

Gender and Communications Toolkit



International Organization for Migration

Media and Communications Division / Gender Coordination Unit

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FOREWORD

Within the framework of its constitutional purposes and functions, IOM has been making efforts to institutionalize and mainstream gender into its work. In November 1995, an *IOM Staff and Programme Policy* was adopted by the IOM Council. 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”. This policy sought to ensure that women and men are provided with equal opportunities, to develop and utilize their skills and to participate in decisions affecting their lives.

Two decades after, it is now recognized that a safe, humane and orderly migration for all, also means to act regardless of sex, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation.

The measures described in this toolkit provide the basis to IOM’s work on gender and migration. In celebration of the 20th anniversary of IOM’s policy, we believe that the treatment of gender as an integral part of IOM’s action for migrants will make an essential contribution to the success of our efforts.

i. OVERVIEW

PURPOSE OF THE TOOLKIT

Migration is a complex process and women and men migrate in nearly equal numbers. Beneficiaries of IOM activity are not a homogeneous group and migration as well as crises can affect women, men, boys and girls, in different ways. Not taking into consideration one of the groups can lead to an ineffective preparedness and response.

What takes place in the field is reflected in your work: *gender** inequality in the field leads to reflect gender inequality in your work and communications.

Thus, the heterogeneity of the reality of your field should be reflected in IOM’s communications. A fair and representative portrayal of this reality implies therefore to avoid *stereotypes** in communications.

Nevertheless, if reality on the field is “unbalanced”, IOM departments and missions should encourage the publication of stories featuring women’s initiatives and partnerships, in order to correct for the current imbalance which tends to favor stories

featuring men. It is important to stay gender-sensitive across editorial content through both the **quantity** of the stories on women and men as well as the **quality** (having a balanced and diversified portrayal), as explained below.

After 20 years, it is now admitted that gender is not only about women nor about adding programmes for women *empowerment** only. It is essential to analyze the needs on the field to reach a larger part of the affected population, men or women. Understanding local cultures will help better identify the beneficiaries of IOM's project and thus can make you bring a culturally appropriate response.

In fact, a gender-sensitive approach in your work is about "better targeting and programming" and thus, it will help ensure a more efficient action that responds to the needs and capacities of the beneficiaries. Not marginalizing groups will help you better prepare and implement your project. Once the "gender patterns" of your field location are clearly known and understood, IOM will be able to design efficient projects and you'll be able to reflect it in your communications materials.

What we aim at through the toolkit is to stress the fact that missing a part of your beneficiaries can lead to an inefficient implementation of IOM's project. The consequence of an omission can be reinforcing or perpetuating inequalities or even creating new inequalities.

The goal of this toolkit is to advance gender equality through IOM's communications by highlighting the varied profiles of migrants, actions and engagement in multiple contexts. Women and men should be shown in different environments and backgrounds (rural/urban, home/work, etc.) and their presence in IOM communications should be representative of their unique roles, capacities, ages and milieu.

This toolkit provides guidance on showing diversity and ensuring that communications materials are representative of entire populations. By doing so, your work will help give a more accurate and representative image of migration.

The ultimate goal will be that both the projects and communications do no harm, improve safety and security, empower beneficiaries and improve participation and ensure that aid is distributed in a non-discriminatory basis. Your activity should help address inequalities, at least on your field, because that is also how we will uphold human dignity and the well-being of migrants.

More concretely, this toolkit should be able to raise awareness of the need for more gender-sensitive projects and communications by providing guidelines for an efficient gender analysis before designing and implementing a project, by helping you address your **own** perception of gender and how it can affect your work, also by giving examples

and inclusive language for written and oral communications as well as visual and audio materials.

WHAT THIS TOOLKIT IS NOT

First of all, this toolkit is not about “women’s empowerment” nor about creating programmes for women only.

As mentioned above, this toolkit aims to remind you that more than 230 million people are migrants, 50% of which are women and that we cannot afford to lose that half of the story. This gender toolkit does not claim to solve gender inequalities, which is a long-term goal, nor will it make you a gender expert or add to your already existing workload.

We cannot give extensive general tools as every context is different and approaches need to be adapted accordingly to the local context. Thus you are responsible to identify the needs where you work and design the best intervention possible given YOUR context.

WHO IS THE TOOLKIT FOR?

This document is designed primarily for IOM media and gender focal points as well as for field staff participating in projects or communications to enable them to improve the design and implementation of IOM communications and projects in the field.

WHAT IS THE TOOLKIT FOR?

