



**PERFORMANCE AUDIT**

**OF**

**UNDP'S GENDER EQUALITY**

**AND**

**EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

**Report No. 2213**  
**Issue Date: 4 March 2021**

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## Report on the Performance Audit of UNDP's Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women Executive Summary

The UNDP Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) conducted a performance audit of UNDP's Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women from 20 November to 18 December 2020. Performance auditing is an independent examination of an entity to assess whether the entity is achieving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the employment of available resources.

The overall objective of the performance audit was to assess the extent to which UNDP has mainstreamed gender equality in its policies, procedures, programmes, and practices. Specifically, the audit aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Did UNDP establish effective governance to successfully deliver on the implementation of the corporate gender equality strategy?
2. Is UNDP effective in mainstreaming gender equality in its programming and accurately reporting results?
3. Is the UNDP Gender Equality Seal Programme effective in achieving gender equality?
4. Are UNDP's staff capacity-building initiatives supporting gender equality?

The audit covered the activities from 1 January 2019 to 31 July 2020. UNDP recorded \$4.4 billion<sup>1</sup> in expenditures under the Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women programme in 2019.

The performance audit was conducted in conformance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the audit was conducted remotely. Scope limitations due to the nature of the remote audit related to the following activities:

- A review of original supporting documentation could not be carried out, and therefore the audit team relied on scanned/soft copies of documents provided by Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) and Regional Bureaux.
- Meetings with BPPS/Regional Bureaux management and personnel were carried out virtually, which could have limited the audit team's understanding of the working environment, such as identifying non-verbal feedback and observing interactions and dynamics.
- Project visits (location, site visits, meeting with counterparts/beneficiaries) were not conducted.

### Overall audit rating

OAI assessed the performance of UNDP's Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women programme as **satisfactory/some improvement needed**, which means, "The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were generally established and functioning but need some improvement. Issues identified by the audit do not significantly affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area." This rating was mainly due to weaknesses in the recording of gender equality results.

**Key recommendations:** Total = **4**, high priority = **1**

The four recommendations aim to ensure the achievement of the organization's strategic objectives.

For high (critical) priority recommendations, prompt action is required to ensure that UNDP is not exposed to high risks. Failure to take action could result in major negative consequences for UNDP. The high (critical) priority recommendation is presented below:

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<sup>1</sup> Figure provided by the Bureau for Programme and Policy Support.

Weaknesses in reporting gender equality results/achievements (Issue 1)

The review of evidence to support the reported results for gender-related activities, within the Results-Oriented Annual Reporting (ROAR), disclosed some weaknesses. Specifically, the audit team noted that for 87 out of 94 (93 percent) supporting evidence provided in the sampled ROARs w difficult to link to specific results, not traceable, and/or not relevant to reported results.

The audit team reviewed the annual report and identified reported results for 5 of the 12 sampled Country Offices. As mentioned above, evidence was difficult to link to specific reported results in the Country Office Results-Oriented Annual Reporting or was not always traceable to reported results.

Recommendation 1: The Regional Bureaux should strengthen oversight over Country Offices' Results-Oriented Annual Reporting to ensure results are supported with adequate evidence.

#### Management comments and action plan

The Assistant Administrators and Directors of the Bureau for Programme and Policy Support, Bureau for Management Services, and Regional Bureaux accepted all four recommendations and are in the process of implementing them. Comments and/or additional information provided have been incorporated in the report.

Low risk issues (not included in this report) have been discussed directly with management and actions have been initiated to address them.

Helge S. Ostveiten  
Director  
Office of Audit and Investigations

## I. Audit background and justification

In accordance with the 2020 Annual Work Plan of the Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI), a performance audit of the UNDP Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women was conducted from 20 November to 18 December 2020. The Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) has corporate responsibility for developing all relevant policies and guidance to support the strategic results, outcomes and outputs with respect to UNDP's Strategic Plan. The BPPS Gender Team supports the organization in implementing gender corporate policies.

