



UPU Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women

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I. Introduction

A. *United Nations mandates on gender equality and empowerment of women*

1 In adopting the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, following the Fourth World Conference on Women, the United Nations affirmed its commitment to advancing women's rights and achieving the goal of gender equality and empowerment of women (GEEW) and its two sub-goals, namely gender parity in employment,¹ and mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes.² Since adoption of the Beijing Declaration, the UN has taken a number of steps to implement this goal:

- 2006: The UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) approved the UN System-Wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women as a means of implementing the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the UN system.
- 2012: The CEB adopted the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) to promote a common understanding and enhance system-wide coherence of, and advance a progressive approach to, gender mainstreaming. UN-SWAP 1.0 applied throughout the UN system until 2017.
- 2015: The UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), of which Goal 5 specifically targets gender equality and women's empowerment.
- 2018: The CEB launched UN-SWAP 2.0, which updated and expanded on UN-SWAP 1.0, building in refinements and lessons learned and aligning it with the 2030 Agenda.

B. *UPU mandate on gender equality and empowerment of women*

2 The global UN mandates mentioned above lay the foundations for the UPU Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. The UPU has long demonstrated an interest in addressing gender equality issues and is committed to supporting broader progress on gender equality as a part of its mandate and mission.³ Efforts to promote GEEW at the UPU gained momentum and support during the 2017–2020 cycle. Moreover, a commitment to achieving the SDGs was demonstrated throughout consultations on the Abidjan Postal Strategy.⁴

3 A proposal of a general nature on GEEW, submitted to the Abidjan Congress with a supporting memorandum (Congress–Doc 39), was approved and codified as resolution C 10/2021, on gender equality and the empowerment of women at the UPU and in the postal sector.

4 To give effect to resolution C 10/2021, the Council of Administration (CA) instructed the UPU International Bureau (IB) to deliver a number of SDG-related outputs on:

- developing and implementing a policy on GEEW during the Abidjan cycle;
- adopting gender-neutral language and applying it to all Acts and documentation of the Union;

¹ In 2017, the UN developed the System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity – a milestone in operationalizing the goal of gender parity. The strategy provides a roadmap for reaching parity at the senior levels of leadership in the organization by 2021, and across the board by 2028, including through the establishment of targets and accountability, special measures and an enabling environment and the review of senior appointments and mission settings.

² In 2022, ECOSOC adopted a resolution on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the UN system, to ensure that all corporate and strategic documents of UN agencies are based on robust and systematic gender analysis and data disaggregation, and to mainstream the gender perspective through a dedicated gender equality outcome and the integration of GEEW across all other SDG-related outcome areas.

³ Resolutions CE 1/1976 and CA 4/1995 in particular address equality in recruitment. Additionally, the Doha Congress approved resolution C 74/2012, on the management of staff of the UPU International Bureau, with a view to achieving the best possible gender balance and the most equitable possible geographic distribution of IB staff. During the October 2019 session (S6) of Council of Administration Committee 1, many member countries showed spontaneous interest in promoting greater GEEW at the UPU, noting that no particular gender should be favoured in UPU staffing, policies or language.

⁴ CA C 3 2019.2–Doc 3.

- reporting annually to the CA on progress made in developing and implementing the policy;
- cooperating with the UN in promoting GEEW and gender mainstreaming.

5 As a first step, the UPU Acts resulting from the Abidjan Congress were published in gender-neutral language, and all subsequent documentation has been revised to ensure gender neutrality, as directed by Congress.

C. *Recent efforts by the UPU*

6 The principles of diversity and inclusion are embedded in the UPU's values and organizational culture. Gender equality is a critical aspect of, and dovetails with, both of these principles. In taking an intersectional approach,⁵ the UPU considers the diversity of its workplace in its efforts to promote equality and inclusion.

7 As the postal sector is traditionally male-dominated,⁶ inequalities often stem from historical and cultural gender biases. They also stem from stereotypes and views of certain groups or individuals based on their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, educational background, work experience, or other social factors.

8 Although progress has been made in some areas within the UPU and the postal sector, women's engagement in and contribution to postal leadership remains relatively limited. If this is to change, men must become women's partners and allies in supporting gender equality and ending discrimination and harassment. Men, like women, regardless of whether they are in leadership positions, can engage formally and informally in initiatives to consciously elevate women colleagues in the workplace. Achieving gender equality requires a collective effort.

9 The UPU strongly believes that a more inclusive, diverse and gender-balanced working environment is one where everyone, regardless of their gender, feels that they belong, that their contributions matter, and that they can reach their full potential.