The toolkit will provide you checklists, self-assessment questions, and other tools so you can develop a full understanding of how well you currently represent gender in communications and concrete areas for improvement.

Follow the guidelines, review the examples and develop a plan to apply them to your work. To get the most out of this toolkit, you and your team should review existing communications and public information. The toolkit highlights the need to use *disaggregated data**, by sex and age, on a regular basis, **when available** and **relevant**, which will allow you to identify gaps in existing materials. You will also be able to ensure diversity and inclusiveness through more consultations and participation in activities; finally, you will be able to ensure that migrants have the same opportunities regardless of their sex, gender, etc. and ensure equal access for all beneficiaries.

WHEN CAN IT BE USED?

This toolkit can be used for written communications such as press releases, articles, blogs, media reports, photos and videos, but also for oral interventions such as panel discussion, community consultations and other project activities.

ii. GUIDELINES AND ASSESSMENT¹

GENERAL GUIDELINES

When developing communications materials for IOM, it is important to give a balanced portrayal of men and women, not only in terms of **quantity** but also in terms of **quality**.

Communications materials should avoid depicting women and men exclusively in stereotypical, traditional ways and/or disempowering ways. For example communications materials should refrain from depicting women only as vulnerable aid recipients or homemakers (cooking, cleaning, etc.) while men are portrayed as leaders in the community, and supporting their families financially. Rather, given the complexity of the migration process and IOM's work. We want to give a **representative portrayal** of the heterogeneous reality on the field.

Communications pieces should encourage the portrayal of women as leaders and active participants in their communities, while keeping in mind that gender is not only about women. It should also be conveyed that men face challenges as well in the migration context, and an emphasis should be placed on recognizing where they are also vulnerable, such as trafficking, or other roles and responsibilities they take on such as caring for children.

Importantly, IOM communications should strive to tell the stories of men and women working together in their communities and empowering each other. It is essential that stories from IOM reflect the complex roles and dynamics that men and women have in societies while also examining those issues which might be overlooked.

¹ The indicators below are not comprehensive and may be revised or elaborated as needed, depending on the local context.

The booklet *“Self-Help for Men facing crisis and displacement”*, is a new IOM publication developed as an activity of IOM psychosocial support program in the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon. It stresses the fact that men also can be vulnerable. Some aspects of men’s lives are overlooked.

“Men don’t cry. Men are not afraid. And yet, men also face wars and conflicts. We often tend to overlook the distress faced by some men at times of crisis. But let us not forget that if women hold up half the sky, as a Chinese proverb says, the other half is held by men.

Apart from leading to enormous financial and social difficulties, crises push men to face emotional challenges that they usually don’t dare talking about, often thinking they are the only one to feel this way. Why should we even discuss it then? That is when the vicious circle starts. But in reality Yes, feeling angry is a normal reaction to the abnormality of the situation; yes, you have the right to be afraid and feel sad. And no, you are not responsible for this.”

Read more [here](#).

Download Booklet [here](#).

Also, it is essential to ensure that communications are sensitive to diversity in gender identity and sexual orientation. LGBTI individuals (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons) are often vulnerable throughout the migration cycle and can be victims of persecution, *discrimination** and gross ill-treatment, in some cases involving extreme forms of violence in many of the countries where IOM is active. **Where possible**, IOM communications should consider the representation of LGBTI individuals in the organization’s work, taking into account the **local context** and the **safety** of the individuals involved.

Finally, sex-disaggregated data on IOM’s activities should be included **wherever available** and **relevant**. These data, collected and analyzed separately on men and women, are important for multiple reasons. Despite increasing awareness on the importance of highlighting the role of women, key data gaps still exist that inhibit the development of appropriate policies and monitoring their progress.

More concretely, in order to depict a fair portrayal in your communications materials, three aspects should be kept in mind:

- **Quantitative:** ensure a *gender balance** in the communications materials where relevant (ideally 50/50 or otherwise representative of the area).
- **Qualitative:** challenge stereotypes and encourage the portrayal of diverse roles for both women and men. The goal is not to censor all photos/videos where women are portrayed in traditional activities such as cooking, handcrafting, etc. but to ensure diversity in representation depending on the context.
- **Language and Wording:** the two preceding aspects are supported by the use of gender-neutral language if both women and men are featured and where relevant. It is also important to avoid sexist or stereotypical language.