The audit fulfilled a requirement within the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) 2.0 (2018–2022). It provides an accountability framework that defines commonly agreed standards and coordinated approaches for the UN system to reach its goals and measure progress systematically. In 2018, there were 66 participating UN agencies, reporting progress on 17 performance indicators annually.

UNDP established its Gender Equality Strategy (2018–2021) that outlines its commitment to: (a) strengthen interventions tackling structural changes that accelerate gender equality and women's empowerment; (b) strengthen the integration of gender equality into UNDP's work on environment, energy and crisis response and recovery; (c) better align UNDP programming with its corporate messaging on the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment within sustainable development; and (d) build upon institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming, through initiatives such as the Gender Equality Seal and the Gender Marker,<sup>2</sup> which provide measurable standards and incentives to drive progress. The Administrator reports to the Executive Board annually on the progress of implementing the Gender Equality Strategy.

UNDP developed the Gender Equality Seal Programme to recognize good performance of UNDP Country Offices/Units in delivering transformational gender equality results.

At the time of the audit, UNDP was undergoing an EDGE<sup>3</sup> certification process. The 'EDGE Gender Assessment and Preparation for EDGE Certification (December 2020)' indicated that based on a preliminary review, UNDP was potentially eligible for certification at EDGE Assess level, meaning "an organization has conducted a detailed assessment and undergone an independent third-party verification examining where the organization stands in terms of gender balance across the talent pipeline, gender pay equity, creating an effective framework of policies and practices that ensure equitable career flows, and fostering an inclusive workplace culture for both the male and female employees."

As of the end of 2019, UNDP reported a gender-specific resource allocation of 8 percent of all country programme and project budgets under GEN3.<sup>4</sup> This was an increase in resource allocation from 7 percent in 2018 and 4 percent in 2014. Nonetheless, UNDP still fell short of its target of 15 percent as indicated in its Gender Equality Strategy set for 2019 and is not likely to achieve this target by 2021. Regarding implementation of the Gender Parity Strategy, the overall share of women in the workforce was at 45 percent as of the end of December 2019, which was near the target of 50 percent. Further, gender parity targets were met at the senior management level (Resident Representatives and Deputy Resident

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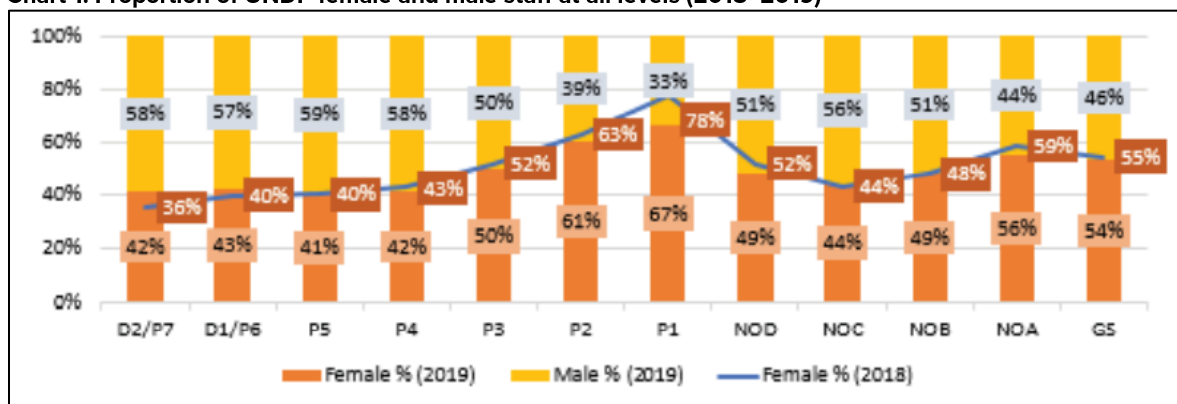
<sup>2</sup> The UNDP Gender Marker is a key instrument in the enterprise resource planning (Atlas) financial system and is used to track expenditures or the organization's investment to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women.

