

# UNAIDS SECRETARIAT PEOPLE STRATEGY 2023 - 2026

## Update on strategic human resources management issues

# UNAIDS Secretariat People Strategy 2023-2026

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## Fulfilling UNAIDS vision by supporting our people



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## Context

Building on 40 years of experience in the HIV response and 25 years since the creation of UNAIDS as the only Joint Programme in the United Nations, the UNAIDS Secretariat undertook a major organizational transformation over the past years. Three interrelated and mutually reinforcing change processes were implemented for the UNAIDS Secretariat to be fit for purpose to fulfil its leadership and coordination role to ensure that the world is on track to end AIDS by 2030.

1. A new [Global AIDS Strategy 2021–2026](#) was adopted and sets out a bold new approach to use an inequalities lens to close the gaps that are preventing progress towards ending AIDS.
2. An [organizational alignment](#) process was undertaken to ensure that the UNAIDS Secretariat is modernized, efficient and strengthened so it achieves its highest impact.
3. A [culture transformation](#) process is underway to further an ever more equal, safe and empowering work environment for all staff in all their diversity to thrive.

People are at the centre of these change processes and this People Strategy outlines key priorities for the UNAIDS Secretariat over the next four years to enable its people to give their best each day to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. Applying a people-centred approach is essential in building a value-driven culture, collaborative working relationships and ultimately successful delivery of the UNAIDS mandate.

Global mega trends are impacting the AIDS response. Human rights challenges, including stigma and discrimination, remain among the main barriers to effective HIV responses and rising geopolitical tensions make it ever more demanding for UNAIDS to operate and ensure the full realization of global human rights standards and commitments particularly for people living with HIV and key populations. This requires strengthening the capacity to defend and further a rights-based agenda.

Responding to and anticipating developments in the multilateral system, reform of the UN Development System, the Global Health environment and the HIV epidemic are critical if UNAIDS is to succeed. It is no longer sufficient to have people with the skills and knowledge needed today but to embrace future readiness and the ability to swiftly adapt.

With the multitude of crises at global scale and other Global Health priorities demanding the urgent attention of Member States and the international community, the Secretariat must sustain the political importance of the HIV response for the broader development agenda and apply new approaches to reaching those needing support and access to services most. To achieve this, the UNAIDS Secretariat identified four areas that need strengthening: knowledge sharing, influencing for change, building and maintaining effective partnerships, and mainstreaming equality and inclusion in line with its feminist principles.

This People Strategy charts the way forward for the Secretariat and its workforce to effectively respond to the challenges outlined above. In this, the organization draws from change processes undertaken to date which have provided an opportunity to unlearn, learn and relearn.

- Since its inception in 1994, the UNAIDS Secretariat has grown organically to address changing and emerging needs of the HIV epidemic. After a quarter of a century, its structure needed major updates to ensure the Secretariat is best positioned to deliver. The **alignment process** placed great emphasis on leveraging expertise and resources from across the organization and creating a flatter and more networked organizational structure. The Secretariat has introduced two branches – Policy, Advocacy and Knowledge, and Programme Support – that are each built

around two world-wide practice areas. These technical branches work alongside the Executive Office, the Department of Management and independent oversight functions. This new structure emphasizes the priority areas of the new Global AIDS Strategy, where the Secretariat offers the greatest added value in support of countries achieving their HIV targets and goals.

