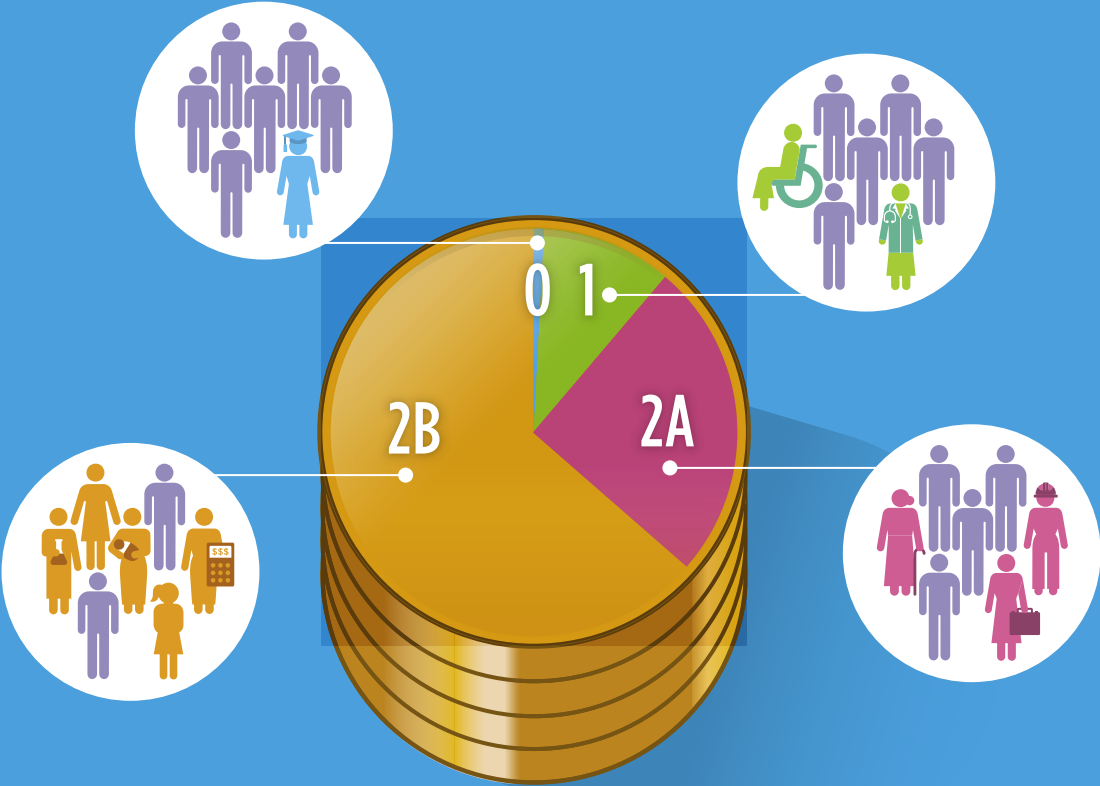


BRIEF 1.

# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENDER EQUALITY MARKER (GEM) AT THE UN ENTITY AND COUNTRY TEAM LEVEL AND IN INTER-AGENCY POOLED FUNDS



This brief seeks to explain the status of implementation of the Gender Equality Marker (GEM) in the UN system. The GEM is a tool to track financial allocations and expenditures according to their contribution to gender equality and/or women’s rights. As summarized in the table below, the GEM uses a four-point scale coding to signal contributions to gender equality as a principal objective (GEM 3/2b), as a significant but not principal objective (GEM 2/2a), in a limited way (GEM 1) or with no expectation to contribute to gender equality and/or the empowerment of women (GEM 0).

Table 1. Coding definitions for the UN Gender Equality Marker

GEM Code	General Definition
3 or 2b	Gender equality / women’s empowerment as a principal objective.
2 or 2a	Gender equality / women’s empowerment as a significant objective.
1	Contributes to gender equality / women’s empowerment in a limited way.
0	Not expected to contribute to gender equality / women’s empowerment.a

