

UPDATE ON STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Additional documents for this item: People of UNAIDS 2024 (UNAIDS/PCB (56)/CRP6); Administrative Review Statistical Overview for 2024 (UNAIDS/PCB (56)/CRP7); Disciplinary and other corrective actions in 2024 (UNAIDS/PCB (56)/CRP8).

Action required at this meeting—the Programme Coordinating Board is invited to:

107. *Take note* of the update on strategic human resources management issues.

Cost implications for the implementation of the decisions: *none*

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Executive summary

1. Significant progress was made on the implementation of the UNAIDS 2023–2026 People Management Strategy over the course of 2024. The Strategy anchors the internal activities of the UNAIDS Secretariat based on five guiding principles: investment in learning, development and growth; enhancing gender equality, diversity, equity, inclusions, and antiracism; leveraging new ways of working; enforcing respectful conduct and zero tolerance; and supporting staff well-being and engagement.
2. These pillars seek to put staff members alongside the communities we serve at and ensure that they are properly supported to face one of the most challenging environments of the global HIV response in more than 40 years of the pandemic. This report will be the second under the 2023–2026 People Management Strategy
3. In 2024, in view of the continuing decline in funding, UNAIDS took steps to protect institutional resources, identify efficiencies, and support staff through this period of considerable upheaval. A recruitment freeze was instituted to preserve and utilize existing resources with waivers available on a case-by-case basis. New contract modalities were adopted to increase efficiencies, promote the timely delivery of projects, and ensure affiliate personnel are employed to maximum effectiveness. The availability of counselling services was expanded along with services to support staff during this transition.
4. In 2025, UNAIDS received notice of termination of funding amounting to 60% of its anticipated revenue. UNAIDS took immediate steps to address this unprecedented crisis, including launching a restructuring exercise. Though the Programme Coordinating Board update typically focuses on activities from the previous year (2024), this report will exceptionally provide an update on the ongoing organizational responses and anticipated changes. These efforts will also be discussed in other reports to the PCB.
5. The restructuring plan includes a reduction of more than 50 percent in Secretariat staffing and a reduced physical in-country presence to in a reduced number of countries, while being able to support through regional teams, multi-country offices and further integration in the UN Resident Coordinator System a total of 60 countries. The Secretariat will shift its focus to four core functions: leadership; convening and coordination; accountability; and community engagement. The restructuring is informed by the work of a High-Level Panel which began its work in October 2024 and is aligned with broader UN reform efforts, including UN80. Implementation of the restructuring will begin in June 2025 and is expected to be completed by May 2026.

Introduction

6. This report provides an update on human resource management activities undertaken by the UNAIDS Secretariat during the reporting period, April 2024 to March 2025. As requested by the PCB at its 30th meeting in June 2012, this report is submitted annually. Human resources statistics are included in this update in accordance with the request of the PCB at its 50th meeting in June 2022.
7. This report exceptionally includes an update on activities taken in April-May 2025 in view of the ongoing funding crisis to provide the PCB with the most up-to-date information on the ongoing changes within the organization.

Background and context

8. Funding challenges continue to threaten the ability of the Organization to effectively coordinate and deliver on the Secretariat's full comparative advantage in support of the Global AIDS Strategy 2021–2026. UNAIDS has reprioritized and reorganized its work, implementing cost-savings and efficiencies, to respond to these increasing financial constraints while supporting staff through this difficult time.
9. Global challenges to the HIV response exacerbate these difficulties. Reassessments of global health and social protection models after the COVID-19 pandemic, economic slowdowns, growing humanitarian and security crises, and the mounting impact of climate change have diminished global focus on the HIV response. At the same time, while new technologies exist, additional barriers to prevention, testing and treatment for people living with and affected by HIV are being introduced. Human rights challenges, such as stigma and discrimination, criminalization of marginalized populations leading to barriers to health services access, continue to undermine effective HIV responses. A regression of gender equality and human rights in several countries makes it even more challenging for UNAIDS to operate.
10. UNAIDS modelling suggests that we are now seeing 2,300 additional new HIV infections every day on top of the 3,500 infections that were already occurring. These reversals are happening as a result of reductions in international support, including US Government funding cuts, as well as HIV-related human rights push backs on women and girls and key populations coupled. UNAIDS estimates that the funding cuts could lead to an additional 6.6 million new HIV infections and 4.2 million AIDS-related deaths by 2029. UNAIDS's own funding has been significantly impacted in 2025.
11. It is in this rapidly evolving context that this update on strategic human resources management issues, along with its accompanying conference room papers, are presented to the PCB. A workforce data report for 2024 and annual reports on administration of justice and disciplinary and corrective measures are presented to the Board as conference room papers.

