OICT Gender Parity Strategy Implementation Plan (2021-2022)

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Patrick Carey, Acting ASG

Contents

"Gender parity at the United Nations is an urgent need – and a personal priority. It is a moral duty and an operational necessity.

The meaningful inclusion of women in decision-making increases effectiveness and productivity, brings new perspectives and solutions to the table, unlocks greater resources and strengthens efforts across all the three pillars of our work".

— Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres

1 Gender Parity in the Office of Information and Communications Technology

Introduction

The United Nations Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT) enables a better, safer, more sustainable future through secure, reliable, and innovative technology solutions.

The goal of gender parity at all levels in the UN is a commitment that is now two decades old and is reflective of core values that are as old as the Organization itself. Moreover, for the UN, parity is critical to its credibility as a standard bearer, is an imperative requested by Member States, and is reflected in a number of GA resolutions. The overall goal for parity across the system at all levels should be set for 2026. Recognizing that there will be some outliers who owing to starting point will have a steeper slope of change, for these few the goal for parity will be 2028.[1]

Gender parity is an important component of achieving a diverse and inclusive culture, structure, and operations. Furthermore, respect for diversity is a core value of the United Nations, and inclusivity across all our areas of work is critical to ensuring different perspectives are considered when we identify and solve the problems facing the Organization and the constituencies we serve.

OICT is committed to the principles and goals of the UN System Wide Strategy on Gender Parity and, in line with its dual reporting, will continue to support the Gender Parity Strategy Implementation Plans of DMSPC and DOS. At the same time, this OICT-specific plan sets out additional complimentary activities given the persistent gender parity challenges faced by OICT. This implementation plan was developed in consultation with multiple stakeholders including: OICT, DOS and DMSPC Gender Parity Focal Points; UN Women; the OICT Working Group on Culture, Diversity, and Inclusivity; and takes note of the Staff Engagement Survey results of OICT.

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[1] *System Wide Strategy on Gender Parity, October 2017 (pp 6-7)*

The purpose of this plan is to set a roadmap for actions by OICT leadership, management, and staff to ensure OICT performs to the highest standards by promoting a safe, inclusive, and gender-balanced work environment that reflects the core values of the United Nations and the people it serves.

The plan has the following objectives in alignment with the DOS and the DMSPC Gender Parity Implementation Plans:

- **Monitor progress on parity:** Monitor the representation of women in OICT and progress in all areas leading to gender equality through annual Gender Parity United Nations System Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) reporting.

- **Establish and support a shared vision for gender parity:** Promote gender parity and re-affirm a common understanding of the Secretary-General's Gender Parity Strategy across OICT.

- **Foster and support gender-sensitive and inclusive leadership**: Lead by example and foster change through leadership commitments and concrete actions. Guide staff to develop inclusive management skills and capabilities across all levels of OICT. Monitor compliance and hold managers accountable for supporting gender strategy implementation activities and meeting parity targets. Include a gender-SMART goal(s) related to contributing to gender equality and parity in performance assessment.

- **Improve recruitment, retention, progression, and succession planning:** Expand recruitment outreach to increase the number of women applicants to OICT jobs in cooperation with UN Women and the Office of Human Resources (OHR); including the use of gender balanced language in job descriptions, use of social media, and other outreach modalities. Support networking and mentoring opportunities to reinforce skills development for all OICT staff.

- **Focus on an inclusive workplace culture and environment:** Ensure a shared commitment to an inclusive working environment that is consistently implemented at all levels and address the issues from multiple angles, including in the context of reforms. Support workplace inclusivity through learning materials and resources.

- **Support the ongoing use of appropriate working arrangements:** Both DMSPC and DOS Under-Secretary-Generals (USG) have reiterated that, where possible, flexible work arrangements should be encouraged for staff who wish to avail of such arrangements. This goes hand-in-hand with a flexible workspace.

- **Establish the basis for dialogue with all staff:** Taking an inclusive approach to staff engagement requires reaching out to all, including those who may have concerns related to parity, as well as creating a safe space for open dialogue to encourage all to be actors of change.

