

## Key insights for change management practitioners

# Change management is changing:

## Are you ready?

There's a new kind of manager in the UN system: the change manager. Alongside project managers, who focus on efficiently and effectively completing the technical sides of projects, change managers focus on the people side of change. If you have such a job profile then your role is to guide leaders and people managers to manage change and support staff to accept and adapt to the changes introduced.

Your role is increasingly visible, as the UN system itself and its staff transform to better support Member States navigate emerging realities. You must also adjust to meet these realities and the challenges they may generate.

**Thanks to *The State of Change Management in the UN System*, you now have a baseline from which to track future trends in change and change management.** Think of it as a dashboard of sorts to help map your strengths and weaknesses, identify opportunities, and mitigate threats.

Read on for:

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

## Strengths of change management practitioners in the UN system

*The State of Change Management in the UN System* offers a glimpse into a highly experienced and skilled workforce that supports UN entities to manage disruption, change and transformation. The survey tells us that such professionals are spread across different teams, ranging from human resources, executive offices or strategy to business transformation and change teams.



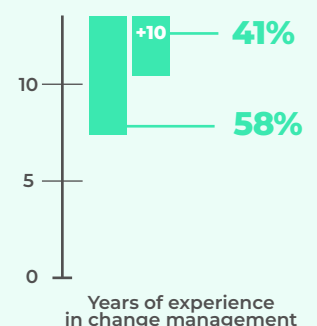
### A widely skilled workforce

Change management practitioners are versed in a wide range of change management skills and functions. Many participants have advanced- or expert-level experience in project management (57 per cent), communications & engagement (56 per cent), strategy development (53 per cent), facilitation (47 per cent) and managing a portfolio of change management initiatives (45 per cent). They also have solid experience in process expertise (34 per cent), and risk management (33 per cent) and organizational development (28 per cent).



### A deeply experienced workforce

41 per cent of participants have more than 10 years of experience in change management; 58 per cent have six or more. Participants are also very experienced in the most prevalent types of ongoing transformations in the UN, with 46 per cent indicating advanced or expert experience in business transformation, 40 per cent in new ways of working and 38 per cent in digital transformation.



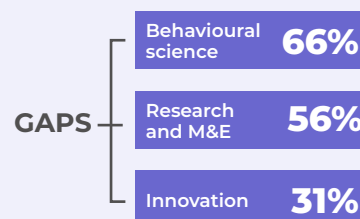
# Weaknesses of change management in the UN system

*The State of Change Management in the UN System* reveals gaps in areas identified in the vision for a UN 2.0 and the Quintet of Change which are essential for the internal transformation of the UN as well as for optimal support to Member States. The survey highlights the insufficient application of key elements required to steer transformation and ensure changes are adopted and sustained over time. This may be because only 30 per cent of change managers across the UN family hold change management certifications. It could also be because change management professionals often wear many hats and are unjustly expected to possess the entire range of change management skills.



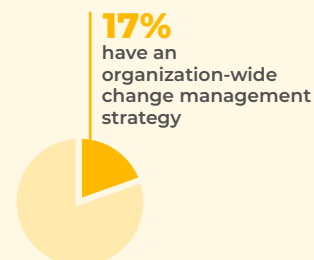
## Gaps in functions and skills

Participants display noticeable gaps in key areas of the Quintet of Change, with 66 per cent reporting not being skilled or having few skills in behavioural science, 56 per cent in research, monitoring and evaluation and 31 per cent, in innovation. In addition, 64 per cent of participants report having little or no experience in 'UN Reform' and 39 per cent in culture change. Twenty-nine per cent of respondents have no or only some experience in strengthening capabilities and coaching, which is a staple of change management. Fully 73 per cent say the same thing about organizational psychology.



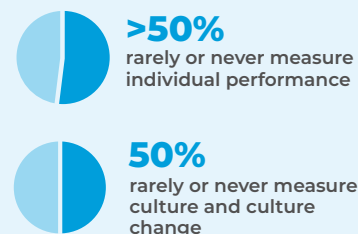
## Gaps in applying change management strategies

Only 17 per cent of survey respondents indicate the presence of an organization-wide change management strategy; 40 per cent do not offer training to senior leaders and people managers; 45 per cent rarely or never apply models, frameworks and methodologies. Among smaller UN entities that figure is 54 per cent.



## Gaps in measuring change

Over half of respondents rarely or never measure individual performance, while nearly half say the same for culture and culture change. Change management and organizational performance are also infrequently measured. This is possibly due to uneven levels of change management certification among survey participants.



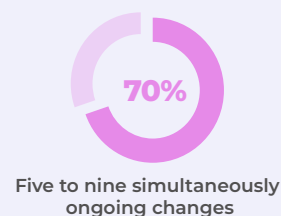
# Threats to be addressed

*The State of Change Management in the UN System* uncovers challenges that hamper both change managers and the function and effectiveness of change management. Combined with the above-mentioned weaknesses, these challenges can be considered threats that must be quickly overcome.



## Change overwhelm

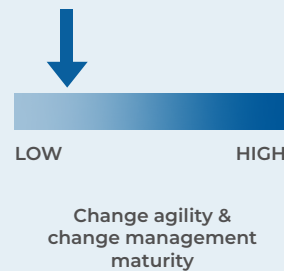
70 per cent of organizations (26 out of 37) report five to nine simultaneously ongoing changes. This volume is unlikely to diminish in the foreseeable future. On the contrary, the acceleration of UN 2.0 will increase the number of simultaneous changes. Yet 63 per cent of respondents say their organization is nearing, at or beyond the point of change saturation.





## Insufficient change agility and change management maturity

Organizations that are agile and mature in managing change are better equipped to avoid or handle change fatigue. However, survey participants give the same rating of low and moderate to their organization's ability and means to adapt to change and to their ability to implement, manage and sustain change effectively, while minimizing disruptions and maximizing benefits. They cite strategic shortcomings and lack of organizational buy-in as the greatest barriers to change maturity.



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

**The COVID-19 pandemic changed society and the workplace. According to survey participants, it also significantly transformed the practice of change management in the UN, forcing change managers to innovate. Achieving the UN 2.0 vision presents further opportunities for you and your practice.**



Systematically implement the fundamentals of change management, including setting standards for the range of change management skills in your team and across your organization.



Assess yourself and your team and ensure your team has a sufficiently diverse range of skills and experience to better support the ambitious internal changes ahead and mitigate change fatigue.



Engage in systematic dialogue with and support senior leaders and people managers to increase their understanding of the importance of change management; change management is a shared responsibility.



Consider a change management certification, if you don't already have one; it will help deal with the increasing complexity and volume of change.



Leverage the power of networks by nurturing change agent networks in your organization and learning from the UNLOCK Network of change management practitioners.



Harness data and insights from the *State of Change Management in the UN System* survey to support your organization through its journeys of transformation.

### About the *State of Change Management in the UN System* survey

*The State of Change Management in the UN System* is produced by the UN Lab for Organizational Change and Knowledge (UNLOCK) project at the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC). It's the first-ever comprehensive stocktaking of its kind and captures the responses of 104 change practitioners from 37 organizations surveyed in July/August 2023.