

UN VERIFICATION MISSION IN COLOMBIA

GENDER PARITY STRATEGY 2017 -2024

1. The UN Secretary-General launched the UN System Wide Strategy on Gender Parity in September 2017, which aims to achieve gender parity across the Organisation by 2028, addressing issues such as recruitment, retention, and talent management; creating an enabling environment; special measures; and barriers in recruitment, particularly for senior management posts.
2. The UN Verification Mission in Colombia adopted its Gender Parity Strategy in January 2018. The Mission's strategy defines a series of actions and commitments to achieve gender parity among personnel in all sections and units of the Mission and to create an inclusive working environment that allows for parity and equality among the personnel irrespective of gender. Moreover, in addition to the targets for gender parity of fixed term international staff directed by the Secretary-General's Gender Parity Strategy, the Mission has set targets and put in place measures to consider gender parity across all staff types (national/ international; fixed/ temporary; UNV and Observers). The Gender Parity Strategy is one of the six priorities set under the Mission's Gender Directive adopted in 2018.
3. The UN Verification Mission initiated its mandate in September 2017. At that time, it had a total of 176 staff and UNVs, 45 % of whom were women. International staff made up 52 % of Mission personnel. In addition to UN staff members, the Verification Mission had 76 UN Volunteers (65 % of whom are women), and 168 military/police observers (15 % of whom were women). As of March 2022, the Mission has made positive progress, with a total of 382 staff of whom 51% are women including UNVs, all contracts and grades, 44% of international Fixed term staff are women, 65% are volunteers and 34% international observers. While this strategy focuses on achieving gender parity among international fixed-term staff, in accordance with the Secretary General's Gender Parity Strategy, it also takes a broader approach and includes comments, observations and recommendations regarding the overall gender parity levels and strategies across all staffing and contract types.

Gender parity baseline

4. As the UN Verification Mission started its mandate in September 2017, the baseline for the Mission's gender parity target is taken as of December 2017, rather than 2016. Among international fixed term staff (including continuing and permanent contract holders), as of December 2017, there were 32 % female and as of March 2022, 44% are female. As shown in the table below, there continue to be disparities among different Mission components, as well as between different levels of seniority. A strategy to achieve gender parity must therefore specifically address these gaps and apparent barriers within certain areas of work and at certain levels. At the same time, it must maintain the positive progress of parity in the areas where it has achieved it and consider strategies for retention.

31 December 2017					31 March 2022				
	Women	Men	Total staff	% women		Women	Men	Total staff	% women
Overall Mission (Fixed, Temp & UNV)					Overall Mission (Fixed, Temp & UNV)				
All Mission Staff + UNVs	129	123	252	51 %	196	186	382	51%	
Mission staff	80	96	176	45 %	119	144	263	45%	
International staff (FS4-FSG, P & above)	37	55	92	40 %	56	74	130	43%	
Fixed Term International Staff (Continuing/ permanent/ fixed term)					Fixed Term International Staff (Continuing/ permanent/ fixed term)				
Total all grades	21	45	66	32 %	49	62	111	44%	
FS 4 - FS5	6	16	22	27 %					
FS 4					0	7	7	0%	
FS5					7	12	19	37%	
FS6					3	6	9	33%	
P3 – P4	10	15	25	40%					
P2					0	1	1	0%	
P3					19	10	29	66%	
P4					13	15	28	46%	
P5	4	9	13	31 %	7	7	14	50%	
D1 and above	1	5	6	17 %	0	5	5	0%	
Substantive component					Substantive component				
Overall component, international fixed term	13	18	31	42 %	36	26	62	58%	
FS 5					1	0	1	0%	
P3-P4	8	7	15	53 %					
P3					18	9	27	67%	
P4					11	8	19	58%	
P5	4	7	11	36 %	6	6	12	50%	
D1 and above	1	4	5	20 %	0	4	4	0%	
Mission Support					Mission Support				
Overall component, international fixed term	8	20	28	28.6 %	12	24	36	33%	
FS 4 – FS 5	5	10	15	33 %					

FS 4					0	3	3	0%	
FS 5					5	6	11	45%	
FS 6					3	5	8	38%	
P3-P4	2	8	10	20 %					
P2					0	1	1	0%	
P3					1	1	2	50%	
P4					2	6	8	25%	
P5	1	1	2	50 %	1	1	2	50%	
D1 and above	0	1	1	0%	0	1	1	0%	
Security					Security				
Overall component, international fixed term	1	6	7	14 %	1	20	21	5%	
FS 4 – FS 6	1	6	7	14 %	1	7	18	14%	
P3-P4*	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	25%	
Other Mission personnel					Other Mission personnel				
UNVs	49	27	76	65%	77	42	119	65%	
National professional staff	24	19	43	56%	35	34	69	51%	
Military/ Police observers	25	143	168	15%	34	66	100	34%	