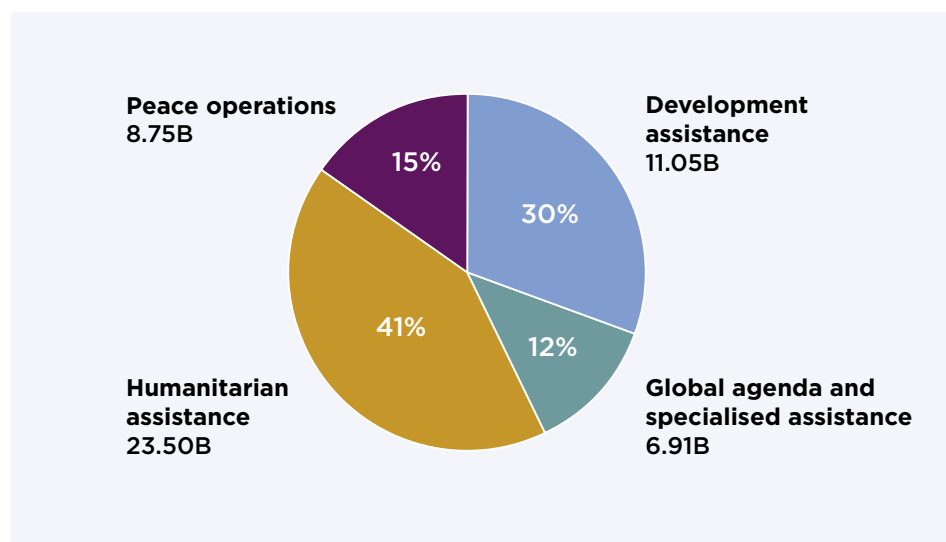


# 1. Overall distribution of UN Funding in 2021

UN expenditure is usually divided into four main activity areas, namely, Development assistance; Humanitarian assistance; Peace operations and Global agenda and specialised assistance. Development and humanitarian assistance constitute what is commonly referred to as UN operational activities for development (OAD).

Based on CEB UN Financial Statistics figure 1 shows the proportion of UN expenditure devoted to each of these four areas in 2020. Expenditure on humanitarian assistance and development assistance were roughly equal in 2016, but by 2020 the UN's expenditure on humanitarian assistance (41% of total expenditure) was notably larger than spending on development assistance (30%). Nevertheless, OAD accounts for almost threequarters of the total expenditure in the UN system.

Figure 1. Overall United Nations expenses in 2020 (\$56,2 billion)



Peace operations expenditure (15% of total expenditure in 2020) includes investments in peacekeeping and other UN activities aimed at creating the conditions for lasting peace in conflict-affected countries. The UN's peacekeeping activities are implemented through a global partnership that brings together the UN Secretariat, troop- and police-contributing countries, and host governments in a combined effort to maintain international peace and security.

Expenditure on the global agenda and specialized assistance (12% of total expenditure in 2020) covers activities such as global norms, standards, policy and advocacy that are not directly linked to any of the other three functions. It also includes development activities in non-UN programme countries. It is still difficult to draw conclusions on, for example, the level of UN normative work, due to the variety of activities included in this category.

## 2. Inter-agency pooled funds

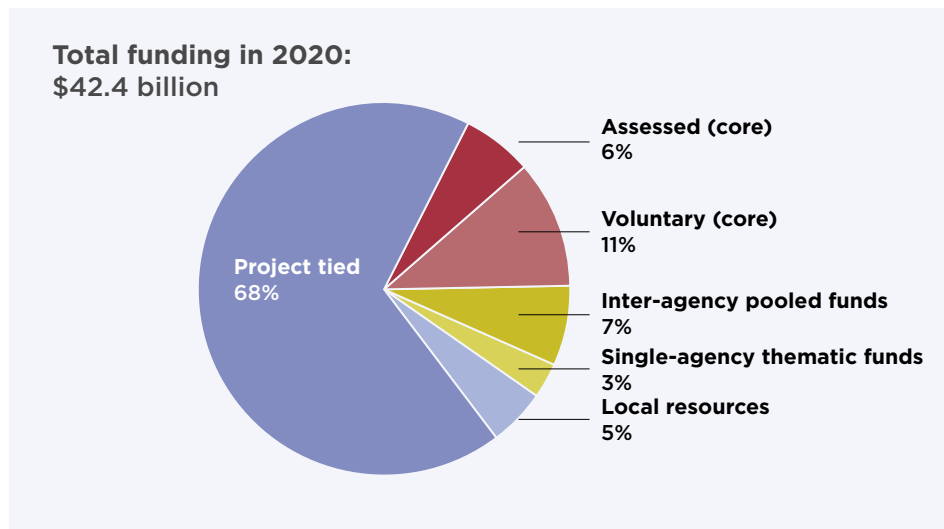
Inter-agency pooled financing is a recognised funding modality for promoting coherence within the UNDS repositioning process and in other reform streams led by the UN Secretary-General and endorsed by Member States. Inter-agency pooled funds are 'core-like' resources that help strengthen efficient coordination and collaboration across entities of the UNDS.

