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# **ESCAP'S GENDER IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2021-2023**

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**Last update: 15 April 2022**



"I am committed to achieve and sustain gender parity at all levels and to promote an enabling and inclusive work environment at ESCAP. We are putting a range of initiatives in place to ensure that gender perspectives are reflected in the organizational practices and operations as well as technical programmes in support of our Member States. Actions at all fronts are necessary toward achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls in Asia and the Pacific."



Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana  
Executive Secretary  
ESCAP

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# IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2021-2023

Equal representation of women and men in the United Nations system is a longstanding mandate. Articles 8 and 10 of the UN Charter stipulate that there shall be no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs.

Gender parity remains a top priority for the Organization following the launch of the system-wide strategy on gender parity in 2017.

In this context, ESCAP's gender implementation plan was first implemented from 2018-2021. The plan was implemented to support gender parity efforts to ensure that ESCAP's workforce is diverse at all levels. Experiences in the implementation of the 2018 to 2021 plan, have allowed ESCAP to change and adjust to progress and changes in the external environment which in turn has informed the formulation of the activities for 2021-2023.

Overall, considering the changes in working arrangements and the workplace environment the year 2020 has brought and following a thorough analysis of women's responses to the ESCAP Staff Engagement Survey, ESCAP identified the need to update the Gender Strategy Implementation Plan by making some changes to the original list of activities and by adding new ones.

The below examples informed ESCAP's revised Implementation Plan for 2021-2023.

## STAFF ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS

An analysis of Staff Engagement Survey results by gender was conducted, providing valuable insights:

- On the 2019 Staff Engagement Survey, ESCAP female respondents gave the dimension of work-life balance a score of 67 – 9 points above the 2017 result of 58. This was the biggest score improvement registered out of all comparable dimensions among women in ESCAP.
  - ✓ ESCAP professional women rated this dimension 11 points more favorably in 2019 (52) than in 2017 (41) – the most significant score improvement. Nevertheless, the result was still lower than the score of 73 achieved among GS women in 2019.
- Staff-wellbeing was the highest scored dimension among ESCAP women (tied with Collaboration & Teamwork) and among ESCAP professional women on the 2019 Staff Engagement Survey.
- Female and male colleagues in the P & above category scored similarly in most dimensions except Alignment, Ethics, Trust & Integrity and Gender, Div., & Incl.
- When we look at the item level, the most significant gender differences among colleagues in the P & above category fall under the Gender, Diversity & Inclusion dimension, indicating a difference in perception of actions taken under this dimension depending on gender.
- 2019 ESCAP professional female respondents expressed higher favourability across almost all comparable dimensions than 2017 ESCAP professional

female respondents, except Retention (-7, score of 40). The dimension's score is notably lower among the 31-40 age group (28). Agility received the lowest score of 18 among professional female respondents within the 31 to 40 age group.

## COVID-19

UN Women's "Supplementary Guidance on the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System" recommends harnessing "mentoring networks and informal support systems to foster a sense of inclusion" in women as a talent management strategy.

In a year in which ESCAP staff mainly worked from home, initiatives such as the Together Mentoring Programme or the Informal Network of Women may owe its success to the increased desire of staff to find opportunities to connect. Besides reducing social isolation while working from home, these initiatives foster a sense of belonging in participants and can be of considerable value in integrating new staff. Mentoring is also known to help reduce stress levels, which were exceptionally high in the past two years. Finally, lockdown introduced new challenges and heightened existing ones for women. Having opportunities that support women in connecting with other women to share experiences, discuss strategies, and seek support remains of utmost importance.

The drastic increase in personnel in flexible work arrangements, mainly working remotely, called for additional action from ESCAP to facilitate discussions around working hours and consideration of challenges faced by families with a lack of childcare options and the requirement to support homeschooling. When work-life balance is being challenged, particularly women's, ESCAP has taken measures to safeguard staff-wellbeing.

To safeguard staff wellbeing, ESCAP intensified its offering of various self-care courses to staff to help cope with isolation, COVID-19 impact and working remotely, such as Stress Management, Identifying and Preventing Burnout and weekly meditation sessions. ESCAP created a dedicated intranet site to support staff in accessing mental health resources.

## OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (OSH)

ESCAP is committed to providing and maintaining safe and healthy work conditions, equipment, and work systems for all its personnel. ESCAP established a comprehensive COVID-19 preparedness plan in coordination with other UN and external entities such as the WHO and Thai local health authorities. ESCAP ensured COVID-19 prevention and mitigation policies and guidelines were developed and adhered to consistently. Workplace risk assessments to identify potential hazards and areas of substantial risk of exposure to COVID-19 were likewise performed. Extensive control measures were put in place, including engineering, administrative and protective controls. Examples of these are modifications of office layouts and other public areas, placement of markings on the floors for physical distancing, plexiglass barriers, provision of non-touch waste bins and hand sanitizers, provision of services by appointment only, not reporting to the office when not feeling well, staggered working hours and working remotely. These measures helped keep our staff safe and well during challenging times.

## SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES

Since 2018 ESCAP has identified systemic challenges that impact the achievement of gender parity in ESCAP. Increasing experience in implementing action items has brought with it further insights into the challenges that will be addressed over the coming year(s).

- Fields such as macroeconomics, transport and energy are traditionally male-dominated, resulting in a limited candidate pool and substantial challenges in identifying qualified female applicants. To address this challenge, ESCAP has increasingly utilized Linked-in recruiter access to identify female candidates in these fields and has reached out individually to possible applicants to generate interest in a UN career.
- The opposite phenomenon can be seen regarding the general service category, in which job positions are traditionally female-dominated.
- The organization's compensation package and benefits are no longer aligned with the market, making it challenging to attract and retain qualified women.
- Competition for female talent across the United Nations agencies and other international organizations offering more competitive compensation packages
- Need for a constructive engagement of men in the dialogue on gender parity. Generally, we noticed that events organized to discuss gender-related issues usually have low participation numbers from men.
- Lack of support Secretariat-wide for spousal employment

To address the identified challenges above and to attain parity at all levels, activities outlined in the Gender Strategy implementation plan focus on its three principal and interrelated areas: **(a) organizational culture; (b) capacity-building; and (c) monitoring gender indicators.**

## ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

### COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE:

- Boost trust by providing staff with safe options to raise issues and concerns:
  - ✓ Establish 'staff wellbeing groups' within Divisions that periodically organize sessions across divisions.
  - ✓ Set up a 'Staff Voice Box' (anonymous online form & physical box). Content will be reviewed regularly and proposed to be taken up at town halls and other opportunities for engagement with Senior management (SMT, Standing meetings).
- Increase and strengthen two-way communication between management and staff to enhance trust and provide a safe space for speaking up.
  - ✓ The Executive Secretary and members of the Senior Management Team periodically engage with all staff in informal 'standing meetings' where concerns, questions, and comments, including from the 'Staff Voice Box', will be addressed.
- Engage men in the conversation around gender, promoting dialogue and exchange of experiences and perspectives between men and women:
  - ✓ Invite more men to the Together Mentoring Programme in an

effort to balance percentage of women and men participating. This will allow for more cross-gender pairs to be formed.

✓ Open specific Informal Network of Women meetings to men.

- ESCAP continues to support its system of Gender Focal Points (GFPs), which are focal points in each Sub-programme responsible for coordinating and advocating for the substantive mainstreaming of gender within their thematic areas. Each focal point is appointed at the P4 level and above, in accordance with the terms of reference.
- In 2021, ESCAP ensured collaboration between GFPs in substantive divisions and HR to coordinate the implementation of the UN SWAP and internal gender mainstreaming activities. Also, the ESCAP Gender Focal Point, appointed at the P5 level, continues to support the Executive Secretary in promoting a gender-responsive institutional environment.

### **COMMUNICATION:**

- In 2020, a life-size gameboard was produced to reflect the non-linear path to leadership for underrepresented groups in the UN. A future launch event featuring a panel in which the game will be played should be held once it is safe to do so.
- Communicate gender parity implementation plan: all staff must realize that the plan contributes to meeting UN values and standards.
- Raise awareness on what is considered desirable ethical behavior:
  - ✓ Introduce Civility Cafes in ESCAP with the support of the Ombudsman Office (open to all staff) – to support career development and reflect on self-awareness, civil behavior, and shared understanding, invite senior managers to speak on topics that have been raised through the suggestion box.
  - ✓ Quarterly communication to staff about avenues to address ethical concerns (sessions and info notes), involving other agencies as appropriate.