As a point of comparison, gender parity numbers among other categories of Mission personnel are outlined below:

5. Based on the numbers above, the Mission has taken note of the following issues:
 - i. There continues to be disparity among Mission components, with only 33 % in Mission Support, and 5 % in Security.
 - ii. There is also disparity among seniority levels, with 0 % at D1 and above.
 - iii. The highest levels of female staff are among P3 staff (66 %) and UNVs (65%).

Gender parity targets

6. As per the Secretary-General's Gender Parity Strategy, the UN Verification Mission in Colombia is committed to achieving overall gender parity by 2024.

Overall Status and Targets

Status 31 December 2017	Annual targets
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All international staff in professional levels (P1 – USG) and field services (FS-3 to FS-7)	Women	Men	Total staff	% women	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	21	45	66	32 %	40 %	44 %	48 %	50 %			
Increase in women staff members per year					+5 (26)	+3 (29)	+2 (31)	+2 (33)			

Mission Status and Targets by grade

	Status – 31 December 2017				Annual targets						
	Women	Men	Total staff	% women	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
FS 4 – FS	6	16	22	27 %	35 % (+ 2)	39 %	43 %	47 %	50 %		
P3-P4	10	15	25	40 %	48 % (+2)	50 %	50 %	50 %	50 %		
P5	5	8	13	38 %	39 % (+1)	43 %	47 %	50 %	50 %		
D1 and above	1	5	6	17 %	25 % (+1)	29 %	33 %	37 %	41 %		

Status and Targets per component and grade

Substantive

	Status – 31 December 2017				Annual targets						
	Women	Men	Total staff	% women	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
P3-P4	8	7	15	53 %	50 % (n/a)	50 %	50 %	50 %	50 %	50 %	
P3											
P4											
P5	4	7	11	36 %	44 % (+1)	50 %	50 %	50 %	50 %	50 %	
D1 and above	1	4	5	20 %	28 % (+1)	32 %	36 %	40 %	44 %	48 %	

Mission support

	31 December 2017				2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	Women	Men	Total staff	% women							
FS 4 – FS	5	10	15	33 %	41 % (+2)	46 %	50 %	50 %	50 %	50 %	50 %
P3-P4	2	8	10	20 %	28 % (+1)	32 %	36 %	40 %	44 %	48 %	50 %

P5	1	1	2	50 %	8 %	12 %	16 %	20 %	24 %	28 %	32%
D1 and above	0	1	1	0%	8 %	12 %	16 %	20 %	24 %	28 %	32%

Security

	31 December 2017				Annual targets						
	Women	Men	Total staff	% women	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
FS 4 – FS	1	6	7	14 %	22% (+1)	28%	32%	36%	40%	44%	48%
P3-P4*	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Gender parity implementation plan

7. While the Mission has made progress in advancing gender parity, there remains disparity in some components and various levels of seniority, for which a differentiated approach will be adopted to address the apparent differences in access by women to different types of positions. The Mission also recognises that gender parity is not only a numeric achievement, but it also requires specific actions in recruitment, retention, and an enabling working environment, as described by the Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines (2021), shifting institutional culture and attitudes towards creating a more inclusive workforce.
 - i. **Minimum requirements in recruitment processes:** A checklist was developed in 2018, which includes the different actions which each recruitment process and recruitment panel must complete. This includes review of ToRs for gender inclusive language, outreach actions to reach qualified female candidates, gender balance in recruitment panels, among others. Emphasis will be made to advance in their use for all recruitment processes.
 - ii. **Selection Memo:** A specific recruitment memo has been developed as part of the minimum requirements. The memo must be completed with information on specific gender actions conducted in the outreach and justification for the recruitment. Human Resources will maintain review of the memos for analysis.
 - iii. **Outreach process:** To reach out to qualified women to apply, different mechanisms have been adopted and will be reinforced to reach women, particularly in areas where women are less likely to apply. The Mission has prepared a series of realistic job previews to attract more female candidates and provide a more realistic overview of the day-to-day job in difficult field locations, the gender parity working group together with public information, has produced a series of videos of female staff in the local/regional offices which are linked to the job advertisements in posts where greater efforts are required for gender parity. Nine videos have been completed: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-8SckVjge3073SwTDG1VQf1oLTWfUQ4>
 - iv. **Outreach for Greater Parity in the Security Section:** In order to attract more female candidates in the Security Section the present strategy is to follow the recently issued UNDSS GJO which are more gender inclusive and thus increase our chances of getting qualified female candidates for our current vacancies at international levels. Also, we are using TJOs while we await the results of the P3/4 UNDSS roster exercise. In addition, we are using tools