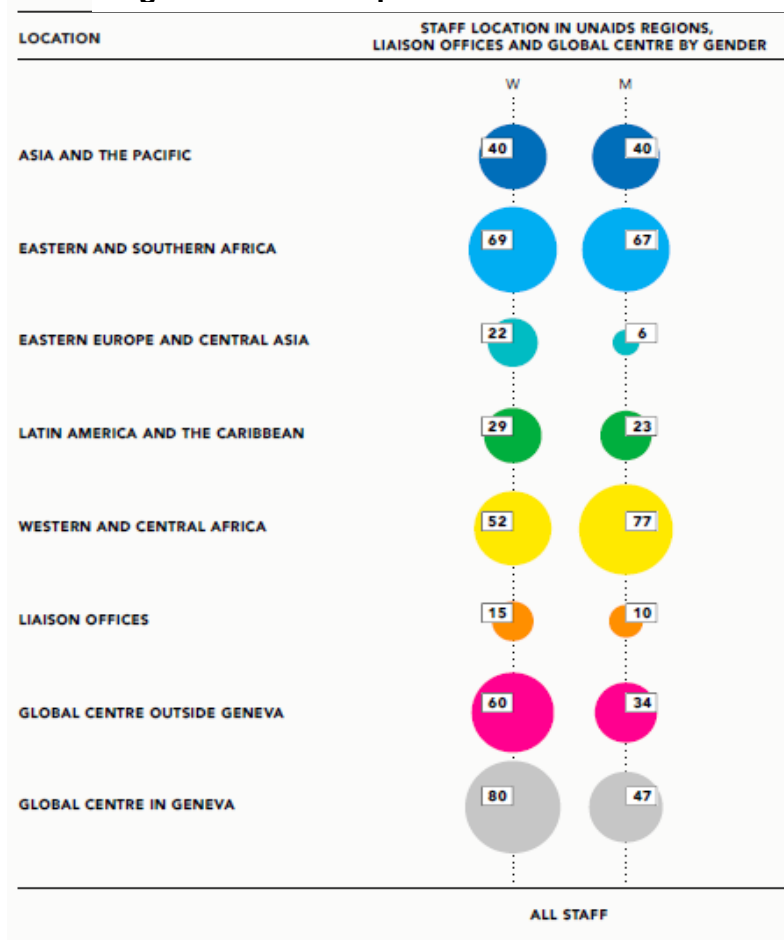
People of UNAIDS

12. People are the most valuable asset of the UNAIDS Secretariat and of the Joint Programme to achieve its mandate and to meet the evolving challenges of the AIDS epidemic. The data provided in this section is a snapshot of the Organization in 2024. As requested by the PCB at its 50th session, workforce statistics are included in this update. Additional data are available in the accompanying conference room paper, "People of UNAIDS 2024" (UNAIDS/PCB (56)/CRP5).
13. This data reflects the Organization in 2024. In view of the current financial situation (as included in the Interim Financial Management Update for 2025 (UNAIDS/PCB (56)/25.11) and the ongoing restructuring, this data is no longer up-to-date but is included for posterity and context on the ongoing changes. Information on the restructuring is exceptionally included in the final section of this paper.

14. In 2024, UNAIDS employed 671 people in a network of country and regional offices worldwide as well as global teams based in Geneva, Bonn, Nairobi and Johannesburg. This structure is aligned with the Global AIDS Strategy 2021–2026 in achieving its highest impact by focusing on the four thematic priorities and being cost-effective, diverse and inclusive, knowledge-driven, and aligned with UN Reform.

15. UNAIDS exceeded the commitment it made in 2012 whereby no more than 30% of staff would work in the Global Centre and no less than 70% would work in Regional, Country, and Liaison Offices. The vast majority of staff (81%) are located in Regional, Country, and Liaison Offices, while 19% work in Global Centre functions in Geneva, Switzerland.

Figure 1. Staff composition



16. UNAIDS has 66 Country Directors (“UCDs”). In 2024 and the beginning of 2025, 23 sitting UCDs or candidates from the 2023 UCD pool were assigned/reassigned. One UCD was newly appointed on a temporary basis to Equatorial Guinea. Four UCDs had their tour of duty extended.
17. As part of the previous alignment exercise, UNAIDS established five National Professional Officer positions to be placed in Resident Coordinator (“RC”) offices as HIV/AIDS Advisors. This pilot model placed advisors in Fiji, Gabon, Colombia, and Guyana. One position in Congo remains unfilled and discussions on next steps with the RC are ongoing. The UNAIDS Independent Evaluation Office is in the process of launching an assessment of the effects of (a) placing HIV advisors in selected Resident Coordinator offices and (b) establishing UNAIDS multi-country offices, as alternatives to standalone offices, which will be scaled up under the current reforms and in line with UN80.
18. In 2024, the number of staff increased by 3% (from 646 staff in December 2023 to 671 in December 2024). Of particular relevance to this report, a new Director of People Management, Mr Stephan Ulrich Grieb, and a new Security Advisor joined UNAIDS in the summer of 2024.
19. Efforts to improve recruitment timelines continued. However, in response to the evolving financial situation, a recruitment freeze was implemented in October 2024. All vacant positions are considered by default “on hold.” Managers may seek an exceptional waiver with the provision of a detailed request, which is reviewed by the Recruitment Freeze

Committee and the Executive Cabinet. With the implementation of these additional steps to reduce UNAIDS financial liabilities, selection timelines have lengthened.

20. Staff hail from 121 countries. Staff from Africa represent nearly half of the total (48%), followed by western Europe and North America (19%), Asia and the Pacific (18%), Latin America and the Caribbean (10%), and eastern Europe and Central Asia (5%). About half of UNAIDS staff (46%) are in the International Professional category, 22% are National Professional Officers, and 32% are General Service staff.
21. UNAIDS has 367 female and 304 male staff members. Notably, 44% of UNAIDS Country Directors are women, an increase from 27% in 2013 but a slight decrease from 2023 (48%) and 2022 (52%). The ungraded positions of Executive and Deputy Executive Directors are all occupied by women.
22. The vast majority of UNAIDS staff (81%) are aged between 35 and 59 years. The average age of new staff was forty-three years old. The average length of service among UNAIDS staff members was ten years; 23% of staff members had fewer than two years of service within the UN, having just started their career with UNAIDS.
23. In 2024, new initiatives recruited more young people to the Organization with increased investments in the internship programme, and introduction of lower-graded international professional positions. In 2024, 12 junior programme officers, 28 UN volunteers, and 64 interns supported offices across the Organization.

UNAIDS People Strategy Implementation

24. The UNAIDS People Strategy 2023–2026, presented to the PCB at its 52nd meeting, anchors the internal activities of the UNAIDS Secretariat, based on five guiding principles:
 - (1) investment in learning, development and growth;
 - (2) enhancing gender equality, diversity, equity, inclusion and antiracism;
 - (3) leveraging new ways of working;
 - (4) enforcing respectful conduct and zero tolerance; and
 - (5) supporting staff well-being and engagement.
25. Developed as a complement to the Global AIDS Strategy, the UNAIDS People Strategy catalyses the work of the UNAIDS Secretariat to deliver on the core tenets of the global strategy: knowledge-sharing, influencing for change, building and maintaining effective partnerships and mainstreaming equality and inclusion in line with its feminist principles. Calibrated to enable “UNAIDS people to give their best each day to end AIDS by 2030”, the People Strategy outlines the priorities for the UNAIDS Secretariat based on a feminist, antiracist, people-centred approach.
26. In 2024, the Department of People Management focused on nine key initiatives to create a supportive and dynamic environment where every staff member can thrive and contribute their best:
 - a) **Pulse survey:** Gathering real-time feedback to understand and address staff needs.
 - b) **Investing in staff learning and development:** Offering both mandatory and voluntary training opportunities to enhance skills and knowledge.
 - c) **Leadership development:** Cultivating strong leaders through targeted programmes.