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### **STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY:**

- All senior managers will need to integrate considerations of gender equality into their e-Performance documents, including demonstrating leadership in this regard.
- On recruitment, it is also stipulated that senior managers ensure that a) recruitment is completed within 120 calendar days, as possible given the measures to mitigate the Secretariat's cashflow crisis; b) adequate outreach for all vacancies that require gender and geographical diversity; c) head of entity is involved in the short-list phase of recruitments that affect gender and geographical representation; d) gender parity at professional levels has improved through all new vacancies; e) Ensure each shortlist includes applications by candidates from un- and under- represented countries.
- Attain 100% compliance of all mandatory trainings
  - ✓ ESCAP prides itself on having high completion rates for training related to the zero-tolerance policy on harassment and sexual harassment. According to the latest data as of end of 2021, 93% of all ESCAP staff members completed all the nine online mandatory trainings which include four trainings related to gender (I Know Gender: An Introduction to Gender Equality for UN staff course; Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN Personnel; Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Abuse by United Nations Personnel - Working Harmoniously; and United Nations

Human Rights Responsibilities). ESCAP HRMS's new staff induction process includes a briefing on these mandatory training sessions and deadlines, and with subsequent follow-ups conducted two to three times a year, there is an ongoing effort in place to make sure all staff has completed these mandatory training sessions related to gender.

## CAPACITY-BUILDING

### TALENT ACQUISITION:

- Continue to invest in talent-sourcing activities, including LinkedIn and other social media outreach, especially for roles that are traditionally male-dominated.
- Continue to align ESCAP's outreach activities with the global Secretariat's to achieve gender parity.

### COMMUNICATION:

- Prepare clear guidance for hiring managers on temporary special measures for the achievement of gender parity.
- Hold briefing sessions on temporary special measures for all staff.
- Prepare standardized/simplified package of information to send to potential candidates on various benefits offered by the UN.
- Prepare testimonial statements/posters of women at ESCAP (pay structure framework and medical benefits) and publish in ESCAP recruitment page.
- Engage with host country authorities to expand opportunities for recognized partner employment and facilitate mobility of dual UN career couples.
- Publicly recognize managers who meet gender targets and/or demonstrate good practices in support of gender equality.

### TALENT MANAGEMENT:

- Develop and deliver comprehensive onboarding for all new staff.
- Include mandatory exit interviews and handover notes for staff prior to leaving the Organization. This can be used to devise sound retention measures by helping to develop an understanding of the reasons by which staff members decide to leave.

## MONITORING GENDER INDICATORS

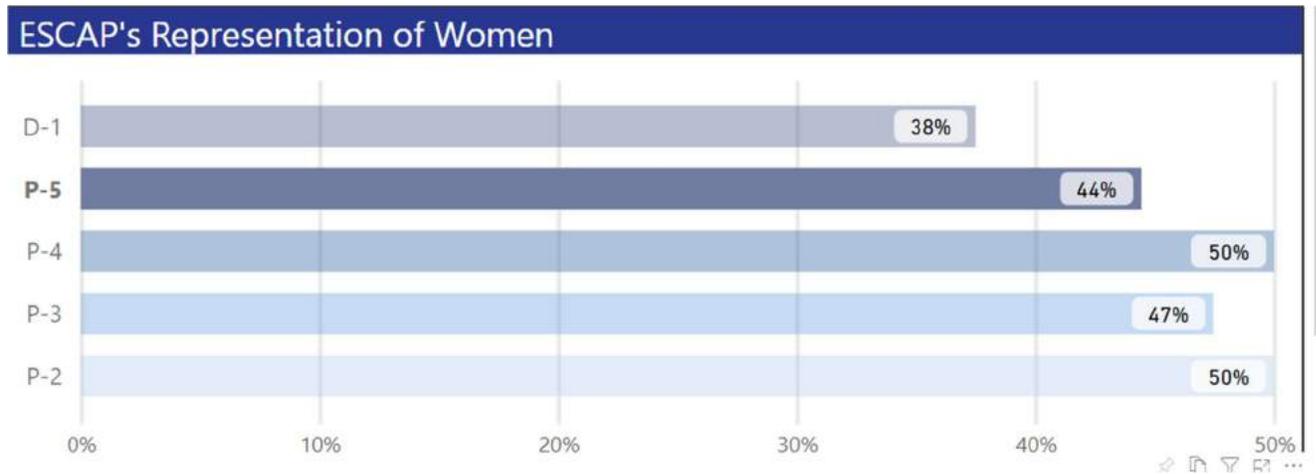
ESCAP will continue to monitor activities to ensure accurate and systematic measurement of gender indicators:

- A senior management scorecard has been integrated into Director's work plans and Directors are sent quarterly target infographic updates by grade and level. An annual report is sent to the Office of the Executive Secretary. The management scorecards are available online and are updated in real-time.
- Work plans will continue to include gender-related actions and clear success criteria to measure their implementation.