<sup>3</sup> The Economic Dividends for Gender Equality (EDGE) is a global certification system to measure the way in which multiple forms of discrimination including gender interact in the workplace.

<sup>4</sup> The UNDP Gender Marker, a monitoring tool, used a four-point scale for tracking financial investments on gender equality, namely: GEN0 (not expected to contribute to gender quality), GEN1 (contributed to gender equality in a limited way), GEN2 (gender equality was a significant objective), and GEN3 (gender quality was a principal objective).

Representatives). However, gender parity at the P1, P2 level next to the P4 level and above remained a challenge, as shown in Chart 1 below.

**Chart 1: Proportion of UNDP female and male staff at all levels (2018–2019)**



Source: 'Annual report of the Administrator on the implementation of the UNDP gender equality strategy in 2019'

## Audit methodology

The audit planning and fieldwork included audit tests, document reviews, interviews and written inquiries. The documentation reviewed included the following:

- UN-SWAP 2.0 Framework and Technical Guidance
- UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2018–2021
- 'Annual report of the Administrator on the implementation of the UNDP gender equality strategy in 2019'
- Gender Seal and Gender Marker records
- Analysis of the extent of gender parity within the organization
- Review of budget allocation and expenditure on gender mainstreaming activities in UNDP

To answer Question 1: *'Did UNDP establish effective governance to successfully deliver on the implementation of the corporate gender equality strategy?'*

The audit team reviewed the organization's structure at headquarters, regional, and Country Office levels, including roles and responsibilities of management and staff responsible for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The review also included assessing the adequacy and effectiveness of policies and procedures on gender equality, risk management and adequacy of mitigation measures.

To answer Question 2: *'Is UNDP effective in mainstreaming gender equality in its programming and accurately reporting results?'*

The audit team selected a sample of 12 projects from 12 Country Offices, covering each Regional Bureau.

The audit team reviewed the following:

- Regional/Country Programme Documents, project documents, annual work plans, and progress (quarterly and annual) reports related to the selected projects.

- The respective Country Offices were requested to share their gender equality strategy (when applicable) and other relevant documents on gender mainstreaming.
- The audit team interviewed management and staff from BPPS, Country Offices, and Regional Bureaux, to obtain an understanding of the process followed in collecting, validating, and reporting data on gender equality, presented within the 2019 Results-Oriented Annual Reporting (ROAR) and the 'Annual report of the Administrator on the implementation of the UNDP gender equality strategy in 2019'.

To answer Questions 3 and 4, *'Is the UNDP Gender Equality Seal Programme effective in achieving gender equality?' and 'Are UNDP's staff capacity-building initiatives supporting gender equality?'*

A sample of 12 Country Offices were selected to assess their performance in the Gender Equality Seal certification process. The audit team also reviewed the completion of training courses relating to gender equality applicable to staff and senior managers.

### Audit results

#### High priority recommendation:

- (a) Strengthen oversight over Country Offices' Results-Oriented Annual Reporting (Recommendation 1).

#### Medium priority recommendations:

- (a) Enhance management of the Gender Equality Seal Programme (Recommendation 3).
- (b) Ensure adequate reporting of gender-results in the Annual Report (Recommendation 2).
- (c) Follow up with respective business units to ensure completion of mandatory training courses (Recommendation 4).

The detailed assessment is presented below, per audit area:

### 1. Did UNDP establish effective governance to successfully deliver on the implementation of the corporate gender equality strategy?

The UNDP Gender Equality Strategy (2018–2021) delineates UNDP's commitment to: (a) strengthen interventions tackling structural changes that accelerate gender equality and women's empowerment rather than engaging primarily in programmes focused on women as beneficiaries; (b) strengthen the integration of gender equality into UNDP work on environment, energy and crisis response and recovery; (c) better align UNDP programming with its corporate messaging on the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment in the achievement of sustainable development; and (d) build upon institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming such as the Gender Equality Seal Programme and the Gender Marker, which provide measurable standards and incentives to drive progress.