- The world is more connected than ever, and this brings opportunities as well as challenges for the Secretariat and its people. The significant and sudden shift towards remote working, brought about by the **COVID-19 pandemic**, has accelerated digitization, automation, and technological transformation, and has fundamentally changed ways of working. Staff have shown considerable resilience and flexibility in addressing the impacts of the pandemic in their work and personal lives. They have quickly embraced changes that were brought upon them through switching to working from home and communicating through virtual platforms. This has fostered a greater connectedness among colleagues and across geographical locations and brought the workforce closer together while being apart. This sense of embracing change, innovating and 'can do' attitude will continue to be nurtured and sustained through the new ways of working that have been introduced to strengthen the Secretariat's capacity to deliver.
- **Duty of care** is the moral and legal obligation to ensure the safety of others and the duty of care towards staff is a priority for the Secretariat's Senior Leadership Team and all staff with supervisory responsibility. Building on lessons learnt from the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the organizational approach to duty of care is being streamlined to support the creation of a safe, healthy and inclusive workplace. The importance of employee wellbeing and mental health have been highlighted through the experiences of isolation and uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as stressors related to the alignment process. Focussing on wellbeing and facilitating harmony between personal and professional commitments are top priorities for the UNAIDS Secretariat and addressed in this strategy.
- **Global Staff Surveys** are a crucial tool, developed collaboratively with the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association (USSA) and other stakeholders, and used by the UNAIDS Secretariat to assess the engagement level of its workforce and identify areas that need improvement. These biennial surveys help gauge satisfaction with people processes, including performance management, career development, support services, and diversity, equity and inclusion, but also assess perceptions of other organizational issues, such as leadership, communication, and workplace culture. Metrics from these surveys serve as key performance indicators for measuring progress on implementing this People Strategy.
- The UNAIDS Secretariat is committed to providing a work environment that respects the inherent dignity of all persons. A respectful and harmonious workplace requires a commitment by all staff to demonstrate UNAIDS values, i.e. Commitment to the AIDS response, Integrity, and Respect for diversity. A robust set of policies are promoting **dignity and respect** of every member of the workforce and codify the organization's commitment to zero tolerance for abusive conduct. This strategy includes dedicated initiatives for nurturing a respectful workplace culture and mindset.

## Scope

The People Strategy considers the entire workforce hence all people working with and for the UNAIDS Secretariat including fixed- and short-term staff members across all staff categories, consultants, volunteers, fellows and interns. It acknowledges the important role the Department of People Management plays in implementing this strategy yet goes beyond it and addresses practices and

processes on how work is managed, collaboration facilitated, knowledge shared, and continuous development encouraged.

The People Strategy complements and leverages other strategies such as those on Internal Communications, Knowledge Management, Resource Mobilization, Mental Health, and Information Technologies.

## Principles

The transformation of the UNAIDS Secretariat is guided by its feminist principles which have also informed the development and framing of this strategy. Specifically, the People Strategy seeks to create a workplace that is inclusive and equitable, enabling everyone's full participation at all levels of the organization. As a feminist People Strategy, it emphasizes gender equality, work-life balance, empowerment, and zero tolerance.

- **Intersectionality:** the strategy recognizes the intersectionality of various identities and how they intersect with gender often creating compounding experiences of marginalization that need particular attention. These include gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, HIV status, and disability status.
- **Equality and equity:** the strategy prioritizes creating an equitable workplace where all members of the workforce have the same opportunities to excel. Through targeted interventions for marginalized groups, equitable outcomes are being achieved.
- **Inclusion and non-discrimination:** the strategy recognizes that discrimination is never one-dimensional. It includes interventions that aim at fostering an inclusive work environment where people in all their diversity feel they belong.
- **Ecological and environmental harmony:** the strategy respects planetary boundaries by deliberately prioritizing interventions that are implemented using information technology to reach all personnel.
- **Inter-generationality:** the strategy is attentive to generational dynamics of power and aged-based discrimination and actively works to reduce disparities. It values the knowledge and experience of personnel of all ages and length of service with the Secretariat.
- **The personal is political:** the strategy promotes balance between personal and professional commitments by accommodating gendered caregiving responsibilities and recognizing the importance of family-friendly policies.
- **Practice of peace and non-violence:** the strategy recognizes the power of language and promotes the use of inclusive language that respects all people and their identities. It holds the intention to end harm that is being done through policies and practices.
- **Linked, not ranked:** the strategy supports the transformation towards a less hierarchical and more networked organization. It prioritizes the advancement of national staff and recognition of their contributions to the organization's mandate.
- **Practice the use of power:** the strategy not only identifies gendered gaps in access or outcomes but addresses power dynamics, privilege, and structural barriers through systemic interventions. It places prevention of and interventions against sexual harassment and sexism at the centre and ensures the necessary support for those affected.

## Conceptual framework

The People Strategy outlines the key priorities for the UNAIDS Secretariat over the four-year period 2023 to 2026 to align people practices, organizational culture, and organizational design and structure with UNAIDS' overall mission, vision, and goals. The key priorities put into focus some important areas for the UNAIDS Secretariat while ongoing improvement is pursued across all people-related aspects of its work.