<sup>1</sup> <https://mptf.undp.org/document/download/28118>

Pooled funds can catalyze integrated programming by establishing transformative criteria for joint planning and effective funds allocation based on priority needs and comparative advantages. Some funds may be tightly connected to a specific project or programme, while others may form part of flexible pooled funds with a thematic or geographical focus. Inter-agency pooled funds are classified as “Multi-partner Trust Funds” (MPTF) and “Standalone Joint Programmes”.

Funding for inter-agency pooled funds has undergone steady growth since 2015. Figure 2 shows that in 2020 the share of inter-agency pooled funds for development purposes has grown to 7% of \$42.2 billion of total funding, made up of US\$ 1.8 billion for humanitarian funds and US\$ 1.2 billion for development related funds.

Figure 2. Total funding in 2020 per type source of funding



## 2. Brief history of the Gender Equality Marker

The Gender Equality Marker was made a mandatory standard for UN entities in 2012 through the implementation of the UN-SWAP. Specific guidance was developed in the UNSDG (Guidance on the Gender Equality Marker) and in the CEB (Guidance Notes on Coding Definitions and on Quality Assurance).

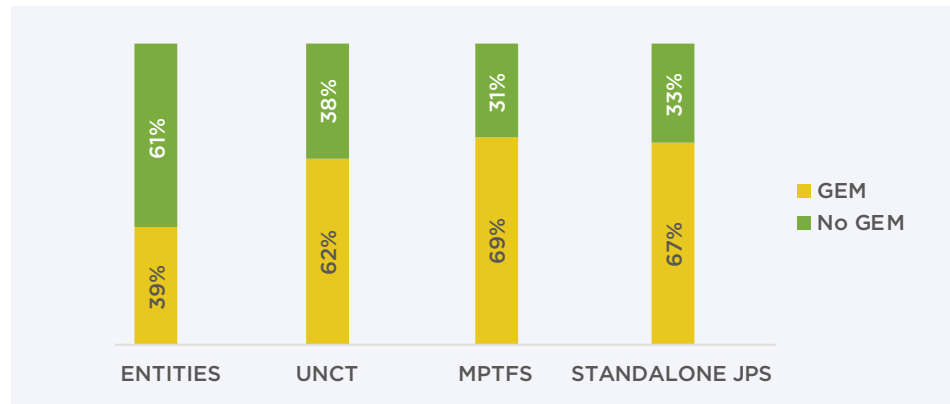
In 2018, the Secretary-General established the High-Level Task Force (HLTF) on Financing for Gender Equality with the objective of harmonizing and extending the implementation of the gender equality marker, defining financial targets and increasing the resource base for GEWE. Recommendations from the HLTF endorsed in 2019 expanded the application of the gender equality marker to interagency pooled funds. The HLTF also requested harmonized implementation of the gender equality marker across the UN system (at the entity and UNCT levels and in pooled funds).

In 2018, the UNCT-SWAP gender equality scorecard was updated from previous version to be aligned on the UNSCDF new content. The Scorecard includes financial tracking and allocations as one of its performance indicators. In 2019, the UNSDG launched specific guidance for the integration of the gender equality marker in UN Info, the online platform digitizing Cooperation Frameworks.

<sup>1</sup> <https://mptf.undp.org/document/download/28118>

As shown in Figure 3, by December 2021, the implementation of the gender equality marker had expanded to 28 (or 39%) entities; 80 (or 62%) UN Country Teams and 75 inter-agency pooled funds (32 (or 69%) Multi-Partner Trust Funds (MPTFs) and 43 (or 67%) Standalone Joint Programmes).