- d) **UNAIDS Country Director network and learning communities:** Fostering collaboration and shared learning among staff.
 - e) **Staff well-being and mental health:** Prioritizing the mental and physical health of our team.
 - f) **Career/realignment support:** Providing guidance and resources for career growth and realignment.
 - g) **Performance management culture:** Strengthening our culture with clear performance expectations and support.
 - h) **Recognition:** Celebrating staff service to the UNAIDS's mandate.
 - i) **Young talent:** Developing the next generation of leaders through focused initiatives.
27. As the financial situation continued to evolve, the Department of People Management identified inefficiencies and streamlined processes, strengthened cross-functional collaboration and technical guidance, and provided additional support to staff as they navigate a difficult and uncertain period.

Investment in learning, development and growth

28. UNAIDS is committed to, and actively engaged in, supporting a healthy, nurturing, and engaging work environment and culture. Investments in learning, development, and growth enable the Secretariat to identify and cultivate talent, create a work environment that fosters innovation and collaboration and empower staff to thrive while delivering their best for the people they serve.

Performance

29. UNAIDS is committed to fostering a performance culture rooted in equity, transparency, and accountability. In the 2023–2024 cycle, the performance management framework evolved to a four-tiered rating system, enabling managers to provide more meaningful, nuanced evaluations that recognize diverse contributions and inclusive leadership. The Secretariat achieved a compliance rate of 91% for this cycle, marking an improvement from 87% in 2022–2023. Approximately 15% of staff continue to benefit from matrix supervision (whereby they report to multiple supervisors), fostering cross-functional collaboration and strengthened technical guidance.

Learning and Development

30. A mandatory new staff orientation for onboarding staff was launched in 2024. Three new staff orientation sessions were delivered to the 91 new staff members at UNAIDS during this period. These sessions cover key topics such as UNAIDS's programme priorities and mandate, the organizational and funding structure, values, and resources for well-being, learning, ethical and performance management standards and requirements.
31. As part of our commitment to institutional excellence and to safeguarding the resources with which we are entrusted, UNAIDS requires all staff to complete a comprehensive suite of 11 mandatory trainings:
- BSAFE,
 - United to Respect: Preventing sexual harassment and other prohibited conduct/prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse,
 - Ethics and integrity at the UN,
 - Preventing fraud and corruption.

- Disability inclusion.
 - I Know Gender.
 - HIV in the workplace.
 - Ethics at UNAIDS.
 - Information security.
 - Mental health & well-being at UNAIDS.
32. In 2024, the mandatory learning programme expanded from five to 11 courses, with over 74% of staff completing all the courses. Compliance was especially high at 94% for the course on “Preventing sexual harassment and other prohibited conduct” and 90% for both “Preventing fraud and corruption” and “prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse”—underscoring UNAIDS’s commitment to a respectful, safe and values-driven workplace.
33. UNAIDS staff completed 1,388 optional training courses to support their professional growth, marking a 10% increase from the previous year. UNAIDS’s Performance and Learning Management Platform (PALM) provides an array of self-paced learning resources from providers such as EdApp, LinkedIn Learning, SkillBoosters, VinciWorks, and Headspace. Popular courses include “Partnerships and Influencing”, “Effective habits”, “Managing performance”, “Inclusive leadership skills” and “Mental health & well-being at UNAIDS”. New courses, available in multiple languages, were added to the repertoire, including a course on UNAIDS value proposition and intern onboarding. Additional new courses, including “Career support training” and “Child safeguarding at UNAIDS”, will be added in 2025.
34. In view of the challenging work environment in 2024 and the difficulties posed in the first half of 2025, UNAIDS has prioritized providing career support to staff, building resilience and adapting to necessary changes. These efforts represent a collective investment in building confidence, clarity, and connection across teams and for individuals. Several initiatives were launched to provide practical support for staff navigating these changes:
- **Career catalyst programme:** This flagship initiative offers live sessions and practical tools on personal branding, CV and cover letter writing, competency-based interviewing, and networking. Since April 2024, 314 participants have completed the programme. An additional 31 participants received individual coaching to optimize their application materials.
 - **Pathway to growth initiative:** In 2024, 73 participants completed this programme focused on self-assessment, defining growth priorities, and professional coaching.
 - **AI-enabled tools and simulators:** UNAIDS introduced tools like ResuMate to simulate realistic interview experiences and feedback.
35. UNAIDS also undertook a review of and revised its Assessment Centre for UNAIDS Country Directors to incorporate new success indicators, strengthen content and testing, provide multilingual support in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese, and improve candidate preparation through comprehensive briefing materials and practice sessions. Feedback from past participants indicated positive satisfaction with the experience of the Assessment Centre (with 93% reporting positive experiences) and with its results (with 89% reporting that it was a reliable tool for selection of the best qualified candidates and developmental feedback).
36. In 2024, UNAIDS launched its applications for the February 2025 Assessment Centre. It received 211 applications, including 53 internal applicants (13 of whom were shortlisted) and 111 external applicants (three of whom were shortlisted). As a result of

the uncertain financial situation, the February 2025 Assessment Centre is currently postponed.

Leadership development

37. Visionary and creative leadership has rarely been more important given the challenges facing UNAIDS and the struggle to end AIDS. To foster and cultivate these skills, UNAIDS has continued to invest in programmes for growth and leadership development.

