

# Focal Point Survey 2011

## [Executive summary]

The system of departmental Focal Points has been created in order to help the Focal Point for Women improve the status of women in the departments of the United Nations. The system has been put in place since 1994, but its functioning has never been formally evaluated. In 2008, the Policy Committee requested the development of a twice a year "gender balance scorecard" that would include indicators on the "functioning of the Focal Point system".

In order to follow the progress on the functioning of the system, the Office of the Focal Point for Women (OFPW) launched a new round of survey among 92 Focal Points for women and Alternate Focal Points in December 2010. In total, 44 respondents fully completed the survey .

### > KEY FINDINGS

#### EXERCISE OF FOCAL POINT FUNCTIONS

Focal Points usually have a large number of staff (> 500 staff) under their care and responsibility.

The slight imbalance between the number of Alternates and the number of Focal Points persists.

Most of the Focal points (43 per cent) have been in their current position as a Focal point for a period of one to three years.

Yet, most of the Focal Points (41 per cent) have not met with their administration/Executive office or head of department

when it comes to information about the later stages of the staff selection (of recommended candidates).

Most of focal points use documentation provided by the Executive office on a regular basis. However, not all of them systematically access information relevant to the representation of women.

Most of the Focal Points expressed their desire to be better trained in career counselling (49 per cent) and in staff selection system (42 per cent).

Overall, Focal Points are to no extent able to carry out their functions as Focal Points in the areas of advocacy and counseling of women staff, monitoring progress made towards the achievement of the gender targets, and participating in the staff selection process.

The main documents and resources that Focal points use as a tool for advocacy are the Secretary General bulletins on: Flexible Working Arrangements Staggered work hours, compressed work schedules, work away from the office (Telecommuting) (ST/SGB/2003/4) Prohibition of discrimination, harassment including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority (ST/SGB/2008/5), special Measures for Protection from sexual exploitation and Sexual Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13), and Gender Targets (ST/AI/2010/3, para. 7.8).

### CONSEQUENCES OF FOCAL POINT ASSIGNMENT

When asked to expand on their positive experiences, respondents explained that being a Focal Point for women presents valuable opportunities to inform colleagues of their rights as a staff member, and develop a strong relationship with both staff and Management and win the respect of both and the Executive Office because of the consistent principled stands taken on issues of gender.

Regarding negative experiences, they were mainly related to heavy workload and lack of support from management and staff.

### MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

The majority of respondents (48 per cent) declared that management had taken no measures to increase the awareness about the Focal Point in their department or entity.

Measures that management has taken during the last 6 months to achieve 50/50 gender distribution at the Professional level and above are mainly related to recruitment (46 per cent) and promotion (37 per cent).

Supportive measures management has taken during the last 6 months to enhance the advisory role conferred up

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Most Focal Points (52 per cent) have seen increased gender sensitivity within the staff selection processes in their departments (e.g. gender equality training for staff).