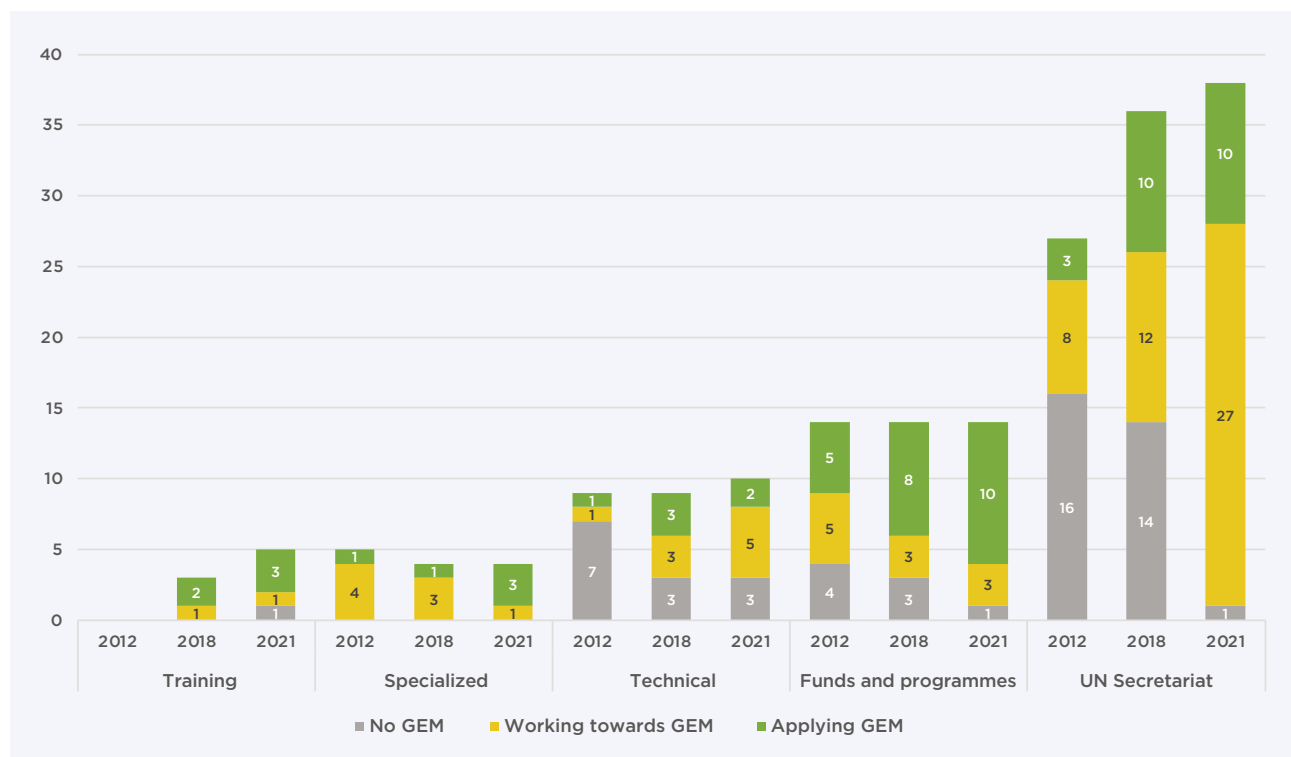
Figure 3. Overview of current implementation of the Gender Equality Marker



### 3. Use of the Gender Equality Marker in UN entities

At the entity level (Figure 4), coverage has expanded from 10 entities implementing the GEM in 2012 to 28 entities in 2022. *More specifically, over the 2.5-year period January 2020- June 2022, coverage has been expanded to 2 more entities fully adopting the GEM and 12 more entities initiating implementation of the GEM<sup>3</sup>.*

Figure 4: Overview of implementation of the Gender Equality Marker at the UN entity level, per typology of entities in the period 2012-2017



Source: UN-SWAP Reporting Platform

Note: The numbers cited above are drawn from self-reported data UN entities submit through annual UN-SWAP reporting.

No GEM = entities rated “missing” and “not applicable”.

Work towards GEM=entities approaching requirements

Applying GEM = entities meeting and exceeding requirements

In 2012 there were no training and research institutions as reporting entities.