38. As part of the executive coaching programme, 101 senior leaders within the Organization have completed a collective 379 hours of coaching to strengthen their leadership skills. Two cohorts of nearly 100 staff also completed the “Leading for Transformational change” programme launched in collaboration with United Nations (UN) System Staff College. This programme equips leaders to implement the UNAIDS mandate to ensure on-the-ground results from our work while navigating complex environments. Nearly 100% of participants positively reviewed the programme as enhancing their knowledge of the vision, mission, and value proposition of UNAIDS and its contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

“During my participation in the Executive Coaching Programme, I was able to strengthen my skills, particularly in strategic thinking, relationship-building, and effective communication. I found the coaching sessions immensely helpful in developing a more balanced leadership approach and improving my team engagement skills.”

- Participant in the executive coaching programme

39. UNAIDS leadership is anchored by the UNAIDS Country Directors, Regional Directors, and the newly launched HIV/AIDS Advisors who lead UNAIDS’s efforts around the world. The UCD Knowledge Network and Talent Pool (“UCDNet”) is a vibrant Community of Practice of 89 of these leaders actively sharing achievements, best practices, and experiences. UNAIDS continues to develop UCDNet to provide a platform for enhanced peer learning, leadership development resources, and candid discussion on challenges. 96% of members engaged in these discussions. A survey conducted with participants indicated the value of UCDNet and encouraged its expansion to support the maintenance of institutional knowledge, particularly in view of the difficulties facing the Organization.
40. UNAIDS also remains dedicated to fostering the next generation of diverse leaders through its inclusive young talent programme. Over the past year, UNAIDS has expanded remote internships, providing valuable experience to 64 interns. Fellowship programmes sponsored by Germany and Italy provided opportunities for six fellows in addition to the 28 UN volunteers to join the Organization. Launched in 2024, the “OpenDoors programme” provides webinars and networking events for LGBTQI+ university students, with the latest webinar attracting over 152 participants.
41. The UNAIDS Rewards and Recognition Programme honors staff years of service and contributions to the global AIDS response. In 2024, 91 staff members were recognized for their dedication and commitment to the AIDS response.

Enhancing gender equality, diversity, equity, inclusion and antiracism

42. UNAIDS continues to embrace the principles that ensure that our staff are best equipped to support the AIDS response: gender equality, diversity, equity, inclusion and antiracism.
43. To further define this vision and commitment, the process to develop a Fair, Respectful and Empowering Framework was initiated in 2024. The Framework will provide measurable goals and accountability mechanisms for diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility grounded in a Theory of Change that takes a gender-transformative lens as entry point to succeed the 2018– 2023 Gender Action Plan. A consultative process has been followed, with nine focus group discussions conducted to capture the experiences of staff with disabilities; staff in the LGBTQI+ community; young people; staff living with HIV; and staff from various race and ethnic groups.
44. Culture transformation is implemented through a feminist and decolonial angle—acknowledging the interconnectedness of different identities and experiences in the workplace. UNAIDS was recognized for this approach by UN Women who highlighted it as a good practice towards gender equality.
45. Team Learning is a key method employed to promote joint understanding and application of values and principles. By July 2024, 67% (449) of staff had participated in module 1 of the “Culture transformation team learning journey” to deepen learning experiences, UNAIDS cabinet, including the Executive Director and both Deputy Executive Directors, provide reinforcement through informal “fireside” sessions where they share and reflect on their experiences of applying the culture transformation concept, including leading in a time of crisis.
46. Through 2024, teams across the organization continued to put into practice “team values charters”, which establish appropriate ways of working collectively and promote support and congeniality daily as they contribute towards the organizational mission.
47. Implementation of the UNAIDS antiracism plan continued in 2024 with leadership from the Executive Director in support of joint UN initiatives to address racial discrimination in the System. In collaboration with the UN Anti-Racism Office, the UN Senior Officials of African Descent Group and the South African Permanent Mission to the United Nations (Geneva), UNAIDS convened a high-level panel that included Graca Machel, under the theme “Partnership, reconciliation, reparations, integration and inclusion for development”, calling for strengthening global efforts to end poverty and inequities.
48. The “antiracism community of practice” led education and advocacy sessions during the International HIV Conference in Munich and the International Day to Eliminate Racism and Racial Discrimination.
49. To ensure that we continue to attract the most qualified candidates, UNAIDS has also collaborated with the e-recruit platform provider, Talenti, which also collects data on applicants including race, ethnicity, affiliation to a key population, and gender identity. These tools also help ensure that UNAIDS fulfils its mandate, as reflected in the founding ECOSOC resolutions, to support key populations.

Leveraging new ways of working

50. The UNAIDS People Management Strategy explicitly sought to introduce and develop new ways of working to respond to increasing financial constraints while maximizing

UNAIDS's contribution to the global AIDS response. These new ways of working support collaboration across teams and promote efficiency across UNAIDS's work.

51. These new ways of working complement broader UN Reform efforts such as UN 2.0, a series of reforms launched by the Secretary-General to ensure that the UN is agile, adaptable, and innovative through its focus on data, digital foresight, behaviour science skills and culture.

Knowledge management strategy implementation

52. To support the implementation of the Organization's previous restructuring in 2022, a UNAIDS Secretariat Knowledge Management Strategy was approved in November 2022. The Strategy has a two-year action plan addressing nine critical performance gaps related to three key pillars: (a) knowledge capture/creation, (b) knowledge sharing/dissemination and (c) knowledge acquisition and application. Of the 27 actions, 21 have been completed, one was delayed to 2025, two were partially completed, and three were halted due to cuts in budget and human resources.
53. Key achievements under the action plan include:
 - **Knowledge capture/creation**
 - Enhanced handover processes have been developed, including video interviews, and piloted with rotating staff including UCDs to support the transition of staff into new roles.
 - The Learning for Leavers programme, first piloted in 2023, helps the Organization to learn from departing staff and contribute to Organizational continuity and management. In 2024, 20 such videos were created and made available to all staff members. Data indicate high engagement with these videos.
 - Programmes to integrate and facilitate knowledge capture in communities of practice ("Peer Assist") and as part of UNAIDS's engagement in priority external events ("After action reviews") have been launched. These programmes provide an opportunity to reflect upon UNAIDS's contributions and to take forward these lessons.
 - **Knowledge sharing/dissemination**
 - Knowledge management objectives have become compulsory for all staff as part of the regular performance management framework with a particular uptake on joining communities of practice, building or contributing to a knowledge sharing product, and sharing lessons learned.
 - An internal communications plan has been developed and implemented with weekly knowledge management tips in newsletters, webinars, training opportunities, guidance notes, and regular updates from the knowledge management team.
 - **Knowledge acquisition and application**
 - As part of training on new ways of working, 321 staff participated in a tailored Knowledge Management module. Modules focused on this area were also integrated into 100% of planned organizational training initiatives in 2024.
 - In December 2024, "The Co³ lab", a dynamic new learning series designed to help build skills in community building, collaboration, and co-creation was launched. These monthly, hands-on workshops explore a variety of topics to blend innovative methods, experiments with practical tools, and an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning.