The UNDP Gender Parity Strategy (2018–2021) aims to attain tangible progress in transforming its culture and the quality of its working environment, maintain full gender parity among all staff, and reach at least 47 percent of women among service contract holders engaged by UNDP, and United Nations Volunteers working in the organization by 2026.

The audit team noted the active presence of the Gender Steering and Implementation Committee, which since 2018 has been chaired by the Administrator with participation of Directors of Regional Bureaux, the Bureau for Programme and Policy Support, Crisis Bureau, Bureau for Management Services, and Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy. The Committee meets twice a year to discuss the progress of the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy, and Gender Parity Strategy including external reporting of results. During each meeting, Regional Bureaux and headquarters units provided updates on the progress of the implementation of the two strategies in their respective regions or units.

The audit team assessed that appropriate actions were being undertaken to address challenges. Specifically, the review of meeting minutes of the Gender Steering and Implementation Committee in 2019 and 2020, disclosed that the status of resource allocations and gender parity was extensively discussed, and practical solutions were being explored. Therefore, OAI is not making a recommendation in this regard.

## 2. Is UNDP effective in mainstreaming gender in its programming and accurately reporting results?

The audit team confirmed the existence of at least one gender-specific outcome, indicative output, and indicator in all 12 project results frameworks reviewed, as required by the 'UNDP Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures'. The review also confirmed that all 12 projects were informed by gender analysis and consistently integrated gender equality issues.

The audit team made the following observations in relation to the reporting of gender-related results:

### **Issue 1**      Weaknesses in reporting gender equality results/achievements

#### **A. Results-Oriented Annual Reporting (ROAR)**

The ROAR requires Country Offices (and Regional Bureaux) to provide objective evidence to verify any change stated in the reporting of the achievement of results. Objective evidence means qualitative information or quantitative data, based on observed and/or recorded facts, which are independent from UNDP. The ROAR guidance notes require Country Offices to submit the ROAR to their respective Regional Bureau for review and approval.

A section of the ROAR was designed to facilitate annual reporting on gender equality at the Country Office level. The audit team selected a sample of 12 projects from 12 Country Offices to review the reported gender-related results in 2019 and corresponding supporting evidence.

The review of evidence to support the reported results for gender-related activities disclosed some weaknesses. Specifically, the audit team noted that for 87 out of 94 (93 percent) reported gender-based results supporting evidence provided in the sampled ROARs was difficult to link to specific results, not traceable, and/or not relevant to reported results. Subsequently, two Regional Bureaux provided additional information and links to supporting documents. The review disclosed that some evidence still did not provide clear linkages to reported results.

Additionally, the audit team reviewed ROAR reporting of five Regional Bureaux on gender equality and noted the same audit observations. Supporting documents or links provided in the ROARs of the Regional Bureaux were not linked to results reported or not fully supported.

Regional Bureaux explained that they noted that some links to the online supporting evidence became inaccessible at some point (e.g., automatically disabled after two months). To address this, Regional Bureaux indicated that Country Offices will be requested to maintain scanned versions on file.

In response to the draft report, the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States indicated that Country Office 2020 ROARs had been strengthened by ensuring that reports were reviewed thoroughly in accordance with corporate guidance with increased focus on proper referencing and use of evidence. Links were also tested to ensure they were valid and up to date. Further, the capacity of the Regional Bureau's Country Office Solutions Team had been strengthened, and a detailed review of quantitative results/indicators reporting was carried out with each Country Office in 2020.



## B. Inadequate reporting of gender equality results

The UNDP Administrator presented the 2019 annual report on the implementation of the UNDP Gender Equality Strategy (2018–2021) during the annual session<sup>5</sup> of the Executive Board. The report was developed using the information contained within Country Office ROARs and Integrated Results and Resources Framework.

The audit team reviewed the annual report and identified reported results for 5 of the 12 sampled Country Offices referenced under item A. As mentioned above, evidence was difficult to link to specific reported results in the Country Office ROARs or was not always traceable to reported results for all of the 5 country offices.