10 Gender equality and the effective participation of women in postal services and operations are essential for meaningful action in all areas of sustainable development and for the creation of an enabling working environment. The UPU is committed to ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women in decision making within the organization and in global postal operations, as well as to removing barriers to women's full participation in postal business development. The equal participation of women and men is crucial for the social and economic development of postal services and operations.

II. **UPU Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women**

D. *Guiding principles*

11 As a UN specialized agency, the UPU recognizes GEEW as a fundamental human right and key component of social justice. The policy is based on the following guiding principles:

- *Universal human rights and the principle of leaving no-one behind:*⁷ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights applies to all individuals, regardless of their gender or socio-economic or legal status, at all times and in all places. It recognizes the equal worth of every person. The principle of universality and indivisibility of human rights must be integrated into all UPU policies, regulations, projects, programmes and activities. In addition, the pledges in the 2030 Agenda to "leave no one behind" and "reach the furthest behind first" reflect the unequivocal commitment of all UN member states to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind and undermine the potential of individuals and of humanity as a whole;

⁵ Intersectionality is an analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which gender intersects with other identities and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of oppression and privilege. Further information on intersectionality can be found at: www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/intersectionality_a_tool_for_gender_and_economic_justice.pdf.

⁶ Additional data on female and male employment in the wider postal sector can be found in Postal Statistics 2021, available at www.upu.int/en/publications/statistics/postal-statistics-2021.

⁷ For more information, see Operationalizing Leaving No One Behind. Good Practice Note for UN Country Teams, available at unsdg.un.org/resources/leaving-no-one-behind-unsdg-operational-guide-un-country-teams.

- *Principle of non-discrimination:* The founders of the United Nations declared their intention to “reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, [and] in the equal rights of men and women”. It is in this vein that the UPU commits to promoting gender equality and equal opportunities for female and male staff in their promotions and career progression and in recognizing and rewarding their performance, without discrimination based on race, gender, class, language or religion.

E. Scope and application

12 This policy is applicable to all IB staff at all levels, as well as to all UPU processes, programmes, projects, activities and operations related to postal services.

13 This policy is a living document and it will be revised during successive strategic planning cycles. Consultation with IB staff and UPU member countries will be necessary to maintain a clear, shared vision and explicit consensus on gender equality objectives and long-term commitments.

F. Policy development

14 This policy was developed through an analytic, participative and consultative approach, including consultation with member countries and UN agencies, as necessary, throughout 2022. It is also based on key findings from an extensive gap analysis and study of the UPU’s performance against UN-SWAP 2.0 performance standards, conducted in April–August 2022. The study shows in which areas the UPU has underperformed in promoting gender equality against the UN-SWAP 2.0 performance indicators and identifies opportunities for improvement.

15 During the consultative process, the UPU also drew on lessons learned and recommendations from annual reports to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) under UN-SWAP 2.0, as well as from inter-agency cooperation, such as virtual meetings with interested member countries, UN-SWAP annual conferences, peer reviews and face-to-face or virtual meetings with UN Women and other UN agencies.

16 In accordance with UN global mandates and resolution C 10/2021, the present policy aims to ensure that the IB is equipped to support the achievement of SDG 5 and applicable related targets, and that gender equality principles are embedded in the IB’s functions and operations.

G. UPU Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women 2023–2025

17 In the broadest sense, the UPU’s vision of GEEW for the postal sector can be summarized as “*gender equality today for a sustainable postal world tomorrow*”.

18 The UPU Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women 2023–2025 establishes a framework for the UPU’s work to achieve specific and applicable targets under SDG 5 during the Abidjan Cycle.⁸

19 This policy defines the measures and actions to be taken in mainstreaming the gender perspective, promoting GEEW and ensuring the equal representation of women and men in leadership and decision-making processes, to help the UPU to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and to improve its performance against UN-SWAP 2.0 indicators.

20 This policy provides the basis for a gender-transformative approach to developing the UPU organizational culture, leadership and decision making. By embracing UPU staff members’ differences, including their culture, ethnicity, geographic origin, religious beliefs, age, gender, political and social beliefs and legal status, this policy aims to establish a more inclusive culture that is free from gender bias and discrimination against women. The UPU aims to promote GEEW to ensure that women and men equally contribute to and participate in the organization’s work and decision making.

⁸ The UPU will contribute to achieving the following targets under SDG 5: 5.1, 5.5, 5.a, 5.b and 5.c.

21 The UPU Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women 2023–2025 does not contain any mandate for the development or enforcement of GEEW policies or practices by ministries, designated operators or regulatory authorities of member countries. Such mandates can be issued only by national authorities in line with the sovereign rights of those member countries.