54. To support this work, IT tools continue to be developed and expanded. *Viva Engage* serves as UNAIDS's primary organizational sharing platform. Resource materials have been developed and rolled out to support cross-organization collaboration. Automatic translation of all discussions on *Viva Engage* provides access in over 26 languages. Data shows strong and sustained uptake of *Viva Engage*. Over 40 video training sessions and 48 in-person sessions have been joined by over 530 colleagues in 2024.
55. Knowledge Management Focal Points representing nearly every department and region across the Organization play an integral role in the implementation and expansion of knowledge management activities. In addition, the 2024 Global Pulse Survey of UNAIDS staff indicates that nearly two-thirds of staff have engaged in knowledge management work this year. UNAIDS continues to incentivize individual participation and to spotlight teams and staff leading on the adoption of knowledge management initiatives.

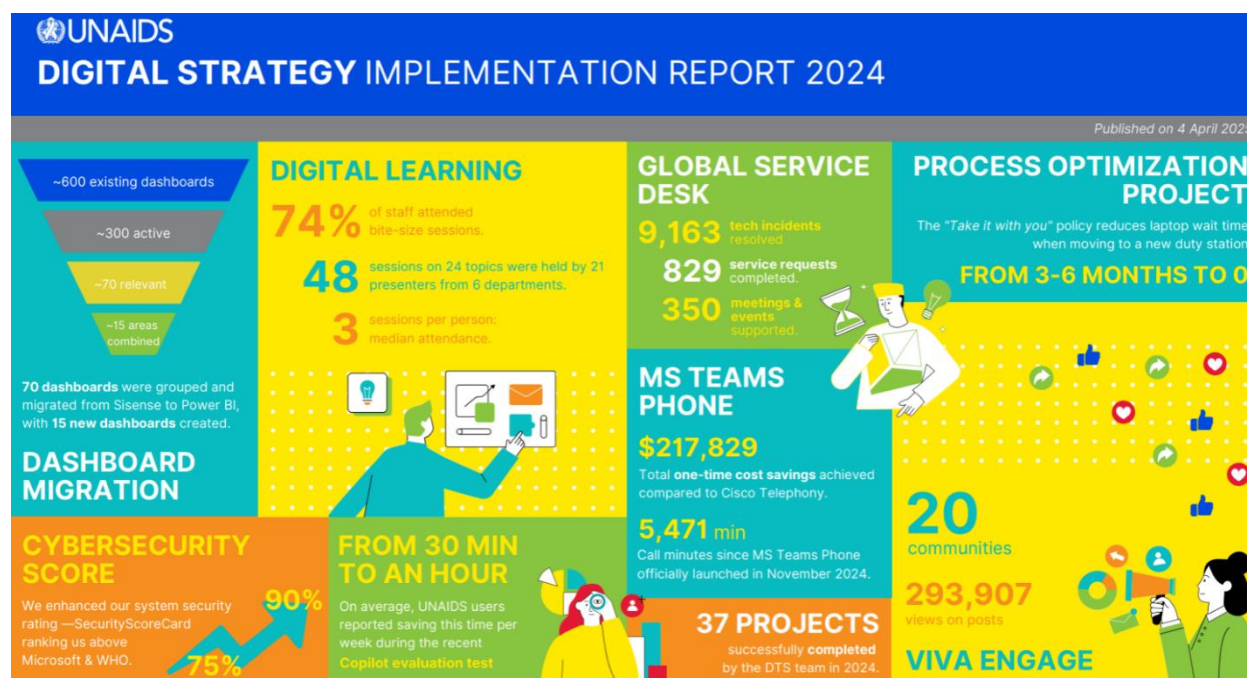
Community of practices

56. First developed in 2023, the communities of practice officially launched in 2024 with two in-person launch events and one moved online following the implementation of organizational travel restrictions. Three communities of practice support UNAIDS's new ways of working: "Equality and rights for all"; "Science, systems and services for all"; "Equitable financing"; and "Data for impact."
57. A capacity building programme was launched in 2024 to guide participants through the process of developing communities of practice. Building on these frameworks, internal groups have been established in other strategic and operational areas including Staff Development and Performance, Science and UNAIDS, Technical Support Mechanism, Data Advisory, Digital Enthusiasts, and Global Partnerships. UNAIDS Secretariat has also supported a number of external communities of practice, including the Asia Pacific Learning Network on community-led monitoring, #Whatwomenwant on gender-based violence in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region and Stigma and Discrimination in Asia and Pacific region.

Digital strategy

58. 2024 marked the first year of the implementation of UNAIDS's Digital Strategy. The Strategy is overseen by a Digital Board, with representatives from across the Organization. Progress moved faster than anticipated in many projects. Key achievements included:
 - **Digital and data literacy programming.** 74% of UNAIDS staff participated in lessons to build confidence in 24 topics such as data visualization, basic artificial intelligence (AI) and cybersecurity. One hundred staff participated in advanced training on Microsoft PowerBI.
 - **Empowering staff with AI tools.** UNAIDS has contracted with AI-based support and translation services to support rapid, accurate summarization and report development.
 - **Cybersecurity training and upskilling.** In October 2024, UNAIDS launched an online, comprehensive cybersecurity portal with clear, step-by-step guides on identifying and addressing common IT security threats.
 - **Safe spaces online portal.** A secure hub for managing sensitive data on key populations was also rolled out in 2024.