Much of this progress in recent years is due to the introduction of a mandatory gender equality marker in the UN Secretariat's ERP system, which has more than tripled the number of UN Secretariat entities working to implement a financial resource mechanism tracking gender equality allocations and/or expenditures. Another area of noteworthy progress concerns the gender equality marker's increased application among UN funds and programmes, which doubled from five entities in 2012 to ten in 2021.

The combined utilisation of the gender equality marker and specific financial targets has driven increased attention in and resources for gender equality and women's empowerment. Implementing the gender equality marker has facilitated the establishment of financial benchmarks/targets in UN entities. Although lagging behind the advances made on financial tracking mechanisms, 23 of the 71 entities reporting to UN-SWAP 2.0 in 2022 indicated they had institutional financial benchmarks.

## 4. Use of the Gender Equality Marker in UN Country Teams

At the UN Country Team (UNCT) level, by year end 2021, 80 (or 62%) UNCTs out of 130 were applying the gender equality marker in their Joint Work Plan in UN INFO, up from 47 in 2020. Of these, 17 UNCTs did not include a fully developed Annual Workplan with sufficient sub-outputs and an accompanying annual funding framework. Figure 6 and Table 2 represent UNCTs implementing the gender equality marker per region.

Figure 5: Overview of current implementation of the Gender Equality Marker at the UN Country Team level, per region by the end of 2021

### UNCT with GEM in 2021 (80#)

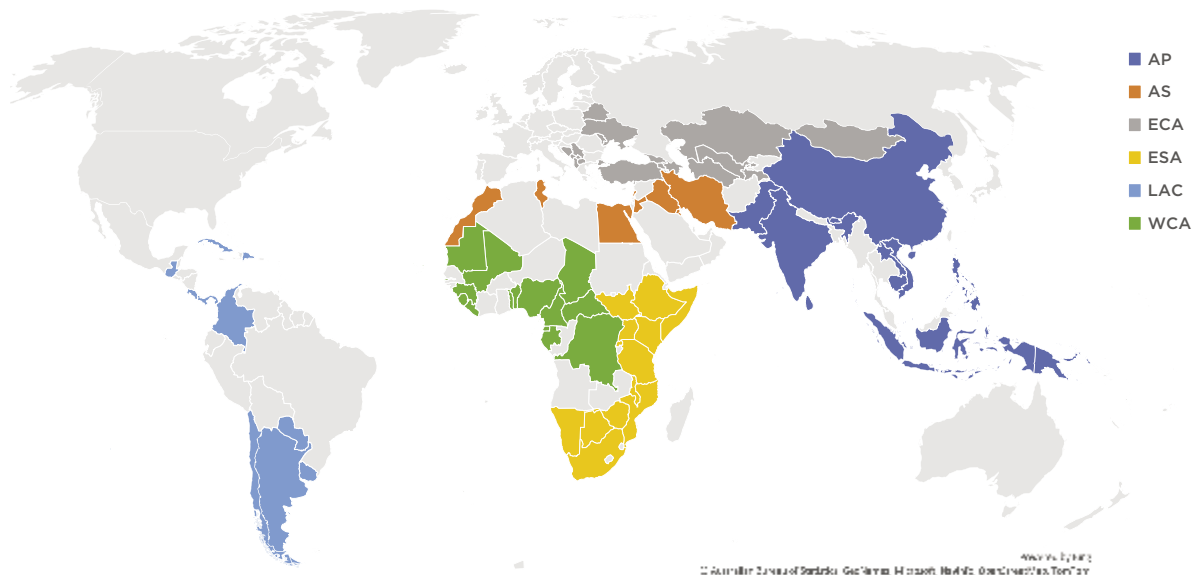


Table 2: Regional distribution of UNCTs implementing the gender equality marker (red color denotes only partial use of the marker)

REGION	ASIA PACIFIC	ARAB STATES	EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA	EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA	WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA	AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
UN COUNTRY TEAMS	Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Pakistan, PNG, Philippines, Sri-Lanka, Timor Leste, Vietnam	Egypt, <b>Iran</b> , Iraq, Jordan, <b>Kuwait</b> , <b>Lebanon</b> , Morocco, <b>Tunisia</b>	Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, BiH, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan	<b>Botswana</b> , <b>Comoros</b> , Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, <b>Namibia</b> , Rwanda, Somalia, <b>South Africa</b> , South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, <b>Zimbabwe</b>	Benin, Cabo Verde, <b>Cameroon</b> , <b>Central African Republic</b> , Chad, Congo, Cote D'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, <b>Gabon</b> , Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, <b>Mauritania</b> , Nigeria, <b>Sierra Leone</b> , Togo	Argentina, <b>Chile</b> , <b>Colombia</b> , Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, <b>Panama</b> , Paraguay, the Caribbean (MCO), Uruguay