In 2019, UNDP had a total of \$2.6 billion in expenditures reported under GEN2 and GEN3, in which the contribution to gender equality was either a significant or a principal objective. The audit team identified eight Country Offices where each had reported more than \$50 million in expenditure on gender equality activities in 2019. The audit team traced reported results for these Country Offices in UNDP's 'Annual report of the Administrator on the implementation of the UNDP gender equality strategy in 2019'.

There was limited information on the results achieved from the eight Country Offices with high financial investments on gender equality as reported in the 'Annual report of the Administrator on the implementation of the UNDP gender equality strategy in 2019'. Specifically, the following audit observations were noted:

- No reported gender-related results for three of the eight Country Offices even though these three offices reported a total expenditure of \$236 million incurred on gender equality activities.
- UNDP Iraq had the largest expenditures (\$284 million) on activities related to gender equality. However, the 2019 annual report only had a sentence referring to UNDP's technical support provided for the establishment of a women's caucus comprising 39 Members of Parliament.

In OAI's view, UNDP should take into account results from Country Offices with high financial investments and include them in the annual report, as appropriate, so that stakeholders will be informed on the outcome of the financial investments.

There is a risk of UNDP not being able to capture measurable progress, draw lessons learned, and/or make decisions that will help improve the organization's performance as a development partner.

<b>Priority</b>	High (Critical)
<b>Recommendation 1:</b>	
The Regional Bureaux should strengthen oversight over Country Offices' Results-Oriented Annual Reporting to ensure results are supported with adequate evidence.	
<b>Management action plan:</b>	
The Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific will conduct the assessment of the quality of ROAR 2020, including the quality of gender results reporting, and assessing lessons learned to be shared with all Country Offices to support high-quality capture of results through the year. In November 2021, a	

<sup>5</sup> The annual session was held from 3 to 5 June 2020.

webinar will be organized to affirm the quality standards for gender results reporting and use of evidence. This practice was already followed in 2020.

The Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean will emphasize the gender results obtained from the ROARs and will continue providing feedback to Country Offices. The Regional Bureau will also play close attention to the quality of evidence presented in the ROARs.

The Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States will be working on the feedback being provided to Country Offices and will request the Effectiveness Group to ensure that links to evidence do not expire.

The Regional Bureau for Arab States will ensure completion of required sections in the Country Office ROARs, compliance with results-based management, and availability of qualitative and quantitative evidence. The Regional Bureau will also continue its quality assurance review of evidence-based reporting, including enhancing the quality of reporting on thematic issues.

The Regional Bureau for Africa will ensure adequate reporting of gender results through preparation of a framework of support to Country Offices. Country Offices are committed to increase gender expertise and resources to strengthen the systematic gender analysis. Virtual training sessions will be held on gender marker and gender responsive reporting.

**Estimated completion date:** January 2022

<b>Priority</b>	Medium (Important)
<b>Recommendation 2:</b>	
The Bureau for Programme and Policy Support should ensure adequate reporting of gender results in the Annual Report on the Implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy (2018–2020), including results from Country Offices with high delivery on gender equality activities.	
<b>Management action plan:</b>	
The Bureau for Programme and Policy Support will ensure that reported results are supported by evidence provided in the ROAR or published on the UNDP website, as relevant. Further, the Bureau will pay particular attention to the results reported by Country Offices with high financial investments and include them in the reports, as appropriate.	
<b>Estimated completion date:</b> April 2021	

### 3. Is the UNDP Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme effective in achieving gender equality?

The Gender Equality Seal Programme is the primary initiative for incentivizing Country Offices to integrate gender mainstreaming into all aspects of their work.

The Gender Equality Seal Programme establishes the minimum acceptable quality standards for gender management, which should lead to increased internal efficiency and visible results in UNDP's work.