59. A snapshot of the data strategy implementation is included below.



60. The project portfolio has been adapted to address the current funding situation. For 2025, efforts will focus on prioritizing support for UNAIDS restructuring; expanding the use of AI to achieve efficiencies; and ensuring that cybersecurity remains a continue priority.

Process optimization

61. To help staff achieve their objectives and improve the work environment, UNAIDS continued its mapping of current workflows to identify bottlenecks and develop solutions to leverage technology, automation and best practices to streamline administrative processes, reduce errors, and enhance transparency and accountability.
62. The process optimization project concluded in August 2024, introducing a series of enhancements to human resources processes to better support staff and equip teams to deliver on their mandates:
- **Simplified recruitment.** The recruitment process has been streamlined with the introduction of a simplified routing system and standardized operating procedures. As part of this optimization, recruitment of General Service and National staff is now managed regionally to expedite hiring. Hiring for consultants has also been transferred to the Department of People Management to provide greater flexibility.
 - **Expanded partnerships with UN entities.** As part of the new recruitment processes, UNAIDS signed a new memorandum of understanding with UNDP that includes the possibility of engaging affiliate national and international personnel for six months or more to support UNAIDS's work. UNAIDS has also expanded its collaboration with UN Volunteers for a wide variety of assignments.
 - **Remote work flexibility.** A new "take-it-with-you" policy enables staff to work remotely without disruption by allowing them to take laptops and mobiles phones wherever they go.

- **Enhanced IT onboarding programme.** New hires are equipped with essential digital skills for their roles from day one.
 - **Background checks on candidates.** Public social media checks are now carried out by a specialist external firm for fast and consistent results.
63. Generative AI tools have also enhanced human resource service delivery such as the AskHR tool, which enables staff to efficiently search UNAIDS human resource policies; ResuMate, which supports candidates in refining resumes and cover letters to enhance applicant quality and recruitment outcomes; and SDP Job Agent, which matches candidates to job openings based on skill categories. The human resource team introduced additional new tools to record and manage teleworking and to support the offboarding of employees. The Department of People Management has also established dashboards that improve data visualization and decision-making capabilities for human resource stakeholders.

Enforcing respectful conduct and zero tolerance

64. In 2024, UNAIDS issued a revised regulatory framework in its (a) Staff Regulations and Staff Rules and (b) Internal Justice System. The revisions were made to update UNAIDS's rules and policies following organization-wide transformation processes and to align these rules and policies with the framework of the World Health Organization ("WHO"). These revisions (a) harmonized UNAIDS's rules on unused annual leave upon staff separation with the WHO; (b) increased transparency around available informal dispute resolution channels to encourage staff to resolve workplaces grievances at the earliest possible stage; and (c) outlined expectations around the formal administrative review process, including the code of conduct and power of attorney in alignment with the WHO's Global Board of Appeal.
65. In May 2024, a new UNAIDS Policy on Flexible Working Arrangements was issued to adapt to an evolved "post-COVID-19" work world, to align UNAIDS's provisions with the WHO framework, and to employ best practices that will ensure that UNAIDS has efficient and effective ways of optimizing productivity while supporting staff to balance professional and private commitments. The Policy covered three types of flexible work arrangements available to UNAIDS's staff: flexible working hours, compressing working schedule, and flexible place of work (also known as "teleworking"). These policies uphold UNAIDS's commitment to strengthening delivery of high-quality results, concrete and measurable goals, clear communication and ongoing feedback while leveraging technologies that afford staff the flexibility to work at a time and location conducive to getting the job done right.
66. In 2024, the WHO Policies on Preventing and Addressing Abusive Conduct and on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Misconduct, reported on during the last PCB, were formally rolled out in UNAIDS. UNAIDS continues to enhance its capacity, and remains committed, to effectively address misconduct, including ensuring that investigations are conducted in the most efficient and expeditious manner. In this respect, UNAIDS management regularly discusses these processes with WHO's Office of Internal Oversight Services (IOS), which conducts these investigations on UNAIDS's behalf. Additionally, a new memorandum of understanding ("MOU") between UNAIDS and IOS is being drafted. The revised MOU aims to (a) provide greater visibility to UNAIDS and transparent information-sharing on the status or progress of the review and/or investigation and (b) maintain the respect for independence and confidentiality in performing these investigations.

67. The Department of People Management continues to work closely with the WHO's Office of the Ombudsperson and Mediation Services and other stakeholders, including the UNAIDS Ethics Office, to ensure duty of care, support, consistent policy application, due process, and early and informal conflict resolution. To enhance transparency and accountability, updates on administrative review cases and corrective administrative actions, including disciplinary measures, are shared annually with UNAIDS Staff. These are also available to the PCB as conference room papers.
68. In 2024, six requests for administrative review were received from UNAIDS Secretariat members globally, in addition to three new appeals that were filed before the WHO Global Board of Appeals by former UNAIDS staff members. Further information, including a breakdown of cases by grade and gender of staff members, is available in the conference room paper, "UNAIDS Internal justice system, administrative review process—Annual statistical report 2024" (UNAIDS/PCB (56)/CRP6).
69. In 2024, UNAIDS concluded 13 proceedings related to allegations of misconduct against UNAIDS staff members, of which five cases led to the imposition of disciplinary or other corrective measures. Further detailed information is available in the conference room paper, "Corrective administrative actions including disciplinary measures imposed in 2024" (UNAIDS/PCB (56)/CRP7).
70. Additional reporting on key metrics is included in the Organizational Oversight Reports.

