

Division of Human Resources

Update on the context and trends

In 2021, the **total staff count** was 15,905 – an increase of about 15% compared to 13,792 in 2017 and with 71% are national staff for four years in a row. 49% of the staff workforce are female, compared to 48% in 2020, while 56% of the international professional (IP) staff are from Programme countries. HR continues to partner with hiring offices to ensure this issue is addressed swiftly. The average recruitment time improved from 93 days in 2017 to 57 days in 2021.

Human resources management continued to be strengthened across the organization with new initiatives and programmes implemented, including on staff wellbeing, learning and career development.

The effects of **COVID-19** continued to be significant on the UNICEF workforce, so the mandated teleworking modality continued as part of the already existing policy on **Flexible Work Arrangements** (FWA) in many affected duty stations. The Division of Human Resources (DHR) continued supporting staff amid the pandemic where new ways of working, including adjusting policies and procedures were prioritized. The *'DHR Guidance for All Employees on Telework During COVID-19 Outbreak'* and a guide for managers on long-term telework were developed. In addition, best practices on support to staff during COVID-19 times were collected from more than 40 country and regional offices, and NYHQ wellbeing surveys for all personnel were conducted. A new HR policy was adopted on disability inclusion which paved the way for improvements to the self-disclosure process and a more streamlined reasonable accommodation request process.

Preparations were made for the new Strategic Plan 2022-2025 where Human Resources as an Enabler is tasked to implement the ambitious **"People and Culture"** goals of the organization. This would require a fit-for-purpose structure and service delivery model, appropriately skilled HR professionals to provide strategic advice to its business partners, and a talent management strategy and framework across UNICEF.

DHR also started the process of **reducing its footprint in New York** to a more cost-sustainable location that is closer to the offices. A comprehensive Location Analysis was undertaken to identify the most suitable location for DHR for implementation starting from 2023. An external company reviewed and provided recommendations on the current HR delivery model and talent management strategy which DHR will consider in its Transition and Transformation Initiative in 2022.

UNICEF rolled out the updated **Competency Framework and Values Charter** based on the core values, having incorporated them into management and leadership learning programmes. New programmes aimed at Youth and staff with Disabilities were also introduced to provide tailored career development support. UNICEF undertook several initiatives to reaffirm its five values of care, respect, integrity, transparency and accountability.

UNICEF worked heavily on the implementation of the Economic Dividends for Gender Equality (EDGE) Action Plan 2020-2021, which included the implementation of the Special Measures to Achieve **Gender Parity at the P5 level**, launched in the last quarter of 2020, and the new process to obtain qualitative data when employees separate, in place since the beginning of 2021.

Major contributions and drivers of results

1. Ensuring that the right people are in the right place at the right time

In 2021, progress was made in conceptualizing UNICEF staff **proactive mobility**, which will be launched upon completion of the functional and skills mapping exercise, as well as the integration of a new Internal Talent Marketplace Platform. Of the 496 staff who were initially included in the 2020 mobility exercise, 74% had been either placed or reassigned voluntarily, compared to 55% in the 2019 exercise. This was due to the decision to exclusively advertise vacant posts for the unplaced colleagues to support their reassignment. 70% of the moves were cross-regions, 71% were cross hardship classifications, and 20% were cross-functional moves. 19% of the placements were promotions.

29 positions were filled in 2021 as part of the **Senior Staff Rotation and Reassignment Exercise (SSRRE)**, a corporate annual exercise to foster mobility, promote succession planning, and facilitate talent identification for future leadership posts. The Leadership Talent Group (LTG) that was established in 2017 continued to be an effective tool to identify talent for senior leadership posts and to enhance succession planning. 40% of first-time SSR candidates appointed to posts as part of 2021 SSRRE originated from the LTG. At the end of 2021, both the geographic diversity and gender balance of the Deputy Representative Programmes cadre remained the same as in previous period, i.e., with 45% of staff from programme countries and 60% female. The diversity of the Deputy Representative Operations cadre remains a focus and will require further efforts, as the current workforce consists of 80% from programme countries and only 25% female.