2   Target

As set out in the UN System Wide Strategy on Gender Parity, OICT, together with DOS and DMSPC, is expected to achieve parity at the departmental (not divisional) level for international staff P1 level and above, on fixed-term, continuous, or permanent/indefinite appointments by 2028 at the latest. However, monitoring of data will include G staff and national positions. OICT will also work with vendors that

provide contractual services to ensure they are familiar with OICT's objectives to have a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

3 Leadership and Accountability

At the core of the System Wide Strategy on Gender Parity and its associated implementation plans is clear accountability from the very top. The Under-Secretary-Generals of DOS and DMSPC, the Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) for OICT, and senior leadership with delegated recruitment authority and managerial oversight, are accountable for reaching the gender parity target set in the strategy. In this regard, reaching gender parity and enabling environment targets will be included in manager and team performance indicators annually.
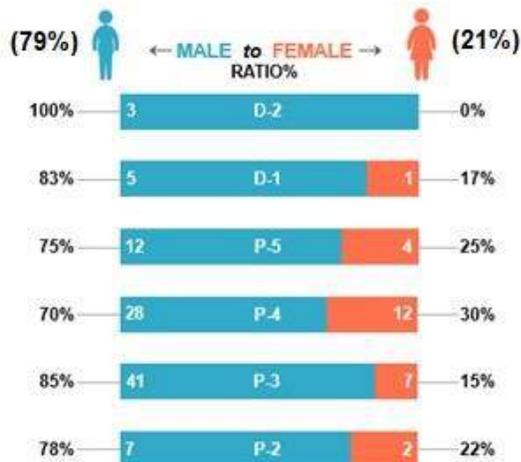
4 Representation of Women in ICT

Overall, the Secretariat has progressed considerably in reaching the targets of the UN System Wide Strategy on Gender Parity. DMSPC and DOS, have both met their overall parity target of 50/50 female to male at the professional level overall, but not at every grade in every area. In contrast, OICT has struggled to achieve similar gains in gender parity. As of 1 February 2021, at the professional level, OICT has a 21 per cent female and 79 per cent male ratio (total 122), and at the general service category, the breakdown is 42 per cent for female staff and 58 per cent for male staff[2].

OICT
MALE to FEMALE IN NUMBERS & RATIO%

GRADE	MALE	FEMALE	GRAND TOTAL
D-2	3	0	3
D-1	5	1	6
P-5	12	4	16
P-4	28	12	40
P-3	41	7	48
P-2	7	2	9
GRAND TOTAL	96	26	122

(79%) ←— MALE to FEMALE —→ (21%)
RATIO%

	MALE to FEMALE	
100%	3	D-2	0%
83%	5	D-1	1	17%
75%	12	P-5	4	25%
70%	28	P-4	12	30%
85%	41	P-3	7	15%
78%	7	P-2	2	22%

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[2] *The 3rd D2 was the acting ASG on temporary assignment as the CITO*

It is worthwhile considering the current OICT gender distribution data within the context of the overall technology sector when developing gender parity strategies and actions. Although there is a dearth of gender disaggregated data across the global ICT workforce for multiple reasons, relevant findings can be found in the 2019 global report: *Taking Stock: Data and Evidence on Gender Equality in Digital Access, Skills and Leadership*, *Report of the UN EQUALS Research Group*. This comprehensive report considers the global ICT workforce and its key findings which are corroborated by other research on the same topic of gender in ICT. Key findings in the report regarding the overall global ICT sector include the following:

- **Although gains have been made, women's representation remains low** across different dimensions of ICT employment, entrepreneurship and policymaking. On average, women constitute less than 35 per cent of ICT and related professions. However, there is wide variation by country and by ICT sub-sector, ranging from as low as two per cent to as high as 60 per cent.

- **Women in ICT tend to be in junior and support roles rather than in managerial roles.** Where women have made inroads into management, they are often in positions that do not offer a pathway to executive/senior leadership roles.

- Evidence from North America and Europe indicates that **women leave science and engineering jobs at higher rates than men**. Although their reasons for doing so are contested; some researchers cite family demands, while others point to workplace discrimination.

- **Gender-based discrimination in the ICT workplace** persists including unfairness in hiring, firing and promotions, unequal pay, and unconscious biases.