such as the issuing of PSJOs combined with TJOs in order to attract a greater pool of female candidates on Temporary Job Openings with the intent to subsequently roster them through a competitive PSJO process.

- v. **Outreach for Greater Parity in International Observers:** While the current strategy focuses on international professional staff, the Mission will take additional steps to ensure gender parity at all levels across the Mission including international observers. The Mission will continue to liaise with member states to ensure their contribution includes larger numbers of female observers. While there has been positive progress from 2017 with 15% of female observers to 34% in 2022, the Mission will continue to work to achieve its 40% target by 2024.
 - vi. **Confidential Exit Survey:** To identify areas of improvement for a gender-sensitive working environment, a confidential exit survey (online) has been developed for staff who wish to comment. Staff who are checking out from the Mission are also encouraged to sustain a final (informal) talk/interview with the Conduct and Discipline office and/or the Gender Advisor. The purpose of this measure is to share best practices, lessons learned and any other issues they may want to discuss. The talks/interviews/survey are strictly confidential. If the Conduct and Discipline office or Gender Advisor identifies a sensitive issue from the interviews, they will raise it with the Gender Parity working group once they have collected a significant number of interviews to preserve confidentiality.
8. Furthermore, in order to ensure retention of female staff members the following additional measures will be put in place to ensure an enabling working environment:
- i. **Staff survey over gender sensitive working environment:** The Mission will conduct regular surveys to identify staff's perceptions and critical barriers for enabling a working environment for gender parity. The Mission has planned for a staff survey in 2022, following the results of the staff engagement survey of 2021. The survey will focus on staff perceptions regarding a gender sensitive working environment and will inform an action plan which will be revised periodically.
 - ii. **Inclusive working environment for LGBTIQ+ staff.** Through the Mission Welfare Committee, with support from the Gender Team, a strategy is to be developed to promote an inclusive working environment for all staff regardless of their sexual and gender orientation.
 - iii. The Mission's **Gender Directive** will continue to be implemented which will directly support specific actions such as **training and sensitisation** to improve the gender capacity within the Mission and clearly define the Senior Management role in advancing gender equality and gender parity.
 - iv. **Communication to Regional Heads of Office and Section Heads** will be regular from the Mission leadership. The message will be that they are responsible for enabling and creating a positive working environment in their region and units, which includes, for example: promoting positive and respectful working relationships within the teams; ensuring equal participation in strategic decisions; discouraging jokes or other comments that may make staff feel uncomfortable or not valued as professionals; discouraging practices which limit staff because of their gender, for example not allowing someone to drive because of their gender; and, ensuring communal living conditions promote safety and dignity of the staff despite their gender.
 - v. **Prevention of Gender-based Violence, Sexual Abuse and Exploitation.** The Mission has a zero-tolerance policy on gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse.

The Conduct and Discipline Unit has developed specific protocols, guidelines and sensitization activities for its personnel. Additionally, as part of the pandemic response, the Conduct and Discipline Unit together with the Gender Team developed specific guidelines for prevention and response of gender-based violence affecting staff, which will be further promoted along with sensitization campaigns.

Accountability

9. The SRSG has the overall responsibility for the implementation of the gender parity strategy, which s/he delegates to the Chief of Staff, who will oversee its implementation with support of the Gender Advisor. Each Head of Section and Head of Regional Office is directly accountable to ensure their respective offices/sections meet the targets in the due time as set by the Strategy. The SRSG will require progress reports on the implementation of the strategy to be presented bi-annually by the Head of Sections and Head of Regional Offices through the reporting tool of the Gender Directive.
10. A Gender Task Force has been established under the Gender Directive, which serves to monitor the overall implementation of the Gender Parity Strategy.
11. A Gender Parity working group, led by the Chief of Staff with support from the Gender Advisor, has been established under the Gender Task Force. It will monitor specific aspects of the implementation of this strategy, provide technical support to section heads and advise senior management on the implementation of the gender parity strategy.