22 As part of its strategic role in the global postal sector, the UPU encourages internal and external stakeholders – including member countries and their regulators, ministries and designated operators, in line with their national legislation, priorities and capacities – to support and contribute to the promotion of GEEW within the organization.

III. Principles of implementation

H. Methodology: GEEW theory of change

23 A theory of change is a methodology for planning, participation, adaptive management and evaluation that is used by international organizations, governments and private sector players to promote positive social change.

24 The UPU's GEEW theory of change describes how it will contribute to and endorse the changes that are required for the organization and the global postal sector as a whole to comply with UN standards and commitments on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

25 In accordance with UN-SWAP 2.0 standards, the GEEW theory of change is underpinned by a vision, namely that *gender equality training supports the implementation of broader gender mainstreaming strategies and contributes to reducing gender inequalities within the organization and the wider postal sector.*

26 This vision is accompanied by two sets of outcomes, as follows:

- Long term: IB staff participating in gender equality capacity-building initiatives will acquire the knowledge and ability to implement, and assume responsibility for, gender mainstreaming strategies, policies and processes;
- Short term: IB staff participating in gender equality capacity-building initiatives will have a better understanding of gender inequalities and gender mainstreaming in key policies and processes of the UPU.

27 The GEEW theory of change is based on a knowledge management, accountability and capacity-building approach that will lead to transformative changes in gender equality in the organization, and more broadly within the postal sector.

- Knowledge management: IB staff members will have access to knowledge resources to help them to understand issues related to GEEW and which policies and processes are in place at the UPU.
- Accountability: IB staff members will be encouraged and motivated to implement policies and processes that promote gender mainstreaming in their work. This will be achieved through a combination of appropriate incentives and a robust accountability framework that ensures compliance with, and promotes the achievement of, SDG 5 and applicable related targets.
- Capacity building: IB staff will acquire the skills and competencies needed to deliver on the UPU's commitment to achieving GEEW goals.⁹

28 Behavioural studies demonstrate that successful change must be guided through social interaction and capacity building. Hord and Roussin (2013) state that “change is more sustainable when it is driven by conditions that invite people to engage in social learning”.¹⁰

⁹ For more information, see the working paper “A theory of change for training for gender equality”, commissioned by the UN Women Training Centre, available at trainingcentre.unwomen.org/resources_library/resources_centre/01%20theory%20of%20change.pdf.

¹⁰ Hord, S. M. and Roussin, J. L. 2013. *Implementing Change Through Learning: Concerns-Based Concepts, Tools, and Strategies for Guiding Change*. 1st edition. Thousand Oaks: Corwin, p. 3.

- 29 The GEEW theory of change will be based on four assumptions and enabling factors:
- Gender mainstreaming is an integral part of the UPU’s strategic planning, implementation and reporting processes;
 - There is political will among the UPU’s stakeholders to champion, promote and achieve gender equality and equal representation of women in postal operations;
 - At the leadership level, there is an understanding and recognition that gender mainstreaming is a transformative process and long-term commitment;
 - Leaders are willing to promote and achieve GEEW and address whatever risks and barriers may arise during the implementation of gender mainstreaming activities.

30 The GEEW theory of change will advocate for an intersectional approach, meaning that the UPU directorates should duly consider intersectionality when promoting GEEW in their respective areas of operation, and that corresponding changes should be made to those directorates’ systems and processes and reflected in the behaviours of their staff. The UPU will consult interested member countries and DOs to validate the above assumptions and enabling factors by testing them against available evidence. This will help to ensure that IB staff and member countries are aligned in their understanding of, and communication on, equal representation of women, gender culture and architecture, leadership commitment, performance management, staff learning and capacity, programmes, projects, activities, reporting and resourcing.¹¹

31 A number of risks may emerge during the implementation of the GEEW theory of change and undermine gender mainstreaming and the achievement of gender equality objectives and goals. These include:

- Fundraising constraints, insufficient donor contributions and a lack of channels for mobilizing further resources, which could adversely affect resource availability and/or the implementation of gender equality programmes;
- Limited awareness among IB staff at all levels of their critical role in implementing UN-SWAP 2.0-aligned policies and in ensuring staff accountability and performance;
- Limited capacity of leadership to eliminate unconscious biases or establish an organizational culture in which internal networking, communication and knowledge- and information-sharing effectively promote gender mainstreaming.

