



---

IOM International Organization for Migration  
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations  
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

**CONFERENCE ROOM PAPER  
80th Session of the Council**

**Geneva, 28-29 November 2000**

**IOM'S GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR GENDER ISSUES**

## IOM'S GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR GENDER ISSUES

1. The basis for IOM's gender policy is found in Resolution 932 (LXXI) adopted by the Council in November 1995. The policy goals state that "IOM is committed to ensuring that particular needs of all migrant women are identified, taken into consideration and addressed by IOM projects and services" and that "equality of opportunity and treatment of men and women is a guiding principle of IOM". Since then, IOM has systematically pursued its gender mainstreaming agenda.

2. Over the past five years, much groundwork has been laid in terms of developing the policy and the strategy, both regarding project development to address the specific needs of migrant women, and achieving gender balance within the Organization. In 1997, a Gender Coordinator was appointed to develop further the gender mainstreaming strategy and to promote "a positive awareness of gender policies throughout the Organization". With the departure of the Coordinator in mid-1999, the function of gender coordination was shifted to the Office of the Director General. Today, the daily overview of gender issues is ensured by the Executive Assistant under the direct supervision and responsibility of the Deputy Director General. She is assisted by 14 Gender Focal Points who constitute the Working Group on Gender Issues (WGGI). Although all the members of the Working Group have full-time professional duties, gender issues receive proper consideration and attention. (The full range of activities carried out by the WGGI can be found in the annex.)

3. IOM's gender mainstreaming strategy is based on three fundamental points derived from the policy:

- For IOM to be accountable for applying the policy, gender must be mainstreamed and incorporated as a strategy in the Organization's processes;
- There is a need to institutionalize and integrate gender into the entire spectrum of IOM activities - projects, programmes and staff policies. For that to be achieved, all staff need to understand and implement the strategy in their work;
- The mainstreaming strategy is not exclusively related to women and their specific needs and concerns. It also includes initiatives for men, where necessary, provided they promote overall gender equality.

4. Implementation of this strategy for gender mainstreaming consists of a dual approach:

(a) **On the programme side**, the strengthening of the following areas:

- improving awareness and understanding of gender in migration with special focus on the needs of migrant women;
- ensuring equal access for women and men to IOM projects and services so that migrant women can fully participate in and benefit from them; and
- designing and implementing specific projects for migrant men, where appropriate.

(b) **On the human resources side**, striving to achieve the following targets:

- the reflection of equal opportunity and treatment of male and female staff in all IOM staff policies and actions;
- increase the proportion of women in professional categories to at least 40 per cent by 2002, with particular emphasis on decision-making positions; and
- a gender-balanced staff by 2008.

5. One tangible improvement concerning the human resources policy in 2000 was the appointment of a Headquarters Gender Focal Point as an ex-officio member of the Appointments and Postings Board to ensure that female candidates are given appropriate consideration when applying for positions. Another step has been to advertise IOM vacancies to reach a wider audience by linking up with the United Nations web site Women Watch, a joint initiative by the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).

6. As part of IOM's strategy to standardize project development and mainstream gender in projects, IOM makes use of three tools:

(1) The **Project Assistance Toolkit (PAT)**. This is an electronic aid/computer application for project development. The PAT is composed of a project database which facilitates information sharing and worldwide tracking of all activities; a "Project Development Guide" which contains reference/guidance materials and tools for project development; and a section dedicated to gender mainstreaming of IOM projects which includes reference materials/guidelines in electronic form for project developers, made available to all Offices. The latest addition to the tools stored in the PAT, relating to gender mainstreaming, is a list of gender sensitive and appropriate terminology to be used when writing proposals.

(2) **Project development training**. Since the beginning of this consolidated approach to project development, IOM has trained over 300 project developers. In the past, structured training was carried out by a Gender Focal Point on mainstreaming in project development. New approaches for training in project development for next year, which would include gender concerns, are currently under review.

(3) **Project proposal review**. Project proposals are reviewed by various supporting departments and units in Headquarters.