Country Offices are certified as Gold, Silver or Bronze, based on a review of their gender equality accomplishments, as follows:

- A Bronze certification is awarded when at least 50 percent of 39 benchmarks are met, meaning that gender mainstreaming elements are in place, but not yet together.
- A Silver certification is awarded when 70-80 percent of 39 benchmarks (and an additional 3 benchmarks for crisis or post-crisis countries) are met, meaning that synergies and results are evolving.
- A Gold certification is awarded when more than 80 percent of 75 benchmarks (and an additional 3 benchmarks for crisis or post-crisis countries) are met, indicating that benchmarks are working together to enable synergy between (i) people and processes, (ii) concepts, mandates and interventions, and (iii) programmes and results.

The certification is led by the BPPS Gender Team. Since the inception of the Gender Equality Seal Programme in 2013, a total of 68 of 130 (52 percent) Country Offices had been certified, as shown in the table below.

**Table 1: Gender Equality Seal Programme achievements by Regional Bureau**

Regional Bureau	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
RBA	6	12	6	24
RBAS	1	6	4	11
RBEC	3	5	1	9
RBAP	1	7	3	11
RBLAC	6	6	2	14
Total	17	36	16	69*

Source: BPPS – Gender Team

\*This total did not include two Country Offices that participated during the pilot certification round process.

The Gender Equality Seal Programme was successful in helping Country Offices to establish baselines for gender mainstreaming, identify and address gaps and challenges in gender mainstreaming and document innovations and evaluate development results and impacts. Further, a Regional Bureau indicated that achieving a certification from the Programme could also create opportunities for resource mobilization for gender equality.

The audit team noted that with the introduction in 2013 of the Gender Equality Seal Programme, 79 Country Offices had gender advisors/specialists, as reported in the 2019 ROAR. Also, 56 Country Offices reported having a multidisciplinary gender focal team with clear terms of reference and led by a senior manager. These fulfilled requirements of the Gender Equality Seal certification.

The audit team noted some areas for improvement, as described below:

## **Issue 2**      Management of Gender Equality Seal Programme can be improved

A total of 79 Country Offices had completed the Gender Equality Seal Programme since it started in 2013. Of these, 48 had active certifications, 23 had expired certifications, and 8 had not been certified (see table below).

**Table 2: Status of Country Office Gender Equality Seal certifications by Regional Bureau**

Regional Bureau	Active certification	Expired certification	Not certified*	Total	Total COs	% Participation
RBA	19	5	6	30	45	67%
RBAS	7	4	1	12	17	71%
RBEC	6	3	0	9	19	47%
RBAP	6	6	0	12	24	50%
RBLAC	10	5	1	16	25	64%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>61%</b>

\*Number of Country Offices that completed the Programme but were not certified, as their scores did not reach the 50 percent required to achieve the Bronze certification.

(a) Missing Country Office gender equality strategies/action plans

The review of the 2019 ROAR disclosed that out of 79 Country Offices that had participated in the Gender Equality Seal programme, 10 had not updated their gender equality strategies or action plan.

Without an updated gender strategy, it was not clear what steps were being taken to continue the commitments of Country Offices on gender mainstreaming.

In response to the draft report, the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific agreed with the high value of the Gender Equality Seal Programme as it was designed to enable Country Offices to build on development results through UNDP policy and programming work, together with workplace culture, capability and management practices. In addition, the Regional Bureau indicated that it would provide guidance to Country Offices for the development of a gender equality strategy and/or action plan. A regional webinar would be organized during second quarter of 2021 as part of its Gender Equality Learning Series. The Regional Bureau would also provide follow-up support to Country Offices.

Additionally, the Regional Bureau for Africa indicated that it would enhance efforts to support Country Offices in formulating gender equality strategies.

(b) Gender Equality Seal Programme limited to Country Offices

The UN-SWAP 2.0 states that in order to meet or exceed the requirements of Performance Indicator 14: Capacity Assessment, “entity-wide assessment of capacity of all relevant entity staff at headquarters, regional and country levels in gender equality and women’s empowerment is carried out.”

Within UNDP the Gender Equality Seal Programme was limited to Country Offices and had not been expanded to include regional and headquarters units. The BPPS indicated that expanding the Gender Equality Seal Programme across the organization would require more resources.

