Key insights for people involved in delivering UN 2.0

Change management:
the ultimate accelerator for achieving UN 2.0

The idea of UN 2.0 expresses the Secretary-General's vision for a UN system with 21st century expertise and organizational culture to deliver stronger results, better Member State support, and faster SDG progress. Achieving this vision requires large-scale systemic transformations, including culture change. Yet, many change initiatives are already being rolled out simultaneously – often without sufficient consideration for interdependencies and their impact on the people side of transformation. This is eating into organizations' leftover capacity for change. If you're involved in delivering UN 2.0, chances are you've already come across such challenges.

Change can only be adopted effectively and sustained over time if it is being effectively managed. Change management can therefore be a key facilitator and accelerator of UN 2.0 and the Quintet of Change. You can embrace it yourself or draw guidance and support from the skilled UN workforce already facilitating change.

Read on for:

- Insights based on the perspectives shared by change management practitioners through the *State of Change Management in the UN System* survey;

- Suggested actions you can take, provided by the UN Lab for Organizational Change and Knowledge (UNLOCK) project at the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC).

Key insights if you are involved in delivering UN 2.0

The Quintet of Change has triggered change management activities

UN 2.0's transformations have begun: 74 per cent of respondents cite the Quintet of Change as having led to innovations and digital transformations and 61 per cent say it has precipitated changes in data, analysis and communications. However, only 28 per cent of respondents linked 'behavioural science' to change management activities.

74%
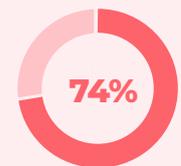
Having led to innovations and digital transformations

Change fatigue needs to be managed

For UN 2.0 to continue to become a reality, organizations and people must change – even though many are already at or past saturation. Only 11 per cent of respondents say their organization has plenty of spare capacity for change, and 21 per cent say they have some spare capacity. Seventy per cent of organizations (26 out of 37) report implementing five to nine simultaneous changes.

70%

Five to nine simultaneously ongoing changes

Skills gaps of change professionals are those targeted by the Quintet of Change

Survey respondents are highly experienced in typical change management skills (like communications and strategic planning) but display noticeable gaps in areas of the Quintet of Change. Sixty-six per cent report not being skilled or having few skills in behavioral science, 64 per cent of participants report having little or no experience in 'UN Reform', 56 per cent feel under-trained in research, monitoring and evaluation, and 31 per cent feel unprepared to lead innovations.

66%

Not being skilled or having few skills in behavioral science

Culture changes need more systematic alignment with UN 2.0

The vision of a new organizational culture at the heart of UN 2.0 involves widespread transformations in a system where culture change is the fourth most prevalent ongoing transformation. However, 39 per cent of survey participants report little or no experience in this cornerstone of the UN's internal transformation and 48 per cent say their organization rarely or never measures culture and culture change.

48%
rarely or never measures culture and culture change

39%
little or no experience in this cornerstone

Change management is increasingly present but inconsistently resourced and applied

The focus of UN 2.0 is people, their individual upskilling and their collective functioning as a culture. Leveraging the tools and methods designed to support the people side of change is essential. Yet only 17 per cent of survey respondents indicate having an organization-wide change management strategy, the presence of which is considered a good practice. Some organizations count on one or two full-time practitioners and others on large teams of 20 people or more. Only 41 per cent of respondents report possessing an activities budget for their change initiatives.

17%
have an organization-wide change management strategy

What you can do if you are involved in delivering UN 2.0

For all of you:

Hone your change agility and help your organization navigate change fatigue. Practice the fundamentals of how to support UN staff in their journeys to adopt changes.

For dedicated UN 2.0 specialists:

Embrace the process of facilitating change to accelerate the UN 2.0 vision. There is a proven discipline specifically designed for this.

Take change management training, if you haven't already. It will help you navigate the people side of change.

For change management practitioners:

Explain the benefits of drawing from experienced change management professionals to your team, peers and organization in order to systematically and sustainably transform organizational cultures.

Align with the UN 2.0 transformation to promote efficiency and to lessen change saturation.

For those responsible for steering change, like senior leaders:

Create purposefully diverse transformation teams composed of UN 2.0 specialists and change management professionals.

Help increase the capacity of UN entities to manage change, including through adequate resourcing.