- **Lack of work-life balance**, insufficient or non-existent parental leave benefits and limited flexible work arrangements are factors in women leaving the ICT workforce or preventing them from joining.

In contrast to the contributing factors described above, the Secretariat ICT work environment provides equal pay for work, generous family and leave benefits, and has an established gender parity strategy to support fair staff hiring and promotion practices. In addition, the mandates of the United Nations and the opportunity to work for an international organization with a global impact is a strong attraction to mission-driven candidates seeking to effect positive global change. In this sense OICT is well positioned to be an attractive employer for women in the ICT sector and should position itself as an employer of choice in its outreach.

The following OICT Implementation Plan action items build on these strengths and focus on additional tailored activities to strengthen outreach and an inclusive work environment in OICT.

5   Implementation Plan

This implementation plan is part of a larger effort to unite OICT under a shared vision and commitment to diversity and inclusivity. Its execution will rely on commitment and actions at all levels of management and staff. OICT Gender Focal Points will work with OICT managers to facilitate information sharing and collaboration, as well as to collect the regular review of progress and report against the UN System Wide Gender Parity Strategy and its associated objectives and action points. OICT Gender Focal points serve as a resource for OICT staff in supporting the System Wide Strategy on Gender Parity and this OICT

implementation plan and the action points detailed below. OICT managers and staff are responsible for integrating the action points into their working modalities, environment, and recruitment activities.

5.1.1 Establish and Support a Shared OICT Vision for Gender Parity

Action Points:

1. Include a gender statement on the OICT Technology Website which illustrates our commitment to diversity and inclusivity.

2. Identify the OICT gender focal points and their terms of reference on the OICT Technology Website and promote them as a resource across OICT to support all levels of management and staff in the implementation of the plan. Senior management should consult regularly with the gender focal points, encourage the appointment of gender focal points in all divisions and encourage both men and women to play this role.

3. Establish a regular OICT Gender Parity Town Hall series, including a quarterly OICT Town Hall meeting, dedicated to gender parity topics to create a forum for OICT leadership to voice its commitment and for all levels of OICT personnel to provide feedback.

4. Regularly include discussion on inclusivity and gender parity in Extended Staff Meetings and regular team meetings such as:

   - Sharing progress on the implementation plan
   - Sharing success stories and challenges for group discussion
   - Introducing topics related to inclusivity i.e., impact of COVID on our workforce and potential differences in how it affected men and women
   - Having Gender Focal points discuss information shared by UN Women, DOS and DMSPC on the Gender Parity Strategy

5. Create a Diversity and Inclusivity section on the OICT Technology website in collaboration with the OICT Communications Team. The section will include the following:

   - Library of strategic documents, policies, research, and case studies
   - Curated list recommended online training
   - OICT gender data and progress monitoring of the strategy and implementation plan
   - Success stories and recognition for staff and managers that are making a difference
   - Ideas for team activities to support diversity and inclusivity

Strengthen recruitment, retention, progression, and talent management

5.1.2   Recruitment - Improving Standards

Action Points:

6. Hiring managers should ensure that OICT vacancy announcements are written in accordance with best practices for inclusive job descriptions (i.e. as provided by UN Women) and gender friendly language to attract a broad pool of applicants. This typically includes value statements, gender-neutral language, emphasis on potential in addition to experience, and the incorporation of a gender indicator in the evaluation criteria.[3] The division Gender Focal Points should serve as a resource in this regard and can facilitate the review of draft job descriptions prior to posting.

7. Hiring managers should ensure high standards and fairness in interviews, including attending refresher trainings in interviewing and familiarizing themselves with inclusive interviewing best practices.

8. The OICT staffing table and post incumbency should be regularly reviewed for succession planning, confirming position availability due to retirements, lateral movements, and promotions in order to plan outreach and recruitment activities well in advance. This will ensure hiring managers have time to plan and are aware of their responsibility to align with the above-mentioned action points for improving outreach and recruitment standards.

5.1.3   Outreach

Increasing the pipeline of female candidates for OICT positions is critical to achieving the established gender parity targets.