- ESCAP will continue the monitoring of four organization-wide targets:

- 1** 50/50 OVERALL GENDER BALANCE AT ESCAP
- 2** 50% ESCAP DIRECTOR POSITIONS ARE HELD BY WOMEN
- 3** 50% OF PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS, AT EACH LEVEL (I.E. P-2, P-3, P-4, P-5) ARE HELD BY WOMEN
- 4** 50% OF GS POSITIONS ARE HELD BY WOMEN

- Below is ESCAP's representation of women as of 15.4.2022



# 2

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2018-2021

### ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Below is a list of activities undertaken by ESCAP in efforts to create an environment of dialogue around gender issues and to foster and maintain an enabling working environment (complemented by key success indicators when pertinent):

#### COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE:

- Periodic brown-bag discussions (with speakers from other organizations and the private sector) were held to encourage discussions and raise awareness on diversity, gender, and work culture.
- Dedicated efforts to promote the uptake of Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) in each Division resulted in a tenfold increase from 3% in 2016 to 32% in 2018 and 37% in 2019. The following actions were taken:
  - ✓ Preparation of customized material for ESCAP staff members on Flexible Working Arrangements and creation of an outreach and awareness raising sessions branded as 'FWA Roadshow'.
  - ✓ Briefings to the Senior Management Team on Flexible Working Arrangements with opportunity for detailed questions and answer session by HR colleagues.
  - ✓ ESCAP-wide communication from the Acting Executive Secretary expressing support for the implementation of FWA and encouraging all division directors to achieve an implementation rate of 20% within their teams.
  - ✓ Outreach to all divisions and sections in ESCAP through the 'FWA Roadshow'. Direct interaction with all staff members allowed for clarification of policy and process and ensured consistency in receipt of information within and across divisions.
  - ✓ Regular briefing sessions for managers explaining various FWA options, tools available for its effective implementation and success stories (including productivity changes)
  - ✓ Creation and delivery of training on 'Managing Remote Teams', providing guidance and advice to managers on how to effectively manage location-diverse teams.
  - ✓ Continuous monitoring of number of staff using FWA by division and presented results to Senior Management.

- In August 2020, ESCAP and DMSPC launched 'Together': a UN mentoring programme that connects staff members across duty-stations and entities around the world. Open to all levels and the whole UN System, it contributes to reduce social isolation and stress and promote inclusivity, while providing a support system for career development and networking. In this pilot phase, around 520 participants from over 90 duty stations, the Secretariat and 16 non-Secretariat entities have been meeting, learning, and growing as ONE UN. Women make up 71% of registered participants.
- In June 2020, a group of women in ESCAP started an informal network of women working in UN organizations in Bangkok (staff, consultants, and interns) to support each other in professional development, raise awareness on the challenges that women face while working at the UN, explore tools available and possible responses, and advance women's empowerment and gender equality at work and in their work. The network meets regularly (1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of every month) to discuss a prepared topic or simply to promote an opportunity for sharing.

### **COMMUNICATION:**

- Regular broadcasts to all Secretariat staff in Bangkok on relevant policy updates on breastfeeding and flexible working arrangements, which received positive feedback from staff in general and the Staff Union.
- Production and dissemination of posters and a video displayed in prominent locations in the UN Compound in Bangkok. The content reflects facts about gender parity and empowerment. The video was featured on ESCAP social media channels in conjunction with the Asia-Pacific Regional Commemoration of Beijing+25.
- A life-size gameboard was produced to reflect the non-linear path to leadership for underrepresented groups in the UN. The game will be played at a future launch event featuring an expert panel once full in-person meetings are feasible again.
- On 19 July 2019, ESCAP held a "Discovery Series" event named "LGBT+ inclusiveness in our workplace" to raise awareness on the difficulties that LGBT+ colleagues face in the workplace and to share some ideas on what staff members can do in their substantive work to make a difference.
- On 24 November 2020, ESCAP's Executive Secretary kicked-off the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence - an initiative managed by UN Women - in a year in which violence against women has increased radically.