### Vision

The vision “enabling UNAIDS people to give their best each day to end AIDS by 2030” reflects the organization’s ambition to continuously improve processes, policies and practices so these support people and facilitate them focussing on what counts: working towards UNAIDS goals.

### Building blocks

Three building blocks are critical in fulfilling the vision of the UNAIDS Secretariat People Strategy. These are interrelated and require attention and prioritization to effectively manage the workforce and create a conducive work environment.

- **People practices** refer to the range of activities and initiatives the organization uses to manage its workforce across the employee lifecycle, with the goal of attracting, retaining, and developing high-performing people who are engaged and have the right skills to face the future.
- **Organizational culture** refers to the shared values, beliefs, and practices that define how people relate to each other within UNAIDS, with the goal of creating an equal, safe and empowering work environment grounded in its intersectional feminist principles.
- **Organizational design and structure** refer to the systems and processes that determine how work is organized and managed. People-centred policies consider the needs and individual life situations of all personnel.

### Key priorities

Within the three building blocks, the secretariat has identified five key priorities, which are interconnected and interdependent. For each key priority, specific activities and initiatives are outlined that will be undertaken to ensure that the UNAIDS Secretariat sustains progress made and is optimally positioned to tackle current and future challenges.

- Investing in learning, development and growth
- Enhancing gender equality, diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism
- Supporting staff wellbeing and engagement
- Building capacity to deliver
- Ensuring respectful conduct and zero tolerance

## 1. People practices

People are at the centre of the work of the UNAIDS Secretariat, and their expertise and commitment are critical to achieving its mandate. With a deep understanding that its workforce is its most valuable asset, the Secretariat is committed to investing in its staff and promoting growth, development, and a

sense of belonging. Empowering staff and providing them with opportunities to excel ensures that the evolving challenges of the AIDS epidemic can be effectively addressed.

Throughout the employee lifecycle, the Secretariat prioritizes the development of its staff. Strengthening technical skills, functional competencies, and the capacity to inspire and lead others especially of senior leaders in countries, regions and at the global centre continues to be a cornerstone for the organization and aligns to the Secretariat's role. Career progression is an important factor of individual growth and support for staff to meet their professional goals and career aspirations is a priority. Through partaking in career development centres, staff are assessed on skills needed for the position they aspire to take on and are offered tailored guidance and counselling to help them in their professional growth.

A dedicated talent pipeline for UNAIDS Country Director positions and other roles, as well as stretch assignments facilitate professional development. Functional and geographic mobility opportunities will continue to be offered, though for a small entity such as the UNAIDS Secretariat, alternative options are being explored to ensure a good balance of specialist and generalist career pathways. Inter-agency mobility is a valuable element for the UNAIDS Secretariat and part of its DNA as the only co-sponsored Joint Programme of the UN. More efforts will be made to facilitate mobility of staff across entities and with the Resident Coordinator System in particular.

Elevating national leadership in the HIV response is important and enhances its sustainability. Through the alignment process, all staff leading a country office are now holding the title UNAIDS Country Director recognizing that there is no difference whether this role is held by a nationally or internationally recruited staff member. The Secretariat has already made changes to its recruitment policy, inter alia to enable experience as a locally recruited staff member within the Secretariat to be considered as equivalent to international experience for the purposes of application and selection to international positions. This opens career pathways for locally recruited staff members and complements other efforts to create opportunities for locally engaged staff members to serve outside their country, such as the Short-Term Developmental Assignment programme. The Secretariat will continue to invest in the growth of its National Professional Officers and General Service Staff including through dedicated tracks of its learning and development offers.

Well-crafted job descriptions are important for attracting the right talent and provide underlying structural support for recruitment, performance management, and career development. As part of the alignment process, the Secretariat has started the revision of job descriptions. This will continue so all staff members have up-to-date job descriptions that provide clarity and direction regarding their roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines including those with matrix management.

