



IOM International Organization for Migration
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OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

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**REPORT BY THE WORKING GROUP ON GENDER ISSUES ON
GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE ORGANIZATION**

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I. FOLLOW-UP TO THE GENDER EVALUATION

1. Following ten years of implementing activities focusing on gender, IOM decided in 2006 to undertake an evaluation by the Office of the Inspector General of the Organization's gender mainstreaming policy and strategy. The main objective was to evaluate the overall performance and achievements of IOM in mainstreaming gender in its programme activities and in promoting gender balance in its staffing policy.

2. The evaluation report was issued in November 2006. It mainly reached the conclusion that IOM's gender policy was "globally relevant to international standards, IOM's Constitution and its programme activities" and that the Organization had been "effective" in implementing it. However the report noted that there was still room for improvement and made the following recommendations:

- (i) *In order to clarify the concept of gender implied in some IOM programmes and activities, WGGI should further refine the Gender & Migration Fact Sheet posted on IOM's web site, which is at present a factual presentation of gender inside IOM's Services, often targeting mainly women, but without a clear strategy on how better to integrate gender components into the services and take into account conceptual and institutional frameworks when necessary. The main policy objectives, formally adopted ten years ago in 1995, should accordingly be revised and submitted to the IOM Council for acceptance under a new resolution. A global revision of IOM policy should also include a more precise strategy for staffing policy implementation, focused on its compatibility with and acceptance by local culture. New sub-divisions, targets, timetables and success indicators could be included in the revision.*
- (ii) *The Human Resources Management Department, in collaboration with WGGI, should refine its method of analysing and presenting staffing and gender data, taking into account that concepts such as equality and gender balance can be intuitively understood but not necessarily correctly analysed, or unanimously praised but culturally not well accepted. Understanding the reasons for the weak participation of men and further encouragement of formal engagement of men is strongly recommended, taking into account that their participation is an important precondition for change and improvement, and that giving the erroneous impression of a women's club does not benefit anybody.*
- (iii) *Major achievements have been made with the existing structures and the way gender was institutionalised in IOM was effective; however, it is time to re-examine the composition and role of the WGGI and GFPs, the accountability of IOM Senior staff starting from the highest level at HQ and in the field and the resources allocated to gender, particularly human resources. Member States and Donors see gender as an important aspect of migration and IOM leadership can be reinforced with their support. Revision of the policy and strategy can contribute to achieving that leading role.*

3. As a follow-up, during the course of 2007, the Gender Officer led an organization-wide review of these conclusions and recommendations in order to reap the benefit of this exercise and to revitalize gender mainstreaming in the Organization. Internal consultations were organized, first with Senior Officials through direct interviews.¹ Secondly, questionnaires were sent to the members of the Working Group on Gender Issues (WGGI) and to all the Gender Focal Points (GFPs) to get their feedback on the evaluation report and on IOM gender policy and strategy in general.² A brainstorming session was then organized with the Deputy Director General and the WGGI members. Based on the outcomes of all those consultations, a document encompassing recommendations for a new strategy for gender mainstreaming in IOM was prepared and endorsed by the Deputy Director General.³ This document covered three main areas, namely gender mainstreaming in programme activities, gender mainstreaming in staffing and the role of the WGGI and GFPs. It put forward actions to make gender mainstreaming more effective in IOM. The main points are as follows:

Gender mainstreaming in programmes

- Update the IOM gender policy and the policy objectives, including the adoption of an organization-wide accepted definition of gender mainstreaming and the clarification of the concept of gender mainstreaming in the IOM context.
- Build staff capacity including capacity to grasp the difference between women-specific actions and gender mainstreaming.
- Ensure organization-wide implementation of the gender policy by clarifying the respective responsibilities and accountability of all staff.
- Improve reporting and information sharing including through the collection of sex-disaggregated data and the use of gender indicators.

Gender mainstreaming in staffing

- Ensure commitment and accountability from top management and supervisors by setting clearly defined and monitored targets and by refining the method of analysing and presenting staffing and gender data.
- Raise awareness among staff members of the importance of gender equality in IOM and encourage formal engagement of men in gender mainstreaming activities.
- “En-gender” the recruitment process, improve the work environment in general and introduce a mentoring programme.