### **STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY:**

- Reinforced ESCAP policy on zero tolerance for harassment, sexual harassment, and abuse of authority through a communication campaign (based on the UN Women's internal campaign on sexual harassment) and town-halls for all staff with the support of the Ombudsman Office.
- In 2019, ESCAP's Executive Secretary, together with the Regional Ombudsman, launched the "Civility in the Workplace" sessions to reiterate the crucial role civility plays in teambuilding and in promoting a culture of respect and positive engagement that fosters a productive office environment. In total, 502 personnel (440 staff members and 62 non-staff personnel) participated in the 24 sessions organized.
- Continual monitoring of three gender related online mandatory training courses. Their completion rates as of 22 November 2020 are as follow:

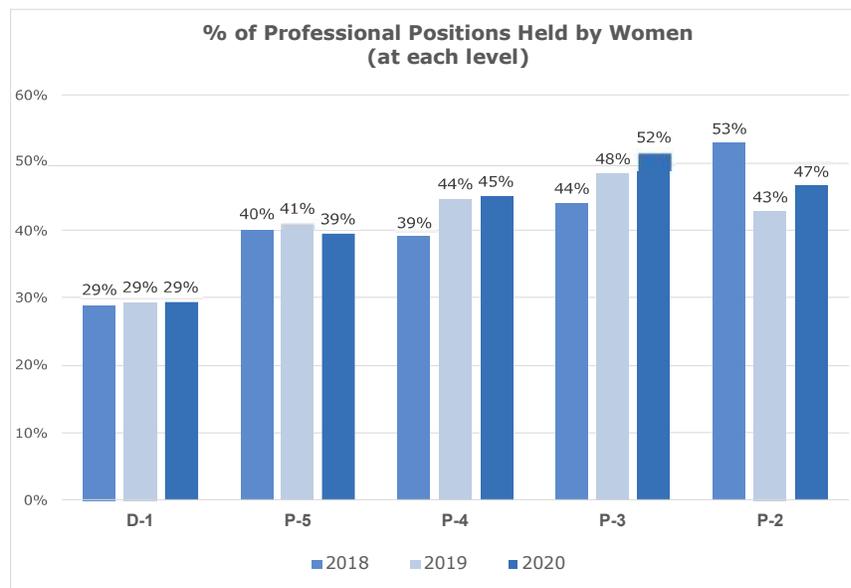
- ✓ Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN Personnel - 96%
- ✓ Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Abuse by United Nations Personnel - Working Harmoniously - 98%. This constitutes an 11 percent increase from January 2019.
- ✓ I Know Gender: An Introduction to Gender Equality for UN staff course – 96 %

## CAPACITY-BUILDING

The following are activities promoted in ESCAP to attract high-caliber women and to ensure that women staff members are valued and managed in a fair and inclusive way:

### TALENT ACQUISITION:

- In 2018, women represented 66% of staff who joined the organization (on continuing and fixed-term appointments) but were only 33% of all applicants. To widen the pool of female applicants for senior level positions, ESCAP in collaboration with colleagues in UNHQ, conducted extensive outreach through social media sources, i.e., LinkedIn and disseminated job openings (JOs) to various channels including member states, OHR Outreach Section, women organization, and other UN Agencies.
- To mitigate bias in the selection process, all ESCAP staff who had obtained their CBI certification before August 2017 were requested to attend the Unconscious Bias training in order to participate as interview panel members for any job openings within ESCAP.
- As of 19 November 2020, comparing to 2018, there were improvements in gender parity at the P4 and P3 levels. On the other hand, there was a slight decrease in percentage of professional positions held by women at the P2 level. At the P5 there was a slight decrease from 2018 to 2020. At the and D1 level, the percentage of professional positions held by women has remained the same.



## **TALENT MANAGEMENT:**

- ESCAP strives to enroll a diverse pool of participants in all available leadership training. Between 2018 and 2020, 15 professional women completed one of the following programmes:
  - ✓ UN Leaders Programme (for D-1s and D-2s)
  - ✓ Executive Management Programme (for P-4s and P-5s)
  - ✓ Leadership Women and the UN (for P-4 and P-5 female staff)
  - ✓ Emerging Talent Programme (began in 2020 as a programme for P-2 YPPs; from 2021 onwards, it will be for P-3s and P-2s)
- ESCAP has proactively promoted one-on-one career coaching to support staff in general, and women in particular, in their career trajectories.