Extensive consultations took place with key stakeholders to revise the **UNICEF Staff Selection Policy (SSP)**. A series of working groups were established to solicit inputs on the SSP, develop training materials, etc. In parallel, multiple tools were introduced and evaluated, such as automated reference checks and online testing, to enhance and simplify the current processes. The strategic development of Talent Groups (TG) and management of IP talent groups was further strengthened globally.

The **recruitment monitoring and evaluation** function continued to play a valuable role in proactively identifying recruitment trends, highlighting best practices and areas that require closer attention. Compliance with UNICEF selection principles and policy was closely monitored and ensured. 1,264 recruitment cases were qualitatively reviewed, over 33% of total completed staff recruitments in 2021. The **Background Verification** of external candidates is now mandatory for all IP-level appointment (initial and reappointments, for fixed term posts), and is critical in ensuring that candidates selected not only meet requirements for a position but are a fit for the Organization.

A **workforce planning project** was launched to match the strategic business requirements with long-term workforce trends, with desired skills and expertise to deliver UNICEF's work today and in the future while meeting the challenges of a changing landscape of work modalities and the drive to ensure simplification and gain efficiencies. An organizational level global inventory of skills is being built to enable staff assessment of the skills on an on-line platform and provide basis for linking staff mobility to career and talent management, promoting transparency, and helping staff plan career moves by developing their skills and experience.

A focus was given on emphasizing the duty of care to **Junior Professional Officers (JPO)** and maintaining partnerships with donors. 23 pledges for JPO positions were received in 2021, with a total of 20 JPOs onboarded by the end of the year. The JPO retention rate continues to increase (from 50.2% to 50.7%) given the personalized approach and continuous offering of career support. The secondment programme has been growing significantly in 2021, with 14 secondees onboard, and 2 new agreements signed with new donors.

Digital platforms were utilized to revolution the landscape of **Talent Outreach**. Talent Outreach and Employer Branding activities such as the branded campaigns, live events, and updates to UNICEF

Careers website served to foster meaningful brand interaction. This increased the audience engagement online by 20% on UNICEF Careers Facebook page, 58% on LinkedIn "Life" tab and 3,347 page views daily on UNICEF's Career website.

The **Internship and Fellowship programme** continued to be strengthened, focusing on partnerships with institutions from the Global South, Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), and non-traditional participants. It increased diversity and inclusion, whereby three partnerships were established under these criteria. By end of 2021, six new partnerships were secured for the deployment of interns, resulting in a total of 46 partnerships. The number of **UN Volunteer** assignments increased to 1243, compared to 902 in 2020, including the deployment of 11 UN Volunteers with disabilities.

Frontlines' membership has grown from 2,329 to 2800 members in 2021. The 'Frontliners' are UNICEF employees who are interested in working in **supporting humanitarian contexts**. They bring various technical expertise necessary to UNICEF ability to prepare and respond to emergencies. Despite COVID-19 and its ramifications, surge support was provided to 57 countries through the deployment of 403 staff and personnel. Approximately a quarter of the surge deployments focused on supporting Afghanistan, while another 11% was in support of Haiti.

2. Providing clarity on what is expected of staff, and ensuring they are equipped to deliver on those expectations

The **Competency Framework**, revised in 2019 to reflect the core values of Care, Respect, Integrity, Trust and Accountability (CRITA), and based on ongoing staff needs, continued to be further socialised, implemented, and incorporated globally, inclusive of various management and leadership learning programmes. Despite the global pandemic, over 420 workshops and webinars were delivered to UNICEF staff. More than 690 individual **career development coaching sessions** were held in 2021 to accommodate the increased demand for individual coaching and related career development activities — an over 50% increase compared to 2020.

The **REACH** global pilot programme to prepare high-potential national staff celebrated its first 43 graduates in 2021. Five graduates (12%) have been promoted to the International Professional (IP) category thus far. Given the programme's substantive impact, REACH will be rolled out in several additional regions in 2022, including WCARO and LACRO. High-level stakeholder engagement and partnerships across the organisation will be expanded to amplify advocacy for the selection of REACH graduates into IP posts, improve workforce diversity, and further augment the historically low numbers of national staff crossing into the IP category.