The indicators below are not comprehensive and may be revised or elaborated as needed, depending on the local context:

- ✓ Portray men and women in diverse roles (leaders, experts, spokespersons, ordinary people)
- ✓ Ensure that it is not only women who are portrayed as vulnerable or victims
- ✓ Portray men and women in different contexts (family/work and rural/urban)
- ✓ Portray men and women not only in traditional ways
- ✓ Quote men and women as expert-source of info-opinion
- ✓ Where relevant, consider stories that feature women of diverse backgrounds
- ✓ Ensure a balance between stories featuring female-driven initiatives and partnerships and those featuring male-driven initiatives and partnerships
- ✓ Ensure communications that are sensitive to diversity in *gender identity** and *sexual orientation**
- ✓ Consider the inclusion of stories on LGBTI individuals and issues, **according to the local context**

IN PRACTICE

First of all, it is important to assess your context before designing a project or communications strategy. It will also be essential to assess your activities after implementation. Only then will you be able to communicate properly respecting *gender equality** and avoiding potential negative impacts of your activity.

- ✓ How could your team have better included gender to the project?

BEFOREHAND...

To start, pick a project that has been less than successful.

Ask your team if the basic questions (below) were answered before the project was designed.

If not, the project has possibly failed because certain groups or aspects of the local culture have either been overlooked.

...ASSESS YOUR FIELD

Improving gender-sensitive communications does not mean that we want to erase biological differences or go against biological facts. A more “gender-sensitive” communications means that we are aiming at identifying social or cultural constructions.

...ASSESS THE SITUATION

A gender analysis is an assessment of the roles of, and relations between, women and men, girls and boys. It recognizes that women’s and men’s lives, and therefore experiences, needs, capacities and priorities, are different. This assessment should be integrated into all sector assessments or situational analyses, starting with the conceptualization phase.

Answer these questions:

- ✓ Who is most impacted by the situation?
- ✓ Who are the people affected by the disaster?/situation we want to address?
- ✓ Which are the most affected areas and population groups?

- ✓ What are their characteristics (male, female, <5, >60, ethnicity, religion, caste, minority groups, refugees, returnees, Internally Displaced Persons - IDPs)?
- ✓ What is the number of people affected by the emergency (disaggregated by sex)?
- ✓ How many were previously highly vulnerable?
- ✓ What has changed?
- ✓ Is the number of affected people and those requiring external assistance growing? If so why? Where are they? What kinds of assistance do they need most?
- ✓ Who makes decisions?
- ✓ Do women and men have equal access to program activities, benefits or services?

...AND APPLY TO YOUR COMMUNICATIONS MATERIALS

When covering any topic, it is important to consider the position given to men and women in **qualitative terms** and not to represent certain roles as only held by women or men. Additionally, articles or stories should highlight examples of both women and men breaking down gender-stereotypes and/or how they might be contributing to gender equality or empowerment.

In written communications as well as through audio/video materials it is important to be mindful of subliminal messages or stereotypes such as women as victims or as mothers only. For instance, while in many cases motherhood might be the primary role that women occupy, the story should emphasize the capacity in which IOM is working with them (for example, if they are learning new skills or supporting their family, etc.).

Being aware of the diverse representation of women and men is essential, not only to achieve the long term goal of addressing gender inequalities but also because, as highlighted above, it will help design project and communications strategies more accurate and thus, more efficient.

It is crucial to ensure a balanced portrayal and consider gender aspects also in **quantitative terms**, for example by ensuring that men and women are interviewed in equal numbers. Quoting men and women equally (or representatively) and ensuring that both genders have equal or representative coverage should be done to the extent possible. Due to the specificity of certain types of media such as video, it is preferable to include voiceover by men and women, and that both voices and images appear without replicating stereotypes like women as passive and men as assertive. Moreover, it is

important to allow equal time allocation to male and female interviewees during interviews or recordings.

- ✓ Ensure equal proportion of representation between men and women in materials
- ✓ Ensure that the voiceover is delivered by males and females
- ✓ Check time balance in interviews to both men and women
- ✓ Ensure translation of everyone regardless of gender
- ✓ Have both males and females (IOM staff or not) in panels/events, as speakers

There are certainly instances where women may be more exposed to risks in which case it is important not to portray them as **inherently** more vulnerable but rather to consider how the context and situation contribute to their vulnerability.

In conclusion, the main objective is to give equal/representative coverage to men and women while at the same time striving to present interesting and complex angles of the vulnerabilities and capabilities of both men and women.