Supporting staff well-being and engagement

71. UNAIDS remains committed to ensuring the well-being and engagement of its staff, including through efforts for an equal, safe, and empowering work culture.
72. Following the 2022 UNAIDS Global Staff Survey, UNAIDS conducted a Pulse Survey in February 2024 to measure progress in priority areas to create an equal, safe and empowering work culture at UNAIDS. Sixty-four percent of staff responded, an increase in engagement of 10% compared with the 2022 survey. Highlights from the pulse survey include:
 - **Supervisory support:** Staff reported strong support in managing workloads.
 - **Learning and development:** Staff ranked the additional support provided by the Organization in this area as the most positive change.
 - **Collaboration and communication:** Staff highlighted improvements made in the Organization's commitment to collaboration and communication.
 - **Misconduct:** 82% did not experience any misconduct over the past year.
 - **Sexual harassment:** 0% of staff reported experiencing any form of sexual harassment.
73. Following the survey, 17 action plans spanning seven topics were identified to address areas for development and improvement.
74. Work-overload remains the primary stressor for staff at UNAIDS worldwide. The previous restructuring, difficult financial situation, and the uncertainty for the organization in 2025 have placed significant strains on staff. To gauge their concerns and to understand how best to support during this period, UNAIDS invited staff in a number of group support initiatives during March to April 2025. Fully 85% of staff participants noted that they are struggling/surviving/in-crisis mode. Ensuring that staff feel supported and appreciated during this time of uncertainty is a critical mission for the Organization.

75. To support staff in managing workloads and adapting to organizational restructuring, UNAIDS designed the "Aligning for success" learning sessions in the last quarter of 2024, with a full launch planned for the third quarter of 2025. These learning sessions are designed to help newly formed teams clarify priorities and manage workloads more effectively and align with the evolving programme priorities outlined in the new AIDS strategy. The Department of People Management has also developed a new series, "Five senses of workplace success", which helps staff understand how to support one other during times of uncertainty and change.
76. In 2024, UNAIDS developed and launched its Mental Health and Well-being Strategy for 2024–2028. From June to September 2024, the Strategy's action plan was rolled out worldwide with events held in all regions to raise awareness and engagement. This strategic plan integrates and builds on all services involved in workforce well-being and mental health, and links with associated services of the WHO. The strategy aims to prevent risks to mental health at work, promote and protect workforce mental health and support workers with mental health conditions.
77. The UN Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy Implementation Board, backed by the UN High-Level Committee on Management, is charged with overseeing the implementation of these strategies across the UN. UNAIDS reports annually through the Implementation Board's scorecard tracking tool across, 12 different services, and with input from the UNAIDS Duty of Care Committee.
78. UNAIDS Staff Counsellor provides services for both individuals and teams to address a wide range of both personal and professional issues impacting staff, including stress, burnout in connection to workload, interpersonal conflict, job security, decentralization/adjustment to remote work, health issues, bereavement and family concerns. In 2024, the Staff Counsellor conducted over 300 individual counselling sessions to 75 staff. Twenty percent of staff supported were managers and 70% were from regions other than the Global Centres in Geneva and Bonn.
79. UNAIDS hosted digital well-being webinars attended by over 200 staff members, provided access to mindfulness apps to over 350 staff members, and provided curated deep dive trainings with the staff counsellor. In addition, staff can also seek support from the external counselling platform provided by the Rome Institute. The external platform served 17 staff members in over 57 sessions.
80. To provide targeted support, psychosocial groups were organized on a range of topics including strengthening workforce resilience and crisis fatigue. These initiatives were jointly facilitated with the UN Department of Safety and Security and UN Women in western Africa. UNAIDS Staff Counsellor proactively reached out to teams facing unstable and difficult conditions in their duty stations.
81. In view of the anticipated unprecedented cuts to the workforce and the parallel geopolitical instability, UNAIDS is ramping up efforts to support staff during this period. Counselling services have already seen a considerable uptick in services requested during the first quarter of 2025. Ten group sessions were held in the first quarter, attended by over 400 participants.
82. UNAIDS staff are also supported by the Office of the Ombudsperson and Mediation Services. It focuses on the prevention and informal resolution of work-related issues as well as interpersonal conflicts, including through facilitated dialogue processes or mediation. In 2024, 15 UNAIDS staff members contacted the Office of the

Ombudsperson and Mediation Services for support.

83. The Secretariat fully complies with the UN Security Risk Management process, which is monitored through an online dashboard and linked to the preparation of the biennial work planning and budget cycle. UNAIDS has taken a number of actions in 2024 and early 2025 to achieve efficiencies while ensuring the safety and security of our staff. Cost-effective solutions included the prioritization of new virtual security tools, such as cloud-based infrastructure and remote monitoring systems, to reduce operational costs.
84. In 2024, UNAIDS completed its recruitment of a new Security Advisor to lead this important work. During his tenure, the Security Advisor has supported policy development to capitalize on these efficiencies, provided strategic security advice and regular reporting, launched the Country Office Safety and Security Focal Points programme, and supported evacuations and responses to geopolitical and climate-related disasters. During this period, the UNAIDS Security Framework 2025–2027 was developed to provide a comprehensive framework to safeguard UNAIDS personnel, assets and operations globally, aligning with its mission to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

Ongoing restructuring process

85. Due to declines in donor funding throughout 2024, the UNAIDS Secretariat launched a restructuring exercise and implemented processes to protect existing financial and staff resources, build infrastructure to support change, and develop a shared vision with key stakeholders for UNAIDS's future.
86. In February 2025, UNAIDS received a termination of funding notice from the US Government, equating to a cut of approximately 60% in expected financial resources in 2025. Additional details on the anticipated funding forecast are included in the Interim Financial Management Update for 2025 (UNAIDS/PCB (56)/25.11). With these additional funding cuts, the Secretariat leveraged the processes it began in 2024 to support the development of the new UNAIDS Secretariat model.
87. UNAIDS has used the restructuring process to look fundamentally at its staffing and to whether the most conservative financial scenario while parallel resource mobilization efforts are underway. These changes run in parallel with, and are informed by, the development of the next Global AIDS Strategy and the High-Level Panel review of the Joint Programme Operating model.
88. Five primary objectives guide the restructuring process:
 - Prepare UNAIDS to support countries to deliver on the next Global AIDS Strategy, with ambitious results for 2030, transforming the Joint Programme and accelerating progress towards sustainable country responses.
 - Align the UNAIDS Secretariat with the Executive Director and the CCO recommendations on a new and bold operating model based on the work of the High-Level Panel.
 - Maintain our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, including key populations and people living with HIV, so we reflect the community we serve.
 - Ensure sustainability and adaptability in an evolving global landscape.
 - Leverage and optimize UN Reform ("UN80" Initiative) to make us more effective.
89. This new model seeks to (a) preserve the unique contributions of UNAIDS to the global HIV response; (b) leverage and maximize the comparative advantages of the

Secretariat and the cosponsors while eliminating any redundancies; (c) refocus and streamline the Secretariat's footprint and staffing resources to respond to an increasingly constrained and rapidly evolving financial situation; and (d) support UNAIDS staff during this difficult period of transition.