Building upon the first Career Development Month for Young UNICEF, the **YoU Are Leaders programme** was launched in partnership with the YoU Secretariat — the first of its kind. The programme aims to identify, recognise and enhance the capacity of young future leaders (under 35 years old) in UNICEF.

Furthermore, an innovative **Career Support Services for Staff with Disabilities initiative** was launched in late 2021. The programme is being piloted with a diverse group of participants selected from the Global Network of Employees with Disabilities.

Finally, **employee relations and support** were given to 90 cases that were escalated to DHR from offices globally. 50% of the cases handled in 2021 reached a solution, many of which (30%) spanned previous years (e.g., separation/termination for unsatisfactory performance, mutually agreed settlement, or other suitable remedy such as reassignment). The remainder are ongoing or at the final stages of resolution. Lastly, 13 rebuttal processes were managed. A new web-based case management system was finalized, which gives UNICEF a consolidated, integrated tool for managing escalated

cases that require HQ intervention.

3. Fostering a culture of continuous learning as well as professional and personal growth

2021 continued to be unprecedented for staff, managers and leaders. Key flagship programmes were delivered in a virtual context, thereby ensuring that learners had access to the tools and skillsets needed to continue to deliver for children, through enhanced knowledge in key areas such as emotional intelligence, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and personal development. A focus remained on ensuring that UNICEF Managers and staff, were better equipped to function at the levels required to deliver on UNICEF's mandate and that **learning** in a virtual context remained engaging and impactful to guarantee key learning outcomes.

The following learning programmes were delivered in 2021:

Core Learning

- 330 staff members (52% female) participated in the Management MasterClass (MMC), of which 325 completed the mandatory 360 Degree Assessment. 90% of participants indicated that the programme was relevant to their current area of work.
- 624 staff members having completed the first half of the ASPIRE learning programme 16 Cohorts (60% female)
- 320 participants (66% female) completed IMPACT+ with 5 participants attaining international posts. 70% of the learners rated the overall programme as "Good or Excellent".
- 12 staff members are enrolled in the Transitional Leadership programme
- 22 pairs of mentors and mentees benefitted from the NeXtGen Pathfinder Mentoring pilot Programme. Mentors include Chiefs, Directors, Representatives and Advisors, and mentees are staff members under the age of 35.
- 47 newly appointed staff members benefitted from the adaptation of the New York Orientation programme into a virtual format.
- Cohort 6 (290 registered users) and Cohort 7 (436 registered users) of the English as a Second Language (ESL) programme was launched.
- 2,393 staff accessed LinkedIn Learning resulting in 5,989 hours of learning, +22,000 courses views, and +135,000 videos views and 4,000 courses completed.
- 2 new live 60-minute webinars in addition to bite-sized resources were designed and delivered in partnership with Corporate Learning Solutions. 8 sessions of Accountability & Working from home were delivered.
- 33 participants were enrolled in the CIPD programme and are set to graduate in 2022.
- 2,183 staff members consumed 113,332 minutes of Headspace content.

Leadership Development – for members in the SSR cadre, and leaders in the senior leadership pipelines

- 48 participants were enrolled in the UNICEF Deputy Representatives programme which was developed in conjunction with Harvard Business Publishing.
- 51 participants completed the Elevating Leadership Initiative designed exclusively for members of the Leadership Talent Group.
- 70 SSR members completed Module 1 of the Senior Leaders Orientation programme.
- 15 newly appointed UNICEF Country Representatives took in part in Country Office Briefing sessions.
- 58 senior leaders benefitted from Executive, Peer and Transitional Coaching.
- 38 360-Degree Feedback assessments for SSR members were launched.

4. Strengthening skills for strategic engagement to enhance people management in a spirit of partnership between line management and HR

Strategic HR support was provided to NYHQ Divisions throughout the talent life cycle. Some Divisions have developed functional talent management strategy and completed skills mapping for their functional teams. Initiatives on building an enabling culture and developing staff and leadership capacities were introduced. A main priority was the support to the HQ Efficiencies Initiative (HQEI) and to divisions undergoing changes including Programme Division, ICTD, Office of Innovation, Office of Research/OGIP, and DHR. Business Partners supported several other changes and transformations, while providing advice and guidance on a range of issues linked to the **COVID-19 pandemic**. Processes were also simplified, and capacity of HR teams built.