BPPS explained that gender-related technical competencies were integrated into UNDP’s technical competency framework. Gender capacity was also assessed during the preparation of the ROAR. Further, as part of staff Performance Management and Development, staff across the organization identified specific technical knowledge skills/competencies, and capacity development areas including those relating to gender equality. Lastly, BPPS indicated that the ongoing EDGE certification provided an independent validation of UNDP’s status on gender equality within the organization.

(c) Long process for a short-term certification

The Gender Equality Seal Programme requires Country Offices to undergo a four-step process spanning 24 months. The Silver and Bronze Seals were valid for two years and the Gold Seal was valid for three years, after which the certification required renewal.

As noted above, 23 Country Offices had certifications that expired. The long process for a short-term certification under the Gender Equality Seal Programme became a deterrent for Country Offices to renew their certifications. A Regional Bureau indicated that the time, effort, and resources required to obtain certification were not commensurate with the short period of the validity of the certification.

The Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific indicated that some optimization of the process might be needed such as streamlining the re-certification process and affirmation of gender mainstreaming measures and systems in use.

The long process of Gender Seal certification increased the risk of Country Offices not participating in the Gender Equality Seal Programme, which could negatively affect the effectiveness and sustainability of the Programme.

Priority	Medium (Important)
<b>Recommendation 3:</b>  The Bureau for Policy and Programme Support should enhance management of the Gender Equality Seal Programme by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) in collaboration with the Regional Bureaux, following up with Country Offices on the formulation of a gender equality strategy and/or action plan to support the implementation of UNDP's Gender Equality Strategy;</li> <li>(b) expanding the Gender Equality Seal Programme at headquarters and regional levels to ensure capacity-building and support to gender mainstreaming across UNDP; and</li> <li>(c) expanding the validity of certification to encourage Country Offices to apply for or maintain their certifications.</li> </ul>	
<b>Management action plan:</b>  The Bureau for Policy and Programme Support will take the following actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To monitor and support Country Offices to formulate gender equality strategies and action plans. In 2021, Country Offices will be encouraged to develop gender action plans. In 2022, Country Offices will receive technical support to formulate their Gender Equality Strategies aligned with the upcoming new Strategic Plan and corporate Gender Equality Strategy (2022–2025).</li> <li>▪ To expand the Gender Equality Seal Programme as follows: (a) adapt the Gender Programme, standards and tools, for headquarters and regional levels; (b) pilot the certification in at least one business unit/office at headquarters and at least one business unit/office at the regional level; and (c) present a plan for expanding the pilots to other business units/offices at headquarters and regional levels.</li> </ul>	

- To continue improving and streamlining its certification steps and requirements and aligning them to well-recognized global certifications. For the Call for Application for the Gender Equality Seal Programme 2021–2023, the Bureau will update its guidelines including corresponding sections on how to maintain and improve certification levels.

**Expected completion date:** June 2022

#### 4. Are UNDP's staff capacity-building initiatives supporting gender equality?

##### Issue 3 Weaknesses in gender training courses

The UN-SWAP 2.0 Performance Indicator 15 refers to capacity development in the organization. It requires all personnel to receive training on how to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in the organization. Further, entities should organize in-depth training (on gender equity and empowerment of women), for managers at the P5 level and above. The organization reported that it exceeded requirements for this indicator.

##### (a) Mandatory training courses not completed

Of the nine mandatory training courses that newly recruited personnel are required to complete, OAI assessed three training courses related to gender equality. The flagship gender course is “The Gender Journey – Thinking outside the box.” The other two training courses are “Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of the Local Population” and “United Nations Course on Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority.” According to the ‘UNDP Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures’, personnel are required to complete these mandatory training courses one month upon taking up their functions.