32 Some of these risks can be mitigated by making incremental changes to the working methods and culture of the UPU, and by systemically building the capacity of UPU staff. The mitigation of other risks, such as those related to resourcing needs, will take longer and require coordinated action among the UPU’s core stakeholders. Risk mitigation measures will be addressed in detail during the cycle and will be taken into account in the implementation process.

33 To realize the vision of the GEEW theory of change, the UPU will support the GEEW learning process as necessary and ensure that all participants acquire a sound understanding of the UPU’s GEEW policies and processes. To evaluate the effectiveness of learning activities and training on GEEW, the UPU will evaluate the knowledge and skills of training participants through pre- and post-training capacity assessments, interviews, workshops, and continual follow-up.

34 The ultimate objective of the GEEW theory of change is to enable the organization’s leadership to make the UPU less reactive and more proactive in its promotion of GEEW. The UPU envisages that transforming leadership will help to establish a more sustainable and gender-inclusive culture that will strengthen the effectiveness of the UPU’s mission to empower those who have been left behind or are at risk of being left behind.

35 The GEEW theory of change underpins and informs specific actions for the current cycle, and potentially beyond, as detailed below.

¹¹ Challenging outmoded ideas – for example that postal operations are for men only – could help to eliminate unconscious biases and eventually lead to social changes in the postal sector. This will require a collaborative and participatory approach in which multiple stakeholders (internal and external) share perspectives and allow the views of women and other underrepresented groups to be reflected as the theory of change is developed and validated.

I. Specific actions

36 Through this policy, the UPU will put in place several institutional arrangements for the progressive attainment of the performance standards set out in UN-SWAP 2.0.

37 To facilitate progress towards GEEW in the organization and the global postal sector, the UPU will:

- foster a gender-transformative culture to support gender mainstreaming in the organization, including in its governing bodies, and, to the extent feasible and allowable, in the global postal sector;
- ensure that leaders in the organization take responsibility for institutionalizing gender mainstreaming in all areas of the UPU's operations;
- strengthen the capacity of UPU staff to mainstream gender in the design and implementation of programmes to achieve gender-transformative outcomes;
- provide technical assistance to DOs and member countries to help them incorporate realistic and measurable GEEW goals into their policies, plans and programmes for the improvement of postal operations and services.

38 IB directorates, gender focal points and gender experts will periodically discuss and consult on measures for mainstreaming gender into the UPU's work.

39 UPU leadership (grades D 1 and D 2) will internally and publicly champion the promotion of GEEW to facilitate the achievement of gender-related targets under SDG 5 and other SDGs. The Director General and Deputy Director General of the IB will continue to internally and publicly champion the promotion of GEEW in the global postal sector and within the UN system.

40 An open and inclusive organizational culture that embraces diversity is required for effective gender knowledge management and communication. The UPU will work to facilitate information-sharing and communication on gender equality both internally and externally in accordance with its mandate.

41 The UPU will ensure that the IB's work, including its programmes, projects and activities, duly consider and integrate the gender perspective by taking into account women's and men's rights and the overarching goal of gender equality, so that staff of both genders benefit equally from the UPU's work while contributing to the achievement of GEEW goals. The UPU will also take account of the GEEW outcomes of individual programmatic initiatives that are not directly referred to in any particular corporate strategic planning document.

42 To integrate the gender perspective in a particular project, the UPU will need to consider a number of key elements in measuring the impact of that project, both quantitatively and qualitatively, on GEEW goals and outcomes. For instance, it should consider to what extent the project:

- involves the participation and empowerment of women, for example as project officers, steering committee members and so on;
- takes into consideration gender-specific needs and addresses specific gender conditions;
- addresses gender equality issues and targets that are relevant to the project;
- involves both female and male (internal and external) stakeholders in consultative and decision-making processes.

43 The UPU will work with internal and external stakeholders to ensure that appropriate planning and programming and remedial actions are undertaken to meet gender-specific needs and close gender gaps in the organization and the postal sector more broadly.

44 The championing of causes both internally and externally will be aligned with the UPU's missions and values and will support the promotion of GEEW as a UN norm. Furthermore, the UPU will take steps to address and eliminate gender biases in the organization with a view to transforming attitudes.

45 The gender perspective will be integrated into existing UPU core values, with appropriate competencies. To this end, the UPU will integrate GEEW into its diversity and inclusion values. This will be reflected in the competencies and ethical standards for all UPU vacancies and job descriptions.

46 Subject to the necessary budgetary allocations, the UPU will undertake regular capacity assessments¹² to assess the capacity, knowledge and skills of staff and member countries as pertaining to gender equality.¹³ The findings of these assessments will be used to develop and establish a capacity development plan to bridge gaps and meet the actual learning needs of UPU staff and postal sector stakeholders. The UPU will work to develop and introduce dedicated training programmes, mentorships, learning materials, webinars, workshops and other gender mainstreaming initiatives and materials as necessary.