- ✓ Avoid replicating stereotypes
- ✓ Interview both men and women
- ✓ Use women and men equally as interviewers, interviewees or speakers at events, panels
- ✓ Do not present women as victims or vulnerable only because they are women but explain the context. Also consider how men might be victims and how the context might contribute to men's vulnerability
- ✓ Respect equality in names, labels, titles except for safety reasons. When naming beneficiaries or partners avoid only naming the male head of household or label the female as “wife” or “mother”
- ✓ Use sex-disaggregated data (If none, it is important to question why and suggest such data be collected) to identify any gap in what is already existing

- ✓ Choose images in which gestures, clothing, postures convey equal status

What roles do men and women typically play in the community or place of origin and how has this changed or been affected?

- ✓ Who holds prominent positions in the community?
- ✓ Who is involved in community-run associations and how?
- ✓ Who is responsible for caregiving?
- ✓ Are there more female-headed households now or are men now being given new care responsibilities (ex. the 2004 tsunami)?
- ✓ What are the reasons behind these differences?
- ✓ For example, traditions, laws, culture?
- ✓ What would be the best timing for different types of relief operation?
- ✓ Have both women and men been consulted?

Are there risks and threats that particular groups of women, girls, boys and men are exposed to?

- ✓ Who/how many have lost their livelihood assets?
- ✓ What assets do they have left?
- ✓ Have women and men suffered equally?
- ✓ Were the losses short term (e.g. a single season's harvest and stored food stocks, seeds and tools) or long term (e.g. permanent loss of land)?



Always consider: what are the ways in which men and women interact with each other and how is this impacting their respective situations?

- ✓ If time permits, send a one page summary to the [Gender Coordination Unit](#) and [Media and Communications Division](#) to describe how risks are perceived in the context where you work

REMINDER: BEWARE OF YOUR OWN STEREOTYPES

Words – that you use or read - can be interpreted differently and language is not neutral. Thus, it is important to carefully consider word usage. Imprecise word choices may be interpreted as biased, discriminatory or demeaning, even if they are not intended to be. Moreover, the use of non-neutral terms can lead to ambiguity – is the author meaning one or both sexes? - and stereotypes. For example, commonly used words such as “fatherland”, “mankind”, “spokesman”, “mother tongue”, etc. should be avoided and replaced by neutral language that could contribute to gender equality and minimize the unconscious acceptance of gender-inequality (for example, “homeland”, “humankind”, “spokesperson” and “native language”).

During events or panels, it is important that both males and females be included as speakers and thematic experts for IOM to ensure a gender balance. Specific language used in press releases, social media content, publications, and statements should provide a gender-sensitive model of communications. Word choices **often reflect unconscious assumptions** about values, gender roles and the abilities of women and men.



To think that gender is only about women is already a stereotype

ACTIVITY – Difference between Gender and Sex

1. Ask your team/yourself if they/you understand the difference between “sex” and “gender”
2. Explain the difference quickly and simply (i.e. sex is a biological construct while gender is a social construct)
3. Read the statements one by one and discuss whether you think the statements refer to sex (S) or to gender (G):
 - a) Women give birth to babies, men do not (S)
 - b) Little girls are gentle, boys are tough (G)

- c) Amongst Indian agricultural workers, women are paid 40-60 per cent of the male wage (G)
- d) Women can breastfeed babies, men can bottle-feed babies (S)
- e) Most building site workers in Britain are men (G)
- f) In Ancient Egypt, men stayed at home and did weaving. Women handled family business. Women inherited property and men did not (G)
- g) Men's voices break at puberty, women's do not (S)
- h) In one study of 224 cultures, there were 5 in which men did all the cooking, and 36 in which women did all the house-building (G)
- i) According to UN statistics, women do 67 per cent of the world's work, yet their earnings for it amount to only 10 percent of the world's income (G)

FOCUS ON THESE QUESTIONS AND KEY IDEAS:

- a. Did any statements surprise you?
- b. Do the statements indicate that gender is inborn or learned?
- c. Gender roles vary greatly in different societies, cultures and historical periods
- d. Age, race and class are also major factors, which determine our gender roles
- e. Women and men in every country experience both power and oppression differently

ANSWER THIS QUESTION: WHAT DOES GENDER EQUALITY MEAN TO YOU?

1. Take sheets of paper and give each one a heading: 1) 'women should', 2) 'women shouldn't', 3) 'men should', and 4) men shouldn't
2. Alone or in group, write down anything they/you have ever heard (from any source) about their heading
3. Discuss the lists by comparing the women/men should/shouldn't lists
4. Discuss how participants/you relate to these messages. How are these ideas generated and sustained in a particular society?

