at the relevant levels and increase the turnover of men, who are then replaced by women.

TABLE 5. TARGETS AT THE GENERAL SERVICE LEVEL (EXCLUDING SSS)

General service staff	Status quo		Target 2017		Target male staff 2014	Target male staff 2015	Target male staff 2016	Target male staff 2017
	Female	Male	Female	Male				
	103	64	84	83	70	75	80	83

Table 5 shows that the number of men needs to be increased at the general service level. ESCWA advertises around 10 vacancies yearly for locally recruited general service staff. Therefore, under normal circumstances, the above targets should be achievable. However, as mentioned earlier, there are a number of factors outside ESCWA control that influence the gender ratio.

V. IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING THE ESCWA HUMAN RESOURCES ACTION PLAN

Accountability for overseeing the Human Resources Action Plan rests with the ESCWA Executive Secretary, with support from the Director of the Administrative Services Division. Monitoring the implementation of the Plan through human resources tools, such as gender scorecards to measure progress, is the responsibility of the Chief of Human Resources Management Section. Hiring managers are equally responsible for ensuring that the Plan is implemented in ESCWA divisions.

TABLE 6. RESPONSIBILITIES

Task	Division/Person responsible	Resources required
Outreach/recruitment		
Creating an inventory of potential sources where qualified female candidates can be approached	Human resources (HR)	Not applicable (N/A)
Creating/updating distribution lists of partners and conducting outreach missions and events	HR	
Allocating funds for targeted advertisements to increase ESCWA visibility among the target audience	Hiring Division	Advertisement fee (could be covered from the post allocated funds)
Emphasizing ESCWA and the United Nations as family-friendly employers on the Commission's website and in advertisements	HR, ICT Policy Section, United Nations Information Centre, SWAP Coordinator	N/A
Explicitly encouraging women to apply for vacancies by adding a relevant statement in job listings	HR, hiring manager	N/A
Actively monitoring and managing existing Inspira pools	HR	N/A
Working with the Office of Human Resources Management outreach unit to use United Nations social media platforms, etc.	HR	N/

TABLE 6 (continued)

Task	Division/Person responsible	Resources required
Selection process		
Ensuring that at least 30 per cent of applicants for vacant posts are women (if not, readvertising or extending the deadline)	Ensuring that at least 30 per cent of applicants for vacant posts are women (if not, readvertising or extending the deadline)	Ensuring that at least 30 per cent of applicants for vacant posts are women (if not, readvertising or extending the deadline)
Ensuring that at least one woman is shortlisted for each vacant position	Hiring manager	N/A
Ensuring an equal number of men and women on each selection panel	Hiring manager/HR	N/A
Requiring a justification from the hiring manager to the Executive Secretary if a suitable woman is not shortlisted/selected	Hiring manager/HR	N/A
Staff retention		
Promoting flexible working arrangements to ensure a work-life balance	Senior management, division directors and section chiefs	N/A
Conducting exit interviews to assess if discrimination or harassment was a reason for leaving the organization. Results of exit interviews should feed into the development of new measures to ensure the retention of qualified women	HR section, ESCWA focal points on women/alternates	N/A
Updating the HR Action Plan every five years to respond to new developments at ESCWA	HR	N/A
Staff development		
Designing and offering opportunities to train women for leadership positions	Senior management, HR	N/A
Advertising and enforcing a work-life policy for all	HR	
Establishing an internal mentoring programme and targeted career counselling for female professionals at ESCWA	HR	N/A
Introducing improved working-from-home policies	HR, hiring managers	N/A
Designing and administering mandatory gender trainings for all staff to raise gender awareness and enhance interaction between male and female leaders	SWAP Senior Coordinator in coordination with UN Women/HR	to be determined
Encouraging female employees at ESCWA to benefit from the special measures by widely disseminating the Plan and sending a broadcast announcement	HR	N/A

Annex III

**CAPACITY-DEVELOPMENT PLAN ON GENDER EQUALITY
AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN
(2015)**

INTRODUCTION AND OVERALL GOAL

In line with ECOSOC resolution 2006/36, ESCWA is committed to developing specific training for staff at different levels. Capacity-building is a fundamental component of the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) that requires ESCWA to provide online mandatory training for all staff, one training day for new recruits, two training days for gender focal points and a specialized training course for senior managers. The Plan aims to bridge the capacities gap of ESCWA staff members to build their gender competence and enable them to adopt a gender sensitive approach in their respective divisions.

TRAINING

Training	Target group	Estimated cost	Expected time
Mandatory online training course entitled "I know gender"	All staff	NA	Ongoing
Specialized training for gender focal points and new recruits (topic to be decided)	Members and alternates of the Gender Focal Points Network and new recruits	NA	September 2015
Training for senior management	Senior managers	\$4,200 (to be secured through fund raising)	October 2015

Annex IV

**DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN ON THE ESCWA GENDER
FOCAL POINT NETWORK
(2015)**

Task	Focal point	Deadline	Resources needed (approximate work days per month)	Follow-up notes
Preparatory and organizational tasks				
Developing an implementation plan and discussing it with Gender Focal Point Network (GFPN) members	GFPN Chairperson	January	0.5 day	
Holding monthly meetings	Chairperson and focal points	Ongoing	3 days (24 hours)	
Drafting minutes of meetings and disseminating them	GFPN Secretary	Each month	3 days (32 hours)	
Holding quarterly meetings with the Executive Secretary	Executive Secretary, Chairperson and focal points	April – August – December	1.5 day (12 hours)	
Staff assessment				
Developing and implementing a staff assessment questionnaire on organizational culture	To be decided	March	2 days (16 hours)	
Drafting a report and disseminating results	To be decided	April and May	6 days (128 hours)	
Capacity development				
Preparation and provision of training for 2015	Chairperson	September – October	10 days (80 hours)	
Engendering publications (25 per cent of divisions publications)				
Providing substantive input to divisions	Focal points and alternates in their respective divisions	Ongoing	10 per cent of the time of the GFPN to work on engendering publications and projects	
Discussing selected publications at GFPN monthly meetings	Chairperson	Ongoing	Part of the time allocated for the monthly meeting	
Working closely with publication authors to engender publications	Chairperson	Ongoing	To be decided	

Task	Focal point	Deadline	Resources needed (approximate work days per month)	Follow-up notes
Engendering projects (50 per cent of divisions' projects)				
Providing substantive input to divisions	GFPN members and alternates	Ongoing	10 per cent of GFPN time to work on engendering publications and projects	
Discussing selected publications during GFPN monthly meetings	Chairperson	Ongoing	Part of the time allocated for the monthly meeting	
Working closely with publication authors to engender projects	Chairperson	Ongoing	To be decided	
Recruitment				
Following up on the ESCWA HR gender parity plan	HR member in the gender focal point network	Ongoing	To be decided	
Appointing a departmental focal point for women as per document ST/SGB/2008/12	Executive Secretary	March 2012	0.1 day	
Reviewing recruitments to ensure alignment with ESCWA HR gender parity plan	Departmental focal point/alternate and HR GFPN member	Ongoing	To be decided	
Monitoring and follow-up				
Monitoring the implementation of the Draft Implementation Plan for the ESCWA Gender Focal Point Network	GFPN Chairperson and Secretary	Ongoing		
Report on UN-SWAP	Chairperson	December	40 hours (5 days)	