## 5. Use of the Gender Equality Marker in Inter-agency pooled funds

The **Peacebuilding Fund** initiated the implementation of the gender equality marker in combination with a financial target of 15% of total Fund allocations to gender equality and the empowerment of women, as stipulated in the Secretary-General Seven-Point Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding. UN Women has seconded a staff to monitor and build capacity for gender responsive peacebuilding in the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). In 2019, 40 % of all Fund investments supported gender-responsive peacebuilding, exceeding the target of 15 per cent for the fifth year in a row, a first for any UN fund. In 2020, the Peacebuilding Fund approved investments of \$173 million in 41 contexts and allocated 40% of its funding towards improving gender equality, the same share as the previous two years.

In 2019, the **Joint SDG Fund** developed a guidance note for the implementation of the gender equality marker aligned on the UNCT SWAP and based on the example of the Peacebuilding Fund. It uses 3-dimension areas included in the UN SWAP Score card to address key GEWE components: programming, monitoring and evaluation; partnerships and financial resources. According to the Joint SDG Fund 2021 annual report, 88% of joint programmes have gender equality markers that are at level GEM 2 (significant contribution to gender equality) or GEM 3, while 26 % of resources have been allocated to programmes with gender equality as their principal objective (GEM 3).

UN Women has continued providing technical assistance to the Joint SDG Fund for the implementation of the gender equality marker and the overall quality of programmes submitted for funding. In February 2022, consultations were held with UNDP, as they are chairing the Operational Steering Committee (OSC) of the Fund, in February 2022, resulting in an agreement to propose UN Women as member of the OSC, where membership operates on a rotational basis.

In 2020, the GEM was made mandatory in the Second call for proposals of the **UN COVID-19 Response & Recovery Fund** in combination with a financial target of 30% for gender equality and/or the empowerment of women. The 2021 Annual Report of the Fund states that 73% of Second Call programmes scored 3 on the gender equality marker and none fell below a score of 2, where gender equality is a significant aim. As a result, financial allocations jumped from 5 per cent of total funding (USD 1.9 million) in the first call, with no specific financial target for GEWE, to 64 per cent (USD 11.9 million) in the second.

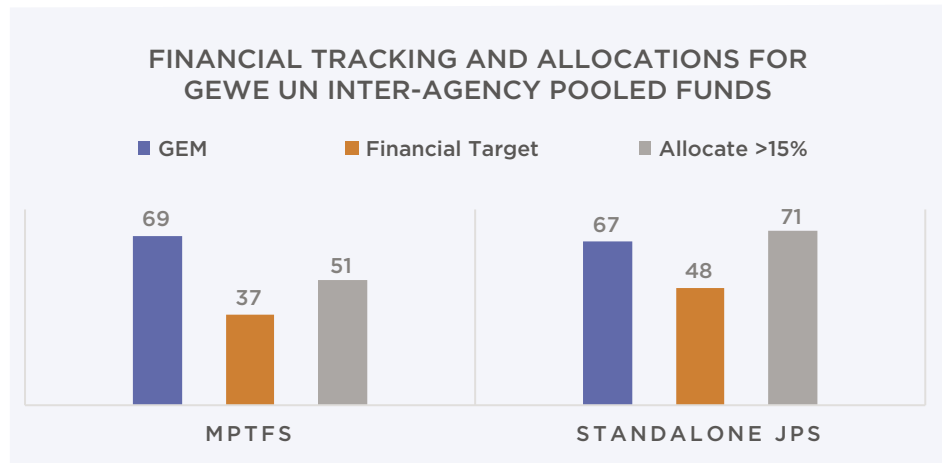
In 2021, building on the 2020 experience with the COVID-19 Fund, the GEM was embedded in the **Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA)** in combination with specific financial targets addressing women’s rights and gender equality. These targets include a 30% of the Cash transfers for people working in Markets (Cash for Market) to be allocated to women and a 15% of the overall STFA to address women’s needs and gender equality issues, particularly through unconditional cash transfers to support widows and survival needs. UN Women is advocating to UNDP to include technical expertise on GEWE in the STFA’s Technical Secretariat.