¹ This took place from 5 February to 26 March 2007. The discussion was based on predetermined questions shared beforehand with the interviewees. See document: “Report by outgoing Gender Officer on interviews of senior managers on gender mainstreaming in IOM”, April 2007.

² See document: “Results of the consultations with the members of the Working Group on Gender Issues (WGGI) and the Gender Focal Points (GFPs)”, May 2007.

³ See document: “A strategy for revitalising gender mainstreaming in IOM”.

Composition and role of the WGGI and GFPs

- Strengthen the gender network by adopting new Terms of References (ToRs) and yearly work plans for the WGGI and the GFPs.
 - Introduce accountability measures coupled with training and the allocation of time to gender activities.
 - Allow for more interaction inside the network.
 - Increase the resources allocated to gender, particularly human resources.
4. The Gender Issues Coordination has also pursued its traditional activities, including awareness-raising activities on gender and migration topics, support to gender projects which this year concentrated on research activities, and sensitization of staff on gender issues.

II. AWARENESS-RAISING ACTIVITIES ON GENDER AND MIGRATION

A. Conference on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

5. According to the estimates, there are between 10,000 and 12,000 women originating from regions where FGM is carried out living in Switzerland. Of these, between 6,000 and 7,000 are already excised or run the risk of becoming so. Francophone Switzerland, and particularly Geneva, is particularly concerned. IOM has been working with the Canton of Geneva in addressing this issue since 2005. The Organization, in collaboration with the cantonal authorities in charge of women's affairs (*Service pour la Promotion de l'Égalité entre Homme et Femme - SPPE*), integration, health and youth aims to contribute to a better quality of life for excised women from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan living in Geneva. The objectives are to sensitize the target communities to achieve behavioural change towards FGM, to empower women (through cultural orientation, literacy courses and discussion groups on FGM) and to inform and strengthen the capacities of the cantonal health professionals regarding the care of FGM victims. On this last component, on 9 October, IOM and the SPPE organized a Conference to encourage the exchange of best practices among health professionals and build a network for the protection of girls. More than 180 health professionals and social workers attended the conference. One of the most renowned specialists in reconstruction surgery of the clitoris, Dr. Pierre Foldès, came from France to share his experience and technique with his Swiss colleagues. During the Conference, the Cantonal Minister for Health committed, on behalf of the state of Geneva, to strengthen the information and training of all relevant professionals such as school nurses, teachers and midwives, and increase the coordination between them to prevent FGM. The implementation of the other project components will take place in 2008.

B. Ministerial Round-table Breakfast on Women's Participation in Poverty Alleviation and Sustained Economic Growth, including through the initiatives of migrant women

6. In the framework of the High-Level Segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), IOM, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues (OSAGI) organized a ministerial round-table breakfast on 5 July 2007

on the topic of “Women's participation in poverty alleviation and sustained economic growth, including through the initiatives of migrant women”. IOM Deputy Director General, Ms Ndioro Ndiaye, UNFPA Deputy Executive Director, Ms Mari Simonen and Ms Rachel Mayanja, Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Gender Issues moderated the discussions between the 20 participants from governments, international organizations and civil society organizations. The overall objective was to discuss concrete actions to ensure women’s participation in economic growth and in the eradication of poverty. There was a particular focus on migrant women’s initiatives.

7. The following migration-related points were singled out as particularly important:

- The impact of remittances on poverty alleviation and the specific contribution made by women in this respect should be enhanced by government actions, in particular to support migrant women’s entrepreneurial activities and through appropriate credit mechanisms.
- Women migrants’ health, and reproductive health in particular, is of primary importance. The access of migrant women to health services, including undocumented women, is of particular concern.

8. The participants agreed to bring these to the attention of their governments, and multilateral and civil society organizations. These points will also be brought to the attention of the ECOSOC and be included in the final ECOSOC report.

III. SUPPORT TO GENDER PROJECTS

9. In 2007, the WGGI decided to contribute to filling the gap in the gender and migration literature by concentrating on research projects.

Gender and labour migration: Policy-oriented research on linkages and impacts: an Asian perspective

10. This policy-oriented research project aims to place gender on the labour migration and development agenda in Asia through innovative primary and secondary research. The objective was to bring sound research results, data and analytical findings in a policy-relevant form, in order to contribute to the international policy dialogue on gender and labour migration.