90. From January to May 2025, UNAIDS undertook a comprehensive cost analysis assessment, conducted surveys on activities and ways of working, and identified opportunities for alignment with the parallel processes of the High-Level Panel and UN80. These efforts will continue throughout 2025 as the restructuring is underway to adapt to the evolving financial environment and broader reform efforts.
91. In view of the urgency of the financial crisis, UNAIDS leadership announced the new structure to staff on 6 May 2025. A briefing for external stakeholders was held on 15 May 2025.
92. UNAIDS will reduce its staff full time employees by more than 50 percent. Impacted staff will be notified in June 2025, and implementation, including the consolidation of country offices, will begin in July 2025 with anticipated completion of the entire process by May 2026. Given the financial situation, changes must be implemented as soon as possible while ensuring stability and continuity of work. Efforts to ensure continuity of business, refine ways of working, and capture institutional knowledge are already underway.
93. UNAIDS remains committed to ensuring that the Secretariat is well positioned to lead a changing Joint Programme that is supporting countries and communities to put in place sustainable, inclusive, multisectoral national HIV responses. However, this unprecedented reduction in resources and staffing will require a substantial reworking of UNAIDS's presence around the world and a narrowed focus on core priorities.
94. In the new model, the Secretariat will focus on four key functions: (a) leadership; (b) convening and coordination; (c) accountability through data, targets, strategy, sustainability and resource mobilization; and (d) community engagement. These changes align with the recommendations of the High-Level Panel for a smaller, more focused model of the Secretariat to ensure that the Joint Programme remains effective with reduced resources.
95. Country support will be located around four regional offices: eastern and southern Africa, western and central Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia-Pacific/central Europe/central Asia. Multi-country offices, Country Offices and single-person UNAIDS Senior Coordinators (co-located within the Resident Coordinator Office) will continue to exist, but with a much smaller footprint. Liaison offices will also be consolidated.
96. Support to countries will be prioritized based on a typology of high HIV burden, stigma and discrimination, and a reliance on international aid. UNAIDS will retain a presence in a reduced number of countries while supporting approximately 60 countries through multi-country and regional offices through regional teams, multi-country offices and further integration with the UN Resident Coordinator System..
97. Programmatic support from the Secretariat will be consolidated into a single practice. The Cosponsors will continue to lead on other programmatic areas in alignment with their individual expertise and mandates.
98. The functions of the External Relations Department will be integrated into Management and the Executive Office. The Management Department will have four key functions:

People Management, Finance, Digital and Technology Solutions, and Resource Mobilization. The Executive Office will comprise the Chief of Staff and their support team, Influencing and Communications, and Governance. The organization will maintain a significantly reduced presence in Geneva, with a focus on leadership and fostering external relationships with Geneva-based organizations.

99. As the restructuring is underway, UNAIDS will continue to keep stakeholders, including the PCB, advised of the new footprint, working closely with countries to ensure minimal disruption to the life-saving work of our partnerships.
100. A number of policy changes have been adopted to facilitate this transition and to support staff to continue to deliver their best during this transition including a more flexible teleworking policy and granting to former staff members the right to apply as internal candidates to UNAIDS vacancies for a period of two years.
101. Pursuant to UNAIDS's commitment to the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV in our workplace (the "GIPA principle"), no staff member openly living with HIV will lose their job.
102. Building on efforts undertaken by the Department of People Management in 2024 (as discussed in the above sections of this paper), UNAIDS is investing in resources for all staff. A staff consultation group has been established to work with leadership throughout this period. Internal support mechanisms such as the Ethics Office, Security Office, the Office of the Ombudsperson and Mediation Services, and the UNAIDS Staff Association will continue to serve staff. A dedicated intranet page provides staff with transparency and the most up-to-date information on the process.
103. The Staff Counsellor is providing individual and group support in addition to critical incident and stress management interventions alongside a number of mental health-related resources available to staff. In preparation for the restructuring, the Staff Development & Performance unit has developed resources for staff to build and showcase their skills and support career transition.
104. The disruptions to UNAIDS are reflected in the broader global health architecture with cuts that threaten the remarkable progress made towards ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. The scale of the United States' contribution to the UBRAF has meant that UNAIDS is particularly hard hit and is being forced to dramatically downsize in terms of its human resources capacity. Through large-scale restructuring, UNAIDS will attempt to limit the impact on its ability to respond effectively to the concerning evolution of the epidemic.
105. Over the course of the next year, the UNAIDS Secretariat will be reduced by %. While the restructuring will seek to ensure that UNAIDS continues to be fit-for-purpose, the depth of this loss will be felt both internally and in the broader fight against HIV. UNAIDS leadership wishes to take this opportunity to express its deep gratitude and admiration for our staff. Over the course of the next year, we will seek to recognize their service and extraordinary contributions. Their dedication, professionalism, expertise, creativity, and leadership over the past three decades have had a profound impact for people living with HIV.

Conclusion

106. Throughout the reporting period, UNAIDS Secretariat has made progress towards ensuring that its staff have the support they need, work in an enabling environment, and

can rely on advantageous policies to give their best each day to deliver on UNAIDS mandate even during times of increasing financial constraints and global uncertainty. In the upcoming year, UNAIDS will undergo a significant transformation. The restructuring will seek to prepare the Joint Programme to respond to new challenges in the epidemic while operating with significantly reduced financial and personnel resources. It will continue to align UNAIDS with broader reform efforts, such as UN80, and to ensure that it is fit-for-purpose to deliver on the upcoming global AIDS strategy 2026-2031, a critical period for the AIDS response to deliver on its goals. This restructuring will preserve the unique and important role of UNAIDS in ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

Proposed decision point

The Programme Coordinating Board is invited to:

107. *Take note* of the update on strategic human resource management issues.

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