## **COMMUNICATION:**

- Proactive and targeted induction where UN benefits packages are detailed in non-UN terms are supporting the recruitment of highly qualified external female talent to senior positions in ESCAP.
- Continued collaboration between gender focal points in substantive divisions and HR to coordinate the implementation of the UN SWAP and internal gender mainstreaming activities.
- On 11 September 2019, ESCAP organized a “Discovery Series” event on the Gender Parity Strategy, informing staff about the UN System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity and to share experiences and best practices.

## **MONITORING GENDER INDICATORS**

The following are monitoring activities promoted in ESCAP to ensure accurate and systematic measurement of gender indicators:

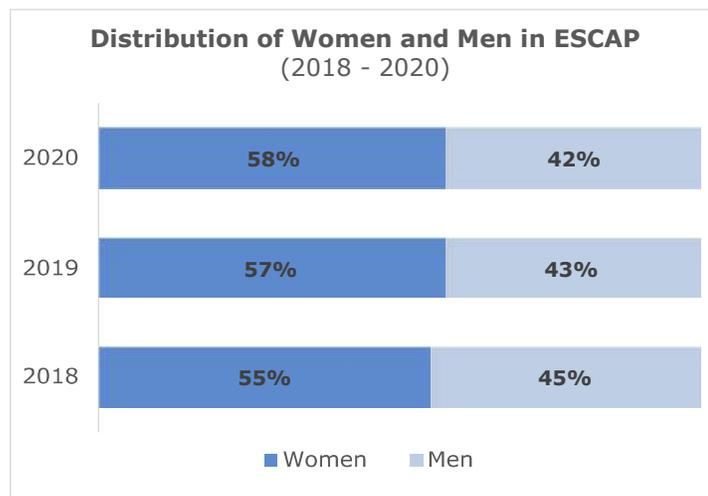
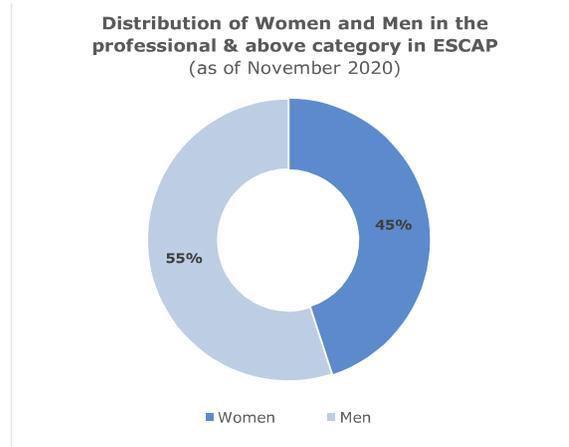
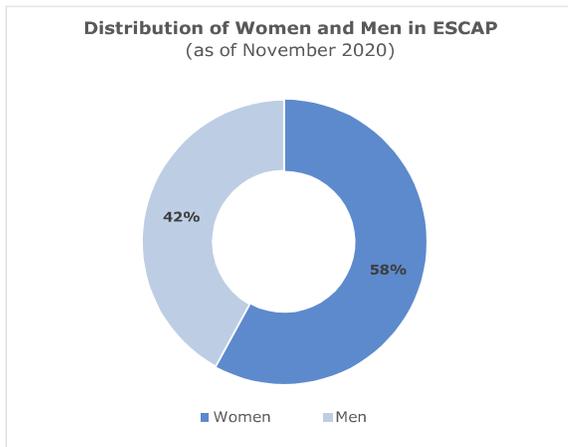
- The Business Transformation unit of ESCAP designed and implemented a Business Intelligence dashboard that provides up-to-date access to statistics on gender representation at all levels for ESCAP Head of Entity and senior managers. In February 2020, a scenario tool was implemented, allowing the head of office to model scenarios in selection processes to ensure gender representation is increased at levels where parity has not been reached.
- A senior management scorecard has been integrated into Directors’ workplans and Directors are sent quarterly target infographic updates on gender representation by grade and level. The management scorecards are available online and are updated in real time.
- Work plans of divisions directors for the past three years’ cycles have included gender-related actions and clear success criteria to evaluate implementation. Division directors are asked to monitor and oversee recruitment in line with gender targets in view of the vacancy management policies of ESCAP and support staff work-life balance and enhanced productivity using Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA).

