

Web Annex XII: Gender Focal Points and Focal Points for Women

Performance Indicator 10: Gender Architecture and Parity, of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP), sets minimum standards for Gender Focal Points across the UN system. In order to meet requirements for the indicator, Gender Focal Points or equivalents at the HQ, regional and country levels must:

- be appointed at the P-4 level or higher;
- have written terms of reference;
- have at least 20 per cent of their time allocated to Gender Focal Point functions

Despite these minimum standards, a UN Women survey of Gender Focal Points across the UN system revealed that there remains a need to strengthen and invest in the UN's gender architecture.

Grade Level

The formal designation of Gender Focal Points (GFPs) at mid and decision-making levels is fundamental to ensuring the successful implementation and monitoring of gender policies and practices, including a facilitative and appropriate organizational culture. While 61 per cent of GFPs were reported to be at the P-4 level and higher, in compliance with the UN-SWAP requirement, a significant proportion of GFPs continue to be from lower levels as shown in the below figure of GFP level distribution.

Grade Level

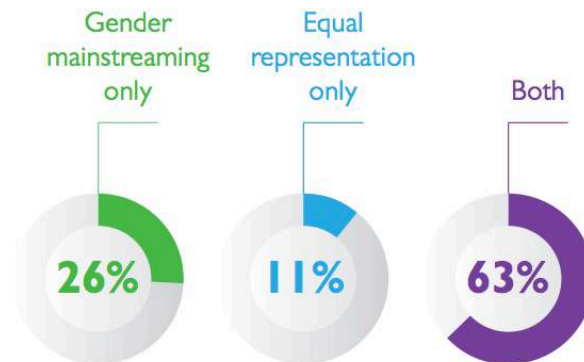


Focus Areas

As the recognition grows of gender equality's cross-cutting importance to the UN's ability to deliver effectively and embody the principles of equality it promotes, the workload of GFPs has increased, without commensurate changes to their resources and competing demands. Often

GFPs are expected to address both gender mainstreaming and gender parity issues within their organizations with 63 per cent of entities reporting that their GFPs handle both.

Focus Areas



Engagement of Men as GFPs

The participation of men broadens the realization that gender is a corporate priority not just a women’s issue, and importantly, their inclusion introduces diverse perspectives and strengthens understanding. Positively, several entities reported having “no challenges” in recruiting men as GFPs.

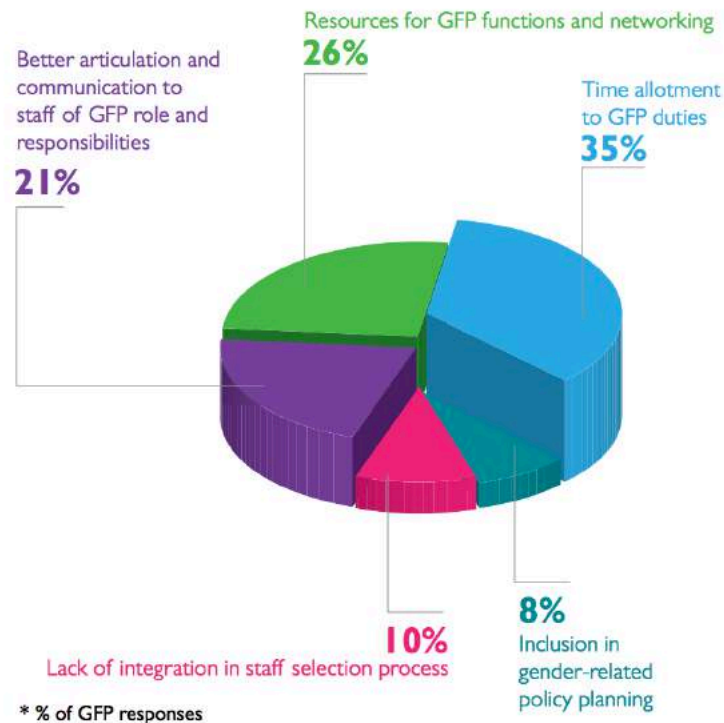
Several entities reported that encouragement from Senior Management to join Gender Teams and become Gender Focal Points facilitated the participation of men. Campaigns such as “WFP men for GEWE” help to elevate the profile and visibility of male engagement in mainstreaming gender, and dispel the idea that gender is a “women’s issue”. Proactively, ITC has ensured gender balance amongst its GFPs by instituting a policy requiring in cases where a male staff member is selected as Gender Focal Point, a female alternate is sought or vice versa.



Key challenges identified by GFPs

It is noteworthy that the greatest challenges identified by GFPs (as indicated in the below chart), correspond to the requirements needed to exceed Performance Indicator 10 of the UN-SWAP (time allocation, definition of duties, resources).

Challenges Facing Gender Focal Points



Based on the UN Women survey, the following additional challenges were reported by Gender Focal Points:

- Tendency to assign gender equality and women's empowerment work only to GFPs instead of seeing the work as an organization-wide responsibility to mainstream gender.
- Job descriptions of GFPs do not always include gender equality related duties and consequently GFPs' performance assessments lack this aspect.
- Overcoming the dismissive attitudes inside and outside the organization towards the role of GFPs.
- For many organizations, the integration of gender equality into their work is in its infancy and the foundational architecture is weak. The development of ToRs for GFPs, resources allotted, policies developed etc. would facilitate the work of GFPs.
- Several entities reported that because the GFP system is not systematized across operations, responsibilities often fall upon other staff such as focal points designated for sexual and gender-based violence work.

Entity Good Practices for Strengthening Gender Focal Points

- Gender equality is articulated by **Senior Management** as being a priority and **integrated into key planning documents**, leading to better integration of gender into programmes and respect for the work of GFPs.
- WIPO reported that several **capacity building workshops** significantly enhanced the momentum and efforts of their Gender Focal Points.
- **Unconscious bias and/or gender sensitivity trainings** increased organization-wide receptiveness to GFP's work and the importance of gender mainstreaming efforts.
- The introduction of the People First Project at ITC laid the foundation for implementing gender parity as an ITC policy, transforming an initially unpopular idea into a well-received component. In the last two years under the Executive Director's strong leadership, ITC has drastically transformed ITC's organizational culture into a **gender-responsive and work-friendly environment**.
- FAO uses an **online platform** to compile different resources and guidance materials, for gender mainstreaming in technical and institutional mechanisms in the various fields where FAO operates.
- WFP has recently relaunched its GFP programme as the Gender Results Network (GRN), with **robust ToRs** and **GRN teams in each CO and RB**. **Consistent newsletters, webinars and other forms of engagement** are leading to increased engagement and organization.