A smooth transition for staff throughout their entire journey, from onboarding to offboarding is essential. To enable staff to contribute effectively from day one, a comprehensive professional development orientation programme equips both new staff and staff moving into new roles and functions with the necessary knowledge and skills to understand the organization's strategic priorities, approaches, and available tools. Offboarding is equally important and includes knowledge capturing processes and the creation of comprehensive handover notes. This facilitates learning from leavers through a seamless transfer of information and ensuring that the knowledge and expertise gained by individuals during their tenure at the UNAIDS Secretariat are preserved and shared with their successors.



## Key priority 1 – Investing in learning, development and growth

The success of any organization, including the UNAIDS Secretariat, is highly dependent on the quality and capabilities of all of its workforce. Effective people practices enable the Secretariat to identify and cultivate talent, and create a work environment that fosters innovation, collaboration, and a high-performance culture. It is of paramount importance to invest in learning and development, empower staff to deliver at their best, and provide opportunities for them to excel and thrive. By doing so, the Secretariat can ensure that its workforce remains motivated and committed to the organization's goals, which, in turn, enhances the organization's ability to fulfil its mandate effectively.

### Over the period 2023-2026, the following activities and initiatives will be undertaken:

1. A multi-year **Team Learning Journey** introduces practices to build brave spaces for open, safe, creative and mutually rewarding dialogues within teams which contribute to healthy and respectful professional relationships. It unpacks the Secretariat's feminist principles and demonstrates how embodying them facilitates greater inclusion, equality and equity.
2. Informed by what skills are needed to effectively support countries and communities to sustain their HIV response, an **inventory of expertise and skills** will be defined and mapped to each role in the organisation. This will facilitate matching of people and opportunities, support personalized career growth journeys, provide clear insights on the talent demographics, and strengthen succession planning. Well-defined talent pools and a mechanism to track expertise will be established to effectively harness global capabilities for quick deployment and transfer of knowledge across teams and duty stations.
3. The staff development fund will be well-resourced to support staff to update and broaden **technical and operational skills**. Prioritization of requests will be informed by the inventory of expertise and an analysis of skills needed in the workforce to deliver on the Global AIDS Strategy.

### Monitoring progress through key performance indicators:

- Global staff survey
  - o My job allows me to make good use of my skills and experience (2022: 76% overall positive)
  - o My supervisor is committed to my learning and development (2022: 69% overall positive)
- #of formal learning experiences completed (2022: 2,888; 4.7 on average per staff member)
- %of on-the-job learning met (2021/22 cycle: 94%)
- #of staff moving internally (4 to be taken as a baseline due to the alignment process)
- #of stretch/temporary assignments by staff category (2024 to be taken as a baseline due to the alignment process)
- Increased sustainable resourcing and uptake of staff development fund (baseline to be established in 2023)

## 2. Organizational culture

Organizational culture plays a crucial role in shaping the experiences of employees within the work environment. Through its ongoing culture transformation work, the UNAIDS Secretariat is cultivating an organizational culture that is equal, safe, and empowering for all members of the workforce. Guided by its feminist principles, this work leverages the positive experiences of staff with their immediate teams to strengthen relationships within teams which will translate in an overall positive workplace climate. Teams across the organization have co-created team value charters which set out norms that foster inclusivity and support experimentation with different ways of working and learning together.

Centring the principle of intersectionality, implies the need to address multiple dimensions of diversity and promote a culture of belonging where everyone's experiences and perspectives are valued. By embracing diversity in all its forms, including gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, HIV status, disability status, and other social identities, the Secretariat can tap into a wealth of perspectives, experiences, and talents. This not only fosters innovation and creativity but also allows the organization to better serve the diverse populations affected by HIV. Inclusivity is a moral imperative and a strategic advantage ensuring that the Secretariat's work reflects the principles of human rights, equality, and social justice.

Striving for compliance with UN system-wide accountability frameworks such as the UN-SWAP on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, and the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit's review on addressing racism and racial discrimination, strengthens the Secretariat's credibility as a champion for equality in the wider UN system and mainstreams these issues systematically and measurably into all its major institutional functions.