47 To promote effective and direct communication, the UPU will continue to progressively integrate the gender perspective into decision-making processes, including in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes, so that staff of all genders benefit equally.

48 Furthermore, the UPU will maintain an inclusive, diverse and gender-friendly workplace atmosphere based on the principles of care, respect and freedom from harassment and abuse. In particular, it will:

- ensure that leaders, managers and all employees work to eliminate unconscious biases that may hamper efforts to maintain an enabling working environment and institutional culture;
- foster a more participative culture in which the contribution of all staff, regardless of their gender, is valued;
- apply UN ethics and related codes (e.g. the UN Code of Conduct); deliver mandatory training; adopt zero tolerance policies on unethical behaviour, discrimination and harassment; introduce special measures for the prevention of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and abuse of authority; discipline perpetrators of any such discrimination, harassment or abuse; resolve conflicts; and establish mechanisms for protection against retaliation;
- promote and report on the UPU's facilitative policies for maternity, paternity, adoption, family and emergency leave and breastfeeding and childcare, and revise and reinforce those policies where appropriate;
- promote and implement UN rules and regulations on work-life balance and track their implementation and impact on staff, disaggregated by gender and grade, using an internal mechanism.

49 The IB will review, report on and, in line with best practice, update UPU policies on facilitative and enabling environments.

50 The UPU will seek to allocate adequate resources to support its work on promoting GEEW within the organization and the global postal sector. To this end, it will assess and track its allocations using the Gender Equality Marker¹⁴ and define targets through internal and external consultations with member countries and external partners.

J. Partnerships

51 The UPU will be actively involved in and enhance cooperation with the inter-agency community of practice of the UN system. It will also attend UN-SWAP annual meetings and workshops and participate in and conduct UN-SWAP peer reviews with sister UN agencies every five years as a means of sharing best practices and lessons learned and building its internal capacity to report its performance against UN-SWAP indicators and track its progress towards achieving SDG 5.¹⁵

52 The UPU will seek to collaborate with external partners and donors that have demonstrated a commitment to GEEW to ensure that gender-related projects are properly pursued. Any future agreement with partners and external donors committed to gender equality will be considered in collaborative or joint programmes.

¹² Gender equality capacity assessments assess the understanding, knowledge and skills of an entity and its staff as pertaining to GEEW and the entity's gender architecture and policy.

¹³ According to UN Women, relatively small investments in the capacity of the gender architecture and all relevant personnel can have a significant impact on the successful implementation of UN-SWAP-aligned policies and ultimately the achievement of SDG and gender-related outcomes. ECOSOC resolution E/2011/6 establishes the need for assessment of staff vis-à-vis GEEW.

¹⁴ The Gender Equality Marker is a mandatory standard for the system-wide reporting of financial data to the International Aid Transparency Initiative and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. For more information, see "Data Standards for United Nations. System-wide Reporting of Financial Data", available at unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Data%20Standards%20for%20UN%20System%20Wide%20reporting%20of%20financial%20data_2023_Final.pdf.

¹⁵ The first UPU UN-SWAP peer review was conducted with the ITU in November 2022.

53 The UPU will work in cooperation with all partners – member countries, designated operators, donors, international organizations, civil society, NGOs, community groups and wider postal sector players – to integrate GEEW and to ensure the participation of women and effective gender mainstreaming in decision-making processes throughout the global postal sector.

K. Accountability

54 This policy calls for accountability at all levels within the UPU, as follows:

- Leadership (grades D1 and D2): As the main representatives of the UPU's mission and values, leadership, including the Director General and Deputy Director General, should foster a shared vision and understanding of GEEW. They will be responsible for the successful implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the policy;
- Managers (grades P4 and P5): Managers should comply with the policy and ensure that their teams are aware of and understand its aims. They are responsible for promoting and fostering understanding of the UPU's GEEW vision and applying it in their respective areas of work;
- All employees (all G and P grades, including consultants): All IB staff at all levels are responsible for implementing the organization's GEEW vision and for mainstreaming gender in their respective areas of work on a daily basis.

55 The UPU Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women was drafted on the basis of the performance and reporting standards for UN entities under UN-SWAP 2.0 and the guidance of UN Women on the development of GEEW policies. This will strengthen the overall capacity and accountability of the UPU in terms of achieving outcomes in gender mainstreaming, gender equality and the equal representation of women and men in the organization's work and the global postal sector.