The following four organization-wide targets were defined to measure the effectiveness of the implementation plan:

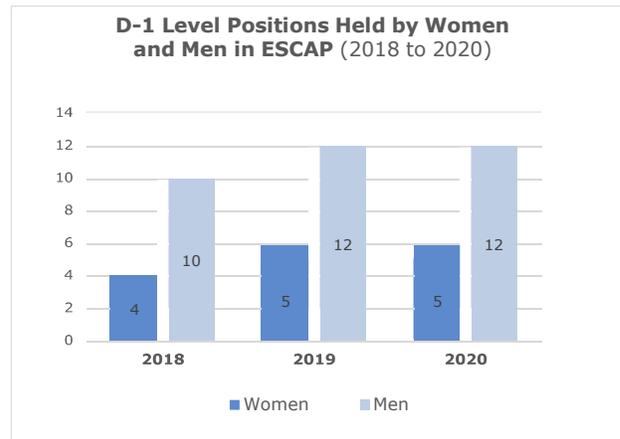
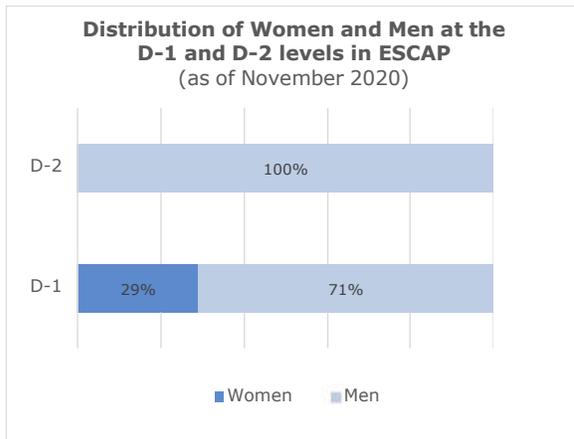
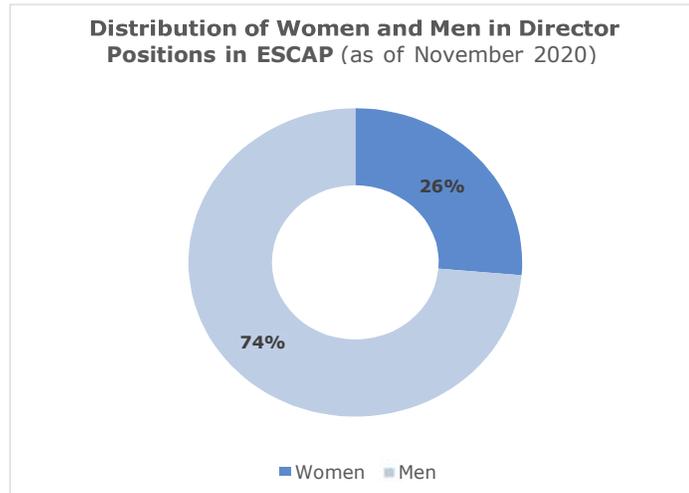
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The following graphics illustrate the progress ESCAP has made, as of November 2020, toward meeting each of these targets.