7. A tangible innovation to promote gender policy through project activities is the proposal to launch a pilot initiative by the Working Group on Gender Issues (WGGI). This is intended to highlight IOM's commitment to encouraging a positive awareness of gender-sensitivity throughout the Organization, and to promote the mainstreaming of a gender dimension in programmes. This initiative would support the development of eight new gender-focused projects proposed by Field Missions and Headquarters' units, using a modest amount of Discretionary Income. It is intended that projects initiated under this programme will serve as

high-profile models to encourage the development of similar gender-related programme activities throughout IOM's global network. In addition to funding the eight projects, the WGGI will monitor, evaluate, and prepare a final report on the outcome of the activities. These eight proposed projects can be found in Chapter VIII.5, General Programme Support, Gender Issues Activities of the Programme and Budget for 2001. A review of these projects was outlined at the informal consultations held on 17 November 2000.

8. IOM's record to date is good but there is still much room for improvement. The road to a gender-balanced staff is still long. Gender mainstreaming in project development needs to be more aggressively pursued by project developers, through increased commitment by Chiefs of Mission and increased awareness of and sensitivity to the gender dimension by their staff.

9. While IOM's strengths lie in the experience of the Deputy Director General, the strong commitment by the Director General to the advancement of female staff members and to achieving gender balance, and the dedication of a core group of persons, additional resources - both human and financial - are needed. It is widely recognized that gender mainstreaming can be truly effective only if the political will exists at the highest level, if the programme and staffing policies reflect that the gender dimension has been taken into consideration and applied, and if all staff throughout the Organization recognize the positive benefits of gender mainstreaming. IOM fulfils the first of these conditions, but the other two will need to be addressed through intensive training which will begin in early December 2000.

10. IOM is fortunate to have a policy, a strategy, support from its Member States, and a Plan of Action for gender mainstreaming. With the recognition of its shortcomings and the will and commitment to address these quickly and thoroughly, IOM is confident that it will be successful in its efforts to achieve full gender mainstreaming and gender equity.

Annex

The activities of the Working Group on Gender Issues (WGGI) this year comprised:

1. **“Informal Consultations” on gender issues** were held with interested or donor Member States on 26 January 2000. Seventeen governments were invited and 11 governments participated. As it had been suggested at that meeting that **all** Member States might be interested in gender issues, another session was held on 17 November 2000.
2. A **Conference on “Women and Migration”** was organized on 31 January 2000. The Deputy Director General wanted to ascertain what was or was not being done for migrant women by the international community. Representatives from IOM Member States, international organizations and NGOs participated in this half-day event, the conclusions and recommendations of which have now been published.
3. IOM actively participated in an inter-agency event organized on the occasion of **International Women's Day** on 8 March 2000 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva. IOM put together a photo exhibition focusing on migrant women and ran a videotape of the award-winning IOM Manila play “We're So Syndicated Ma'am” which focused on the perils of trafficking.
4. A **Gender and Migration News Bulletin** was revitalized. From an information document strictly for Gender Focal Points in 1998 and 1999, a product was developed for **all** IOM Missions and staff members. It is hoped that this Bulletin, which appears four times per year, will be made available to Member States in 2001, once resources are obtained for publishing a version in colour.
5. Several **internal briefing sessions for Headquarters’ staff were organized on migrants and AIDS**, thanks to cooperation with UNAIDS.
6. A **training session in gender issues** is being planned for early December 2000 for **all** staff in Headquarters, with particular emphasis on senior staff.
7. An introductory **briefing session on migrants' rights and human rights**, with emphasis on vulnerable categories, such as migrant women and children, is also being planned for early December 2000 for the Working Group on Gender Issues and selected European Gender Focal Points.
8. An **interactive WGGI/Field Gender Focal Point exercise on their respective Plans of Action** was conducted from April through September 2000 which helped IOM's Gender Focal Points learn more about the activities of their counterparts. A global analysis of this exercise drew the following conclusions for those posts having participated in the exercise:
  - most posts are actively engaging governments, multi/bilateral organizations, NGOs and other entities in dialogue concerning migrant women;

- gender mainstreaming seems to be well incorporated in most posts although Headquarters needs to improve field access to the Project Assistance Toolkit (PAT);
- interaction at all levels with international, regional and national networks of migrant women's groups are logically more active in capitals where major organizations have offices;
- IOM's Programme and Staffing Policy Objectives, incorporated in its Plan of Action, need to be streamlined.

9. **Support to IOM's Research Unit for a study on "Trafficking of West African Women to Europe"**. (This study, carried out in autumn 2000, is coupled with an IOM study conducted at the same time in Nigeria on trafficking in women.)