The audit team noted that the above three mandatory courses had an average completion rate of 89 percent, as of 8 December 2020. The completion rate was broken down, as follows:

**Table 3: Status of completion of mandatory training courses – gender equality**

Mandatory Training Course	Completed	Incomplete/ Not attempted	Completion rate	Non-completion rate	Total
Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of the Local Population	14,160	1,555	90%	10%	15,714
The Gender Journey: Thinking outside the box	13,927	1,788	89%	11%	15,714
United Nations Course on Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority	13,970	1,745	89%	11%	15,714

Source: Atlas

The audit team further analysed the completion rates across grade levels, with particular emphasis on senior managers at the P5 level and above. There were 81 senior managers at the P5 level and above (12 percent of the total number of senior managers) that had not completed the “The Gender Journey: Thinking outside the box” training course. Further, 70 and 61 senior managers at the P5 level and above (9 percent and 8 percent of the total number of senior managers) had not completed the “Prevention of



Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of the Local Population” and the “United Nations Course on Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority” courses, respectively.

Non-completion of the mandatory training courses relating to gender may have impact on the adoption of gender equality within the organization.

(b) Lack of gender training courses tailored for senior managers

In order to exceed requirements of the UN-SWAP 2.0, entities should organize in-depth training for managers at the P5 level and above, including reviewing policies on gender equality and empowerment of women and discussing their successful implementation.

According to the Office of Human Resources, UNDP has invested in the development of skills and behaviors to foster gender-sensitive working environments. Sessions on leadership development for Resident Representatives and Deputy Resident Representatives were held, including executive coaching sessions and online training courses that were offered in 2019.

However, there were no tailored gender-specific training courses for senior managers, particularly as described in the UN-SWAP 2.0. The Office of Human Resources indicated that a revised UNDP mandatory online course on gender, which includes a module on leadership tailored for senior managers would be rolled out in 2021. Accordingly, OAI is not issuing a recommendation on this regard.

In response to the draft audit report, the Office of Human Resources indicated that the responsibility to ensure the completion of the mandatory training courses by all personnel will continue to reside with the respective heads of business units.

<b>Priority</b>	Medium (Important)
<b>Recommendation 4:</b>	
The Office of Human Resources should regularly follow up with respective business units to ensure completion of mandatory training courses, particularly at the senior management level.	
<b>Management action plan:</b>	
The Office of Human Resources will lead the implementation of measures to monitor and support the completion of mandatory training courses.	
Specific measures to promote and facilitate compliance will include:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Emphasizing the managers’ accountability as the role models in compliance with mandatory training courses.</li> <li>▪ Considering the completion of the mandatory training as part of staff performance reviews.</li> <li>▪ Continuing to include in the annual goal plans of managers an indicator related to the completion of mandatory courses.</li> <li>▪ Existing practice whereby the eligibility for formal training opportunities offered by UNDP is subject to the compliance with the mandatory courses will be continued, strengthened, and communicated more explicitly.</li> <li>▪ Sharing with the Bureau Directors quarterly mandatory training course compliance reports.</li> </ul>	
<b>Expected completion date:</b> January 2022	

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## Definitions of audit terms - ratings and priorities

### A. AUDIT RATINGS

- **Fully Satisfactory** The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were adequately established and functioning well. Issues identified by the audit, if any, are unlikely to affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area.
- **Satisfactory / Some Improvement Needed** The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were generally established and functioning but need some improvement. Issues identified by the audit do not significantly affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area.
- **Partially Satisfactory / Major Improvement Needed** The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were established and functioning, but need major improvement. Issues identified by the audit could significantly affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area.
- **Unsatisfactory** The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were either not adequately established or not functioning well. Issues identified by the audit could seriously compromise the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area.

### B. PRIORITIES OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

- **High (Critical)** Prompt action is required to ensure that UNDP is not exposed to high risks. Failure to take action could result in major negative consequences for UNDP.
- **Medium (Important)** Action is required to ensure that UNDP is not exposed to risks. Failure to take action could result in negative consequences for UNDP.
- **Low** Action is desirable and should result in enhanced control or better value for money. Low priority recommendations, if any, are dealt with by the audit team directly with the Office management, either during the exit meeting or through a separate memo subsequent to the fieldwork. Therefore, low priority recommendations are not included in this report.