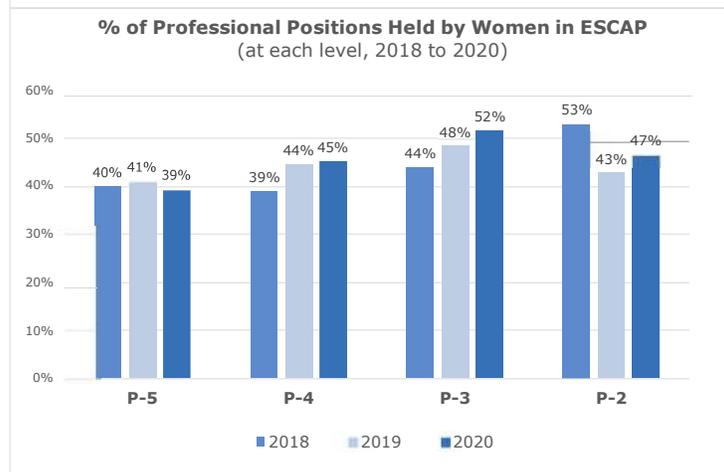
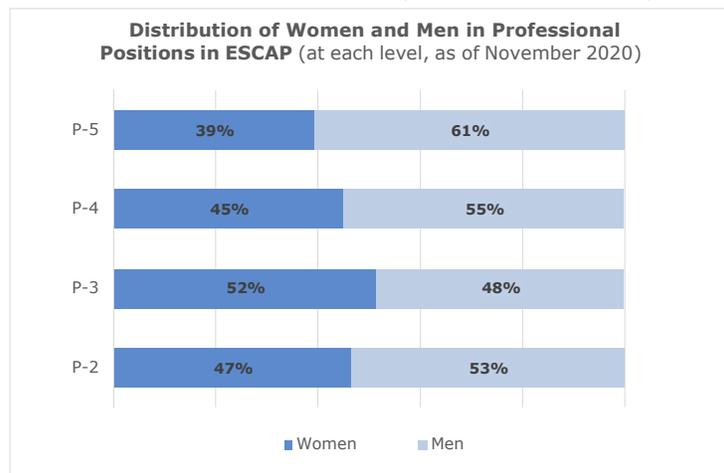
### 1. 50/50 OVERALL GENDER BALANCE AT ESCAP



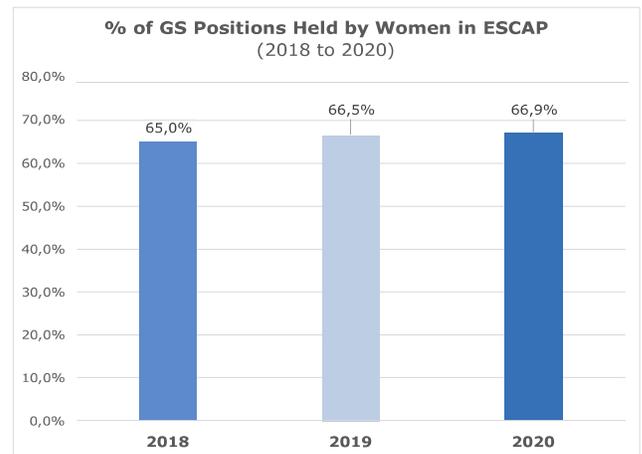
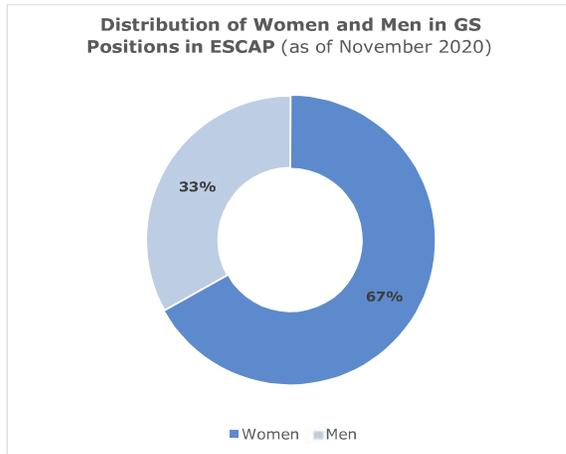
## 2. 50% ESCAP DIRECTOR POSITIONS ARE HELD BY WOMEN



## 3. 50% OF PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS, AT EACH LEVEL, ARE HELD BY WOMEN



#### 4. 50% OF GS POSITIONS ARE HELD BY WOMEN



On a divisional level, as of November 2020:

- Gender parity in professional positions is achieved in 6 out of 23 divisions: TIID, CDSS, APDIM, SCAS, SONCA and DA.
  - ✓ There are 10 divisions in which the percentage of professional women is below 40%: APCTT, SOSEA, SIAP, TD, SOSSWA, MPFD, ED, APCICT, CSAM, OES.
  - ✓ There is only 1 division in which the percentage of professional men is below 40%: SDD.
- Gender parity in GS positions is achieved in 3 out of 23 divisions: APCTT, APDIM, DA.
  - ✓ 16 out of 23 divisions are predominantly female when it comes to GS positions.
- The most significant improvements in percentage of women in professional positions were seen in the following divisions: SONCA and APDIM (from no representation to 50%), OES (14% to 36%), SD (38% to 57%) and SIAP (0% to 17%).