At the end of April 2021, the STFA had allocated \$64 Million to 11 UN agencies under the GEM 2 criterion, aiming, among other objectives, to target 50,000 women-led SME by the end of 2022 which would generate employment for approximately 500,000 women. Also, it is anticipated that by Dec 2022, the STFA will be able to reach more than 2 million people (including one million women) across 34 provinces in Afghanistan through restoration of access to basic and essential services, sustainable livelihoods, and social cohesion.

**More broadly speaking**, and over and above the engagement at the individual fund level as delineated briefly above, UN Women has supported the UNSDG FMOG (Fiduciary Management and Oversight Group) Working Group on Pooled Funds (led by the MPTF Office) to launch a first survey to all MPTFs’ Administrative Agents. This survey has been responded by **a total of 115 UN interagency pooled funds**, equivalent to 70% of the estimated 164 active UN inter-agency pooled funds during the period 2020-2021. Of the total of complete responses received, **49 (or 43%)** were from MPTFs and **66 (or 57%)** were from **standalone Joint Programmes (JPs)**. This survey is expected to be conducted annually henceforth.

The results of the survey in Figure 6 show that over **65% of the MPTFs and JPs** are applying the gender equality marker. Yet, only 37% of the MPTFs and 48% JPs include financial targets related to gender equality. In terms of financial investments (with or without established targets) **51% of MPTFs and 71% of JPs, according to the survey, are allocating 15% or more of their resources to programmes with gender equality as their principal objective.**

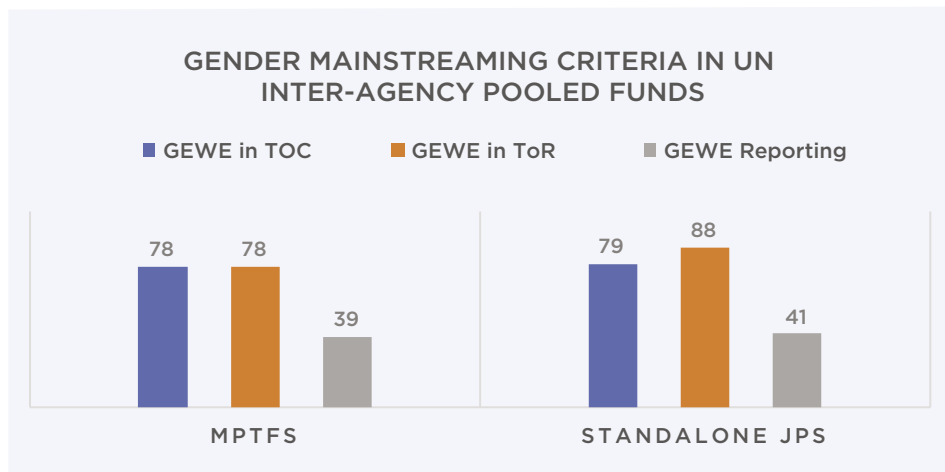
Figure 6: Financial tracking and allocations for GEWE in UN Inter-agency pooled funds, by 2021





The gap between rhetoric and resources is wide. While over three quarters of MPTFs and JPs address gender equality concerns in their theories of change and in their Terms of Reference and JP documents, **less than half include contributions to gender equality in their financial reports (Figure 7)**