A series of **HR Analytics** related initiatives were further undertaken in 2021, with a strategic support to formulation and implementation of new HR policies and initiatives based on evidence, such as when developing the new Staff Selection Policy. In partnership with Columbia University, DHR implemented an innovative initiative to analyse the organizational performance in the Time to Recruit. While further system improvements in HR data continued to be achieved, a new Dashboard was designed to support UNICEF strategic workforce planning and reporting on staff movements and career progression from 2008 until nowadays. Finally, an HR Data Focal Points network with representatives from all UNICEF regions was created, and consultative sessions were conducted to better understand the current capacity and needs in HR analytics across offices.

A successful approach to **Talent Management System (TMS)** requests was introduced, capitalizing on the use of the corporate Service Gateway tool to standardize and streamline TMS access approvals and technical support, which strengthened oversight and resulted in efficiency gains. The TMS portal has been redesigned to serve as a one-stop shop for users to access to guidelines and tools that aimed at building their capacity and facilitating their day-to-day work. Contribution was provided to the UN Mutual Recognition of Roster (UNMRR) project as part of the collective efforts to strengthen interagency collaboration, which required close coordination and cooperation with the UN Inspira team to facilitate UN joint rosters. Finally, timely technical support, system advisory service and talent reporting continued to be provided.

5. Maintaining staff motivation and engagement, and an environment that allows everyone to contribute to their full potential

UNICEF remained committed to implementing and achieving the Secretary-General's UN System-wide Gender Parity Strategy. Implementation of the **Economic Dividends for Gender Equality (EDGE)** Action Plan produced three main initiatives in 2021:

1. The implementation of the Special Measures to **Achieve Gender Parity at the P5 level**: as of 21 December 2021, UNICEF had 48% women at that level, 6% more than when the measures were launched in October 2020. This is a significant achievement since UNICEF has never had more than 44% women at that level.
2. The monitoring and reporting on **exit/separation data**: a formal process to collect exit data of employees who separate was launched (almost 800 instances of separation or internal movement in 2021). Data on reasons of separation and employee satisfaction, disaggregated by gender, regional origin, level or age will be presented in 2022 and will influence the 'new working modalities' initiative, the new Procedure on Flexible Working Arrangements, and the new EDGE Action plan 2022-2023.
3. The roll-out of the **diversity dashboard** that was open to all personnel at the end of 2020 with disaggregated workforce data on gender, age, nationality and regional origin, level and functional area.

This dashboard is complemented by a **Global Staff Survey dashboard** on employee engagement, also disaggregated by gender.

The implementation of the **Pulse Check on Workplace Culture** was also achieved, a biannual periodic survey which aims to assess workplace culture at each UNICEF office and establish a mechanism that holds Heads of Office accountable for it. The reactions are compiled and scores for each office and dimension are published to the entire organization a couple of days after the survey closes.

On **disability inclusion**, new process to reasonable accommodation has been automated in Service Gateway. The Inclusive Employment Guide was also rolled-out to ensure disability inclusion in selection processes.

Developing and using people-centric tools, **new policies** were published, hands-on toolkits created, and a comprehensive social security system put in place and reactive to emergencies and pandemic. Offices worldwide were further provided with guidance on ongoing issues stemming from the **COVID-19** pandemic, including flexible work, return to duty station and/or to office, vaccination requirements and various special measures regarding travel. UNICEF staff and management were supported in accessing medical entitlements in furthering duty of care principles including, medical evacuations of critically ill-staff and dependents, oversight of medical insurance plan and managing complex sick cases, etc. During the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, DHR continued response was critical to ensure that all personnel were supported in the different offices. The division continued supporting enhancements to the medical insurance plan especially in accessing mental health care and diagnosis/treatment. UNICEF staff contracting COVID-19 have been effectively medically evacuated to agreed treatment centres during the pandemic. DHR as global focal point for vaccine deployment for UNICEF personnel contributed to more than 8500 personnel and partners and dependents being vaccinated.

The impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of staff and the demand for psychosocial support continued through 2021. **Wellbeing support** was provided remotely for most staff, while limited number of missions could be finally carried out in some regions. Key interventions included offering multi-part series of interactive wellbeing webinars to teams, hosting tailored webinars for the REACH programme and Young UNICEF cohorts, developing and piloting country office wellbeing plans, initiating the ‘Redefining the narrative of Burnout’ project, etc. A significantly higher level of support than in the pre-COVID 2019 era continued to be provided, with the completion of 4,169 individual counselling sessions, 30 percent of which were for staff based in emergency and/or hardship duty stations. The reduction of COVID-19 cases and relaxation of travel restrictions in some regions allowed to conduct of 34 missions, including to countries in the ‘Top 20 list’ such as South Sudan, Ethiopia, Mozambique, DRC, Sudan, Palestine, and Ukraine. 18,364 participants benefited from 594 group sessions/workshops/webinars.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

On the **staff mobility** front, while consultation is important, the main lesson learned is that decision making process for managed mobility needs to be more centralized at HQ level. In addition, functional leadership needs to be empowered and more accountable for enabling more placements at the global level. Another take-away is the feedback received from participants of the mobility exercise that revealed that the various mediums that were used to personally communicate with staff were appreciated.

As explicit consideration was given to gender and geographic diversity, in addition to country-specific

requirements when making candidate recommendations to SSR post, 52% of the recommended candidates of the **SSRRE 2022** were female and 62% were programme country nationals. These appointments are projected to improve the geographic diversity, while maintaining the gender parity of the SSR cadre in 2022.

On the support to **emergency surge recruitments**, the increased pool of candidates through Frontlines was not sufficient, as refusal to release staff by Country Offices (COs) remained a challenge to adequately respond to emergencies. As a lesson learnt, an integrated platform is crucial to manage surge requests that allows COs to request surge mechanisms through one single entry, and HQ to efficiently respond to the requests, monitor, track and report.

Within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of the revised **Competency Framework** has taken longer than anticipated given the challenges remote learning has presented in socialising the framework. Weak internet connectivity when working from remote locations was the greatest challenge encountered by many staff. An organisational requirement for innovative approaches to working remotely arose, and several new programmes were developed, such as managing performance remotely and working effectively from home with a focus on how to manage performance and how to work effectively from home.

Employee relations and support continued to be adapted to the on-going pandemic context. Remote management, stressful workloads and return to work dilemmas continued to dominate the caseload. To increase effectiveness in finding solutions that are in the interests of the staff member and the office, as well as UNICEF ultimately, the scope of support to staff was broaden from supporting managers to increasingly have a direct contact with staff members involved. This increased the chances of a more amicable and informal solution.

Staff, managers and leaders **learning engagement** was a recurring challenge, especially in keeping staff motivated after so much time spent working remotely. This was intensified by the global uncertainty as most staff were preoccupied with the needed global pandemic response. Challenges were experienced in keeping staff motivated and engaged, and in ensuring that programmes were dynamic and learner centred. As the flagship learning programmes had the in-person modules unavoidably differed, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the long gaps between modules broke continuity in learning. This situation will be addressed as restrictions ease and travel recommences.

The COVID-19 pandemic created a catalyst for more **flexible work arrangements** that are focused on real results-based work, while recognizing the need to balance the personal and work lives of our workforce. Special attention was given to safe and healthy measures for returning to the office, considering the potential risk of loss of life during the pandemic.

Staff Counsellors adopted innovative and interactive virtual delivery of webinars and conducted 'online missions'. While online fatigue may have resulted in reduced participation over time, it was found that counsellors' visibility through this virtual presence has helped to destigmatize the topic of mental health. Nevertheless, the stigma related to seeking support may have resulted in some staff working long hours remotely while experiencing burnout and/or managing chronic mental health conditions in silence. The plan to equip and strengthen capacity of managers to identify issues and have conversations linked to staff wellbeing and mental health will encourage early supportive steps to be taken by both parties. Lack of staff counselling resources in some regions continues to limit the depth and breadth of coverage, including the systemic follow-up of recommendations.. A lack of qualified external mental health professionals, including for child and adolescent cases that have been on the rise during the pandemic, limits the referral options in some regions. This highlights the importance of continuing to strengthen the framework for staff counsellor care in terms of access to professional clinical supervision and providing continuous professional development opportunities.