GENDER AT WORK

As of February 2015, 54% of IOM staff were men and 46% women. However, the ratio of women to men decreases as seniority increases.

Remember that gender balance and equity **within** IOM also have an impact on external communications (in facilitating gender balance at events, authoring articles, etc.) and allow for more diverse portrayals of men and women's experiences, and getting different perspectives. Thus it is central to foster gender equality within the organization and local missions and to encourage more gender balance in the authorship of articles and conduct of interviews (assessments show that currently male staff largely outnumber female staff in this arena).

- ✓ Ensure gender balance among managers
- ✓ Where women are less represented, increase women's proportion in decision-making positions and leadership
- ✓ Equally treat and recognize capacities for women and men (i.e. tackle the gender-pay gap)
- ✓ Ensure gender balance among authors of content where relevant
- ✓ Encourage both female and male staff to write about their work
- ✓ Equally involve male and female IOM staff in the writing of stories/articles

iii. EXAMPLES - DOS AND DON'TS

As mentioned previously, any communications materials greatly influence the external image of the organization and reflect how organization staff think and behave.

Thus, it is crucial to **review all communications materials** to avoid any exclusionary or discriminatory terms, thereby promoting greater gender equality.

WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Challenging Gender Stereotypes

✖ Gender biased	✔ Gender sensitive
Social Good Summit attendees and their wives are invited.	Social Good Summit attendees and their partners are invited.
John and Mary both have full time jobs; he helps her with the housework.	John and Mary both have full time jobs; they share the housework.
Research scientists often neglect their wives and children.	Research scientists often neglect their families.
The average construction worker is experiencing impacts on his health due to hazardous working conditions by the age of 35 years.	Recent research revealed that construction workers are experiencing impacts on their health due to hazardous working conditions by the age of 35 years.
The policy manual states that the Deputy Resident Representative attends every Project Appraisal Committee meeting at his Country Office.	The policy manual states that the Deputy Resident Representative attends every Project Appraisal Committee meeting at the Country Office.

Using Equal Forms of Address

✖ Gender biased	✔ Gender sensitive
Miss, Mrs.	Ms.
Men and ladies	Men and women / women and men
Man and wife	Wife and husband / husband and wife
Ed Schmidt and his wife Janet	Mr. and Ms. Schmidt / Ms. and Mr. Schmidt
Mrs. Ed Schmidt	Janet Schmidt, Ms. Janet Schmidt

VISUAL MATERIALS

Non-Stereotypical Images:



Non-Stereotypical Images:



iv. DEFINITIONS²

Empowerment: Concerns individuals gaining power and control over their own lives. It involves awareness-raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources and actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality.

Gender: Refers to the social attributes for males and females that are learned in a given culture, and though deeply rooted in every culture, are changeable over time, and have wide variations both within and between cultures.

Gender Balance: The equal representation of men and women, for example in the composition of an organisation, a project team or a decision-making body.

Gender Equality: The equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. It is a goal that has been accepted by governments and international organizations, including IOM, and is enshrined in international agreements and commitments.

Gender Identity: Each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with one's sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body and other expressions of gender, such as dress, speech and mannerisms.

Gender Mainstreaming: The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated or exacerbated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

Gender Neutrality: It aims at neutralizing reference to gender in terms that describe people, or reference that imply giving predetermined roles to genders and sexes. It allows a language that is suitable for both male and female.

² The definitions given have been adapted from: UNESCO, 2012, UNESCO Publications: Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines; UN ECOSOC, 1997, Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997, A/52/3; UN OSAGI, 2001, Gender Mainstreaming: Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality; UN General Assembly, 1979, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; UNAIDS, 2011, Terminology Guidelines (Revised Version).

Gender Stereotypes: Simplistic generalizations or preconceptions about attributes or characteristics that are or ought to be possessed by, or the roles that are or should be performed by, women and men. Stereotypes can be positive or negative, but they rarely communicate accurate information about people. Gender stereotypes are particularly harmful when they limit women’s and men’s capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives and life plans. Harmful stereotypes can be both hostile/negative (e.g., women are irrational) or seemingly benign (e.g., women are nurturing – it is frequently based on this stereotype that child-rearing responsibilities often fall exclusively on women).

Persons of diverse sex, sexual orientation and gender identity: Umbrella terms for all persons whose biological sex, sexual orientation or gender identity places them outside the mainstream, and persons