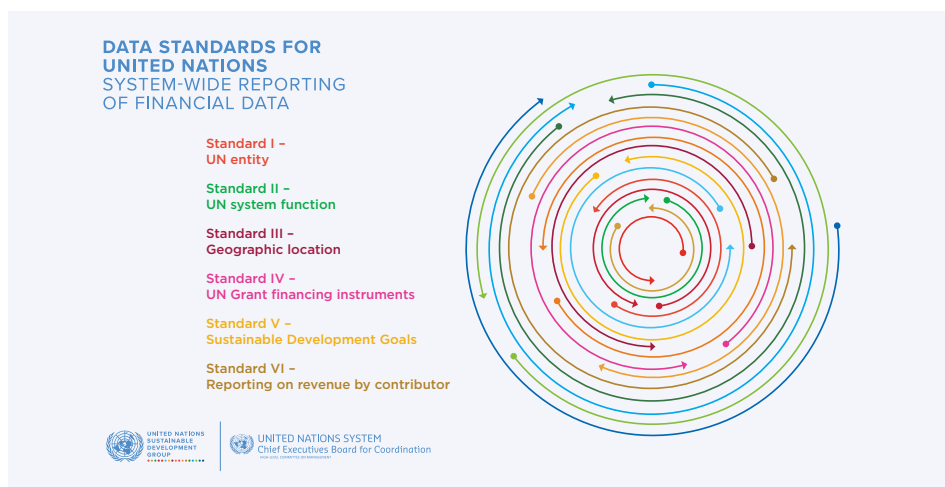
Figure 7: Implementation of gender mainstreaming criteria (Theory of Change, Terms of Reference, Financial Reporting) in UN interagency pooled funds, by MPTs and standalone JPs, by 2021



The human and financial resource constraints under which UN Women operates preclude any individual fund by fund engagement as undertaken in the prior years, favoring systemwide approaches combined with the focus on specific funds described above. Therefore, UN Women is participating in the updating of current systemwide guidance for universal applicability to all MPTF Funds, specifically the 2015 undg Guidance Note on MPTFs and the 2015 MPTF Office Manual “Designing Pooled Funds for Performance”. These notes are expected to be finalized before the end of 2022.

## 6. The Gender Equality Marker as the UN Financial Data Standard

The UN financial data standards prescribe the requirements for UN system-wide financial data reporting exercises. Six initial data standards were developed through a joint initiative of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) and the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) of the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination and adopted in 2018. In 2022, additional data standards, including the gender equality marker (standard #7) were endorsed by the CEB Finance and Budget Network (FBN) as part of the updating of the initial data standards.



These standards inform the **2020 SG’s Data Strategy** that sets the vision of the UN transformed into a data-driven organization, with data used to “make better decisions and deliver stronger support to those we serve”. In addition, through the **(2022-2025) Data Cube Strategy**, the CEB Secretariat has committed to provide Member States and data users with high-quality system-wide financial information aligned with the SDGs for a more transparent and comprehensive picture of the UN system-wide revenue and expenses with disaggregated data for better analytics and insights for evidence-based decisions.

UN entities report to the **CEB Secretariat through the Data Management Platform (DMP)** for the production of the UN-CEB Financial Statistics. After a transition period of 3 years (since its approval in 2018), the CEB collection of 2021 financial data has fully incorporated all the **data standards** for United Nations system-wide reporting of financial data.

Further to this mandatory reporting to the CEB by all UN entities, the road map for implementation of the data standards requires the **harmonization of code lists with OECD and IATI**.

**IATI (International Aid Transparency Initiative)** is a global initiative to improve the transparency of development and humanitarian resources and their results to address poverty and crises. IATI brings together governments, multilateral institutions, private sector and civil society organizations and others to increase the transparency of resources flowing into developing countries. Organizations that distribute or spend resources publish information about their development and humanitarian activities using IATI’s data standard. Entities reporting to IATI include FAO, IFAD, ILO, IOM, ITC, UNEP, UNAIDS, UNCDF, UNDCO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, OCHA, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-WOMEN, UNITAID, WFP, WHO, UN-HABITAT

**The OECD** Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is a unique international forum of many of the largest providers of aid, including 30 members. They maintain the International Development Statistics (IDS) online databases covering bilateral, multilateral aid (ODA) and private providers’ aid and other resource flows. In particular two statistical frameworks on ODA – Common Reporting Standard (CRS) and Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD) - are of relevance for the purpose of unified coding between the UN, IATI and OECD.

The UN Transparency Task Force recommended additional variables to the UN-CEB minimum data set for reporting to IATI and/or OECD. The Gender Equality Marker was included in that recommendation. Under the principle “maximizing transparency, minimizing efforts” in meeting UN financial obligations, the CEB FBN has endorsed the gender equality marker standard (as a four-point scale financial tracking tool) as part of the UN-CEB minimum data set for reporting to IATI and OECD. All this has taken place very recently during the CEB Financial Statistics workshop: 2022-2025 Data Cube strategy on 20 and 21 April, and it is in the process of final approval.



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