11. Labour migration was identified by the five IOM Offices participating in the study (Viet Nam, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand and the Philippines) as the key common area of concern for the region and of interest to develop comparative data and studies. Over the last 30 years, Asia has been a region of movement and migration, such as to the Gulf countries in the 1970s or to the booming economic centres of Asian countries, such as Singapore in the 1980s. However, what has developed especially since the 1990s has been a “gendered migration process” where men tend to migrate to work in construction and women often to fill gaps in domestic work or in specific industries. The increased visibility of women as labour migrants in the region has brought a number of economic and social issues to the forefront: the effects of female migration on gender roles in both the destination and country of origin; the dynamics of the migrant family; the effects of gender on the migration process (motivation, constraints); the

rights, equality and protection of female migrant workers; the sending and use of remittances; and the relative stability of female migration even in times of economic crisis. Furthermore, the vulnerability of male migrants in terms of rights, access to services and the change in gender roles in the family and community is another issue highlighted yet under-researched.

12. The project aims first to contribute to a better understanding of gender analysis and second to prove that gender is a key analytical tool for understanding migration in general, labour migration in particular and diverse gender impacts on development. Gender blind policies can lead to inappropriate responses to migratory phenomena. Therefore, new research on different aspects of gender and labour migration, in particular on the impacts of migration on gender roles, gender specific migration motivations and gender differentiated strategies of migrant families, was undertaken.

13. Six research studies (the Philippines study was previously developed by IOM Manila in 2005 and the China study was previously written for the IOM/DFID conference on migration and development in Asia) have been conducted to date and are now in the final stages of review and editing. It is envisioned that these studies will lead to an IOM publication that will incorporate these six studies together with a common “Introduction” and “Policy Recommendations” drawn from them. These are:

- Bangladesh: “Impact of short-term male migration on their wives left behind: A case study of Bangladesh”
- Sri Lanka: “Gender roles and support networks of spouses of migrant workers”
- Thailand: “Gender and Migration in Thailand”
- Viet Nam: “Sexual and gender-based violence against migrant workers – policy development and advocacy support”
- Philippines: “Working in Italy: The experience of Filipino migrant workers and their families”
- China: “The impact of Gender on rural-to-urban migration in China”

WGFI Funding: USD 30,000

IV. SENSITIZATION OF STAFF ON GENDER ISSUES

A. International Women’s Day (IWD)

14. On the occasion of IWD, the Director of CAMARADA, a Geneva-based NGO assisting migrant women and their children through literacy classes and vocational training, was invited to give a presentation on her work. A film presenting testimonies from women who used the centre was also shown. This talk was really appreciated by Headquarters-based staff members who are less in contact with migrants in general and migrant women in particular than their field colleagues. It helped them get a feel of how migrant women are living their migration

experience and how they are faring in Geneva. CAMARADA also set up a stand outside the Organization's main lobby with different products manufactured by migrant women trained by the NGO.

B. Negative workplace behaviours

15. As a follow-up to the fact sheet on *Negative Workplace Behaviour and How to Deal with it* issued last year, an awareness-raising event was organized for the staff in Headquarters. Some WGGI members and other volunteers acted out different scenarios. The objective was to sensitize staff to what is negative workplace behaviour by:

- presenting several examples (dismissive behaviour, ridiculing, withholding of information, blaming and shaming, stereotyping);
- explaining the consequences for the staff and for the Organization;
- offering examples of what constitutes good interaction patterns between colleagues, conducive to a healthy work environment.

V. ONGOING ACTIVITIES

- During the course of the year, the Gender Officer, assisted by some volunteer GFPs, continued to participate in several gender networks, task forces and groups.
- Vacancy notices were circulated to all IOM GFPs and posted on "Women Watch" in order to reach as many qualified women as possible.
- The Gender Officer continued to sit in the Appointments and Postings Board as a non-voting *ex-officio* member as part of the strategy to reach gender balance in the Organization.
- IOM contributed to several United Nations Secretary-General's reports.

VI. CONCLUSION

16. The first IOM Gender evaluation has been an enriching experience. It has identified good practices and challenges and produced many findings and recommendations. Above all, it brought senior officials, gender focal points and the Gender Officer to talk and reflect on the policy, which in itself is a success. It is hoped that the strategy devised to respond to the recommendations of the evaluation will have a positive impact on the future of gender mainstreaming in IOM, for the benefit of all migrants and staff.