The UNAIDS Secretariat strengthened its duty of care towards staff to ensure an inclusive, safe and secure workplace where personnel have a positive workplace experience and are enabled to function at their optimal level and fulfil their potential. Safety and security are paramount considerations, and the Secretariat is committed to ensuring the wellbeing and protection of its staff in all aspects of their work. By promoting a culture of safety and security, the Secretariat creates a conducive work environment where staff members can focus on their roles and responsibilities with peace of mind. This includes adhering to Minimum Operating Security Standards to mitigate risks and maintain a secure working environment and implementing occupational safety and health measures to safeguard employees' physical wellbeing.

### **Key priority 2 – Enhancing gender equality, diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism**

Equality is front and centre of the Secretariat's ambitious change agenda. Through the Global AIDS Strategy, the focus of the global response shifted to ending the inequalities on which HIV and epidemics thrive. The organizational alignment brought staff ever closer to the organization's mission and those it serves while creating an equal, safe and empowering workplace. Applying an intersectional feminist lens means that those furthest behind are identified and the multiple structural challenges they face dismantled. Staff will further refine their expertise and skills to mainstream equality and inclusion consistently, whether they support countries and communities, advocate for policy changes or manage internal processes. This will ensure alignment between programmatic work and how people experience the organization.

## Over the period 2023-2026, the following activities and initiatives will be undertaken:

1. All functional teams co-create **value charters** capturing agreements on norms each team member is expected to adhere to. Progressively, teams will review and refine their value charters for it to reflect the Secretariat's feminist principles and the team's commitments to demonstrating them through their day-to-day interactions.
2. Informed by a benchmarking exercise, an intersectional **Gender equality, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility and Anti-racism framework** will be developed to establish a baseline and define the ambition for progress by 2026. The framework will succeed UNAIDS Secretariat Gender Action Plan and integrate with the UN-SWAP on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, and the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit's review on addressing racism and racial discrimination.
3. Actions and approaches to address racism and racial discrimination need to inform how staff support each other and countries in moving towards the 2030 vision of ending AIDS. Therefore, and to further the decolonizing Global Health agenda, guidance for **anti-racist programming and policy development** will be developed and applied in these processes.

## Monitoring progress through key performance indicators:

- Global staff survey
  - o In my team, I am encouraged to be sensitive to gender equality, diversity and inclusion, in terms of my actions, my behaviour and my language (2022: 79% overall positive)
  - o The Senior Leadership (Cabinet, Regional Directors and Directors of Global Centre Departments) at UNAIDS demonstrate their commitment to gender equality, diversity and inclusion (2022: 61% overall positive)
- Workforce composition (2022: 6% non-cisgender, 8% persons with a disability, 11% non-heterosexual, 10% identify as part of key populations (excl. PLHIV), 5% PLHIV)
- Compliance with UN-SWAP on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2022: 5 exceed, 9 meet, 2 approach), UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (0 exceed, 2 meet, 7 approach, 6 miss), JIU recommendations on addressing racism and racial discrimination (baseline to be established in 2023)
- #of team value charters (2022: 27)
- Existence and operationalization of guidance on anti-racist, decolonial programming and policy development (to be introduced in 2025)

## Key priority 3 – Supporting staff wellbeing and engagement

Creating a workplace that enhances mental and physical health and wellbeing is of the utmost importance to maintain productivity and performance levels and therewith the capacity to deliver on the Global AIDS Strategy. The UNAIDS Secretariat promotes a workplace culture that values wellbeing and self-care, proactively addresses stressors resulting from working in complex environments and invests in building resilience of its staff. While the Secretariat follows WHO staff rules and regulations, a number of adaptations have been developed to meet the particular situation of its staff and this practice will continue. New policies will be developed, and existing ones updated to uphold the strategic

interests of the UNAIDS Secretariat and the wellbeing of staff members, promote balance between personal and professional commitments, and reflect the needs of staff throughout their working relationship with the organization.

### Over the period 2023-2026, the following activities and initiatives will be undertaken:

1. Central to the organization's duty of care is the implementation of the UNAIDS/WHO **Workforce Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy** 2023-2028 that outlines actions to promote and protect mental health at work and ensure equitable access to quality and culturally appropriate mental health support for all members of the workforce. The strategy includes initiatives to support and destigmatize staff experiencing mental health conditions.
2. The **internal communications** function facilitates effective information sharing between different parts of the organization and keeps them connected. It is a critical enabler in creating a shared sense of purpose and belonging. A new internal communications plan will outline goals and deliverables to bring country, regional and global levels closer together and connect all staff to the activities of the Secretariat.
3. **Employee engagement** across all categories of staff at all levels is critical to the success of the Secretariat as engaged staff are more productive, more committed, and more resilient. Every two years, global staff surveys are conducted to receive feedback, gauge satisfaction with people processes, and assess perceptions of issues, such as leadership, communication, and workplace culture. The collaborative development and subsequent implementation of action plans, including for Cabinet, to address areas that need improvement is an organizational priority.