Action Points:

9. Hiring managers are responsible to make all possible efforts to conduct outreach and increase gender parity at all levels, including new hires entering OICT for the first time, as well as those rising to senior levels. Hiring managers should show demonstrable actions for achieving the gender parity targets. Demonstrable actions as well as demonstrable outreach should be part of the hiring managers' workplan.

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[3]*UN Women - Vacancy announcements: Example of Good Practice*

10. Review industry best practices and work with OHR to improve outreach to both men and women. Participate in job fairs that target women (i.e., Grace Hopper). Leverage the Careers Portal to strengthen female representation and promote profiles of under-represented staff, both in nationality and gender, to attract under-represented candidates.

11. Strengthen outreach channels by leveraging social media to promote OICT vacancies across a wider and more diverse population in cooperation with OHR.

12. Actively participate in ICT job fairs (virtual and in person) to promote job opportunities at all levels in OICT.

13. Work with ICT business units across the Secretariat and the United Nations common system to build a mailing list / shared database of profiles, of women in all staff categories in the areas of ICT, Geospatial Information Systems (GIS), Information Management (IM) and digital communications to leverage professional ICT networks and promote support outreach of OICT vacancies across the UN system.

14. Create opportunities for talented young people to join the United Nations through internship programs and gain exposure to ICT opportunities in OICT with the support of external organizations that promote this effort.

5.1.4 Retention, Progression and Talent Management

Action Points:

15. Hold coaching workshops and Brown Bag lunches, in cooperation with OHR, for junior and mid-level staff, both men and women, to develop management and leadership skills to support career development.

16. Accelerate and promote the participation of OICT staff in the *Together Mentoring* programme established by OHR.

17. Facilitate movement of staff across the Secretariat and United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes (e.g., providing flexibility on secondments, liens to posts, temporary assignments, etc.).

5.1.5 Strengthen the Merit-Based Selection Process and Remove Potential Bias

Action Points:

18. When including gender inclusivity as a selection indicator, consider measuring commitment to gender equality as a competence while interviewing, i.e. incorporate questions related to the candidate's real-life examples on how she/he has supported a colleague or mainstreamed gender perspective in their work

19. Job descriptions and candidate suitability assessments will focus on experience, testing and interview performance, for example, giving equal or greater credence to work experience - rather than requiring a master's degree.

5.1.6 Increase the Number of Entry Positions Designated for Women

OICT staff have extremely low attrition rates. This makes it difficult to change the gender parity balance without new positions to be filled. Increasing the number of extra budgetary funded positions in OICT will provide an entry point to attract recent college graduates and develop a cadre of entry level professional who can, over time, improve the gender balance of OICT.

Action Points:

20. Establish three (or more) Junior Professional Officers (P2), in coordination with sponsoring Member States, ideally offering two years' experience working at UN Headquarters plus one-year in the field.

21. Pilot the establishment of a Young Woman Leaders (YWL) Programme in OICT, in partnership with UN Women and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, to engage a diverse cohort of young women from underrepresented countries. Begin with the recruitment of 3-5 women to serve in OICT as UN Youth Volunteers. While participating in a structured professional development programme, the YWL participants will be mentored by designated OICT senior staff to become part of a network of young leaders in OICT.

5.1.7 Focus on an Inclusive Workplace, Culture and Environment

Action Points:

22. Identify mandatory and recommended training for OICT personnel, in coordination with DOS and DMSPC, i.e. Unconscious Bias Training, and provide OICT staff with a curated list of online self-paced learning content (i.e. LinkedIn courses) in the areas of inclusive management, effective virtual and hybrid teams, and skills development. Recognize staff that completes courses and activities.

23. Hold or join gender allyship sessions (i.e. DMSPC Men Talk Gender event) and teambuilding activities to discuss and learn more about building an inclusive workplace together.

24. Continue to support flexible work arrangements post-COVID return-to-work. Conduct an OICT survey to gather data and lessons learned from the all-remote experience to develop a new OICT position on flexible work arrangements.

25. Organize sessions to review and discuss the *Enabling environment guidelines for the United Nations system' in support of the 'Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity'* and their implementation, where applicable, in the OICT working environment[4].

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[4] *https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/02/supplementary-guidance-on-the-enabling-environment-guidelines-for-the-united-nations-system*