### Monitoring progress through key performance indicators:

- Global staff survey
  - o I would recommend this organization as a good place to work (Employee engagement index)  
(2022: 61% engaged, 21% neutral, 18% disengaged)
  - o I feel that I am provided with opportunities to engage and contribute to initiatives that affect the future of UNAIDS.  
(2022: 50% overall positive)
  - o The Cabinet understands the views and opinions of staff  
(2022: 39% overall positive)
- Implementation of Mental Health Strategy  
(baseline to be established in 2023)
- Existence and implementation of internal communications plan  
(to be launched in 2024)

## 3. Organizational design and structure

The UNAIDS Secretariat aspires to be a bold, knowledge-driven, and networked organization that builds on its unique value proposition while leveraging the best of the wider UN system. Through the alignment process, important structural changes have already been made to this effect including deploying staff and resources closer to the people the Secretariat is serving. At the heart of the new organizational structure are four world-wide practice areas that speak to the collective strengths and value added of the Secretariat and are also relevant in the context of [Our Common Agenda](#).

Leveraging the gains made requires updating of policies and practices so these are sustaining structural changes and support new ways of working and thereby enhancing the Secretariat's capacity to deliver. The Secretariat will systematically communicate essential, authoritative information on key policies, processes and internal services to enable staff to understand where they can go for support and guidance, become familiar with reporting tools and systems, feel comfortable using them, and report confidence in the fairness and consistency with which they are applied.

Staff support services have been strengthened and continue to play a critical role. Collaboration between USSA, Ethics Office, Office of the Ombudsperson, Office of Internal Oversight Services and Management is being deepened by proactively creating spaces for dialogue.

A new Business Management System (BMS), a flexible and user-friendly platform, is being developed in collaboration with WHO. It harmonizes business process across all levels of the organization for programme management, human resources, finance, supply and travel. The BMS leads to simplifying and streamlining selection and recruitment processes and offers opportunities for enhanced data collection and analytics which facilitate evidence-based decision-making. Easy to use dashboards enable the Secretariat to monitor key metrics such as staffing levels, talent acquisition, retention rates, and workforce demographics, and to evaluate the impact of its initiatives and interventions. Significant progress on the availability of real-time data and automating its presentation has already been made and will be further refined to ensure data accuracy and consistency. Further efforts will be made to delegate authority and for process simplification and automation.

#### **Key priority 4 – Building capacity to deliver**

Emphasis is put on leveraging the opportunities inherent in the Secretariat's four world-wide practices and strengthening knowledge sharing, influencing for change, building and maintaining effective partnerships, and mainstreaming equality and inclusion. This contributes to enhancing organizational effectiveness and coherence while also increasing the ability to keep HIV/AIDS on national and global agendas.

Promoting effective performance management means going beyond compliance by developing a feedback culture. The organization ensures that performance management provides a fair and objective platform for the evaluation of expected results and competencies, and for engaging staff with meaningful acknowledgement of achievements. The skills of staff with managerial responsibilities will continue to be strengthened to manage individual and team performance, and address underperformance effectively. This includes guidance and training on how to lead and manage performance in culturally diverse and geographically dispersed teams. Performance management coaching provided to supervisors, supervisees and teams reinforces effective two-way communication, feedback, and accountability. Matrix management enables the Secretariat to become a less hierarchical and more networked organization and, progressively, more staff will receive technical guidance from matrix managers.

#### **Over the period 2023-2026, the following activities and initiatives will be undertaken:**

1. **Knowledge sharing** is a way of working that harnesses the knowledge and expertise of members of the workforce through enabling and empowering them to capture, share and apply strategic knowledge systematically. Guided by the [Knowledge Management Strategy](#), capability to effectively engage in Communities of Practice will be progressively built so these become a central way of working. Through strengthening **digital literacy, skills and innovation**, the existing digital gap among the workforce is narrowed.

2. Leadership and coordination are core functions for the UNAIDS Secretariat, and its staff needs to have the skills to build and maintain **effective partnerships** with a wide network of stakeholders and to **influence** policies and practices in such a way as to promote more just societies. A core set of knowledge and behavioural competences will be cultivated to enable the workforce to champion these collaborative and high-impact approaches to advocacy and partnering.
3. A **rewards and recognition programme** will be introduced to acknowledge and celebrate individual and team achievements to deliver on organizational priorities and reinforce the desired mindset shift, champion new ways of working and demonstrate behaviours aligned with the feminist principles.

### Monitoring progress through key performance indicators:

- Global staff survey
  - o I feel comfortable giving open and honest upwards feedback to my supervisor (2022: 74% overall positive)
  - o I receive regular, timely feedback that helps me improve my performance (2022: 67% overall positive)
  - o New and improved ways to do work are frequently adopted (2022: 54% overall positive)
- Activity/engagement in CoPs (baseline to be established in 2023)
- #of interdisciplinary CoP activities (baseline to be established in 2023)
- #of staff who are in matrixed positions (2022/23: 68)
- Rewards and recognition mechanism in place and awarded annually (to be introduced in 2025)

### Key priority 5 – Ensuring respectful conduct and zero tolerance

The UNAIDS Secretariat is firmly committed to upholding its values and maintaining the highest standards of conduct, as such, it prohibits all forms of harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse of authority in its workplace as well as any sexual misconduct with regards to the communities it serves, either by its personnel or by partners it works with. The organization has embarked on a journey to strengthen safeguarding oversight, improve its systems and transform its culture to reflect and maintain its commitment for zero tolerance.

The Secretariat supports a workplace culture based on respect, openness, trust where staff members work and collaborate effectively with each other, and handle conflicts in a respectful and constructive manner. When abusive conduct happens, victims can seek redress through the independent internal justice system.

### Over the period 2023-2026, the following activities and initiatives will be undertaken:

1. **Review and identification of needs and opportunities to strengthen the Secretariat's safeguarding procedures and culture and a plan developed to ensure that the Secretariat fully upholds its duty to protect and safeguard the rights of the people it serves.** This action plan will include interventions that address prevention, reporting and response, support to

victims/survivors, and accountability. The #Respect campaign which raises awareness on preventing and addressing abusive conduct and sexual misconduct will be continued.

2. As part of the range of informal support services, staff can refer to the Ethics Office and the Office of the Ombudsperson for guidance and mediation for work-related conflicts. These services will continue to be adequately staffed and resourced to strengthen **informal conflict resolution, prevention and early intervention**. Research-backed training and awareness raising activities will be offered and access to these services facilitated.
3. Formal complaints can be filed with the WHO **Office of Internal Oversight Services (IOS)**. A Memorandum of Understanding governs the provision of investigation services to the UNAIDS Secretariat and sets out timeframes. Its implementation is being monitored by senior management and IOS will provide qualitative analysis, including possible root causes and structural / systemic weaknesses identified over the course of IOS investigative activities, and recommendations for addressing them.

### Monitoring progress through key performance indicators:

- Global staff survey
  - o In the last 12 months, I have experienced discrimination, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of authority or ill treatment at this organization (2022: 77% overall positive, i.e. indicated they experienced none)
  - o I feel comfortable to speak up and address colleagues about incivility or exclusionary behaviours I experience or observe (2022: 58% overall positive)
  - o I am knowledgeable about and confident in mechanisms and offices that are part of the UNAIDS internal justice system (2022: 64% overall positive)
- #of visitors to the Office of the Ombudsperson (baseline to be established in 2023)
- Existence and implementation of Safeguarding Action Plan (to be launched in 2024)
- Existence, uptake and assessment of training and awareness raising activities on informal conflict resolution, prevention and early intervention (to be introduced in 2024)
- #of preliminary assessments completed within 30 days of intake by IOS (baseline to be established in 2023)
- #of investigations completed within six months by IOS (baseline to be established in 2023)
- %of staff members, consultants, volunteers, fellows and interns screened through the ClearCheck Database (baseline to be established in 2023)
- %of staff members, consultants, volunteers, fellows and interns who completed the updated version of the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN Personnel online course (baseline to be established in 2023)

### Implementing the strategy

Partnerships across units at the UNAIDS Secretariat as well as with WHO services are critical to successfully implement the People Strategy. This includes deepening the collaboration between staff support services, in particular the USSA, Ethics Office, Office of the Ombudsperson, Office of Internal

Oversight Services and management functions. The UNAIDS Secretariat will also leverage the unique strengths of partners across the UN system such as the UN Staff College, OneHR and the Development Coordination Office. UNAIDS Secretariat staff will continue to engage proactively in inter-agency fora and working groups including the High-Level Committee on Management, the International Civil Service Commission, and the Human Resources Network.

The People Strategy will be operationalized through biannual workplans to ensure that this remains a live document, adjusting and responding to emerging priorities as they arise and ensuring the allocation of required human and financial resources. Careful planning in line with other organizational processes will help prioritize and sequence activities and initiatives to reduce workload issues.

Regularly tracking progress is essential to assess the effectiveness and impact of the implemented initiatives. By monitoring key performance indicators and milestones, the Secretariat can identify areas of success and areas that require further attention or adjustment. This ongoing monitoring allows for timely course corrections and the optimization of resources to achieve desired outcomes. Therefore, a semi-annual formal review process is being introduced which will be led by the Director of the Management Department. This will provide a platform for reflecting on changes in the intraorganizational context and the external environment which may necessitate reprioritization and reorientation of activities and initiatives that were initially included in the strategy. Through reflective practices, the Secretariat can identify outdated or ineffective approaches and make informed decisions to reallocate resources towards more impactful endeavours. This flexibility and willingness to adapt to the changing context are crucial for maintaining organizational relevance and maximizing the Secretariat's impact in the fight against HIV.

An update on the implementation of the People Strategy 2023-2026 will be provided annually to the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) through the Update on Strategic Human Resources Issues.

## Key assumptions and risks

The successful implementation of the People Strategy is contingent upon addressing and mitigating several key risks. An up-to-date risk register is being maintained by the UNAIDS Secretariat, including the identification of risk owners and the implementation of mitigation measures monitored. These high-level risks are particularly relevant at the time of developing the People Strategy.

- Through the alignment process, staff numbers have decreased. The filling of vacant positions that have been determined as essential for effective coordination and delivery is contingent on meeting the UBRAF funding levels agreed by the PCB. Funding shortfalls and the consequences of exchange rate volatility are negatively impacting on the capacity to deliver the Secretariat's full comparative advantage in support of the Global AIDS Strategy. A [Resource Mobilization strategy](#) has been launched in November 2022 proposing four areas of change for it to succeed.
- The increased workload and stress levels may lead to extended sick leaves due to stress and burnout, further exacerbating the resource constraints. This situation can create a vicious cycle where staff absences hinder progress and limit the Secretariat's ability to achieve its goals. Mitigating these risks requires proactive measures to manage staff resources appropriately, address work pressure by effective planning and prioritization, and maintain support systems to promote staff wellbeing.



- High workloads can impede staff participation in learning and development programmes, hindering the adoption of new ways of working that are crucial for the Secretariat's capacity to deliver on its mandate. This is particularly concerning as the HIV epidemic continues to evolve, requiring up-to-date technical knowledge and expertise. It is essential for staff to stay abreast of the latest advancements, research, and best practices in the field to effectively respond to the changing dynamics of the epidemic. To overcome this risk, it is essential to prioritize learning and development opportunities, ensure adequate time for skill-building activities, and promote a culture of continuous learning and innovation. Additionally, embracing sharing of knowledge, lessons learned, and innovative approaches among staff help cultivate continuous learning.
- The UNAIDS Secretariat's alignment process and the perception of a winding down HIV/AIDS programmes might lead to difficulties in attracting highly talented workforce. This issue is particularly pronounced in specific countries where finding qualified applicants for national staff positions becomes more challenging. To address this risk, the Secretariat needs to focus on positive communications, invest in outreach efforts and employer branding, and showcasing the organization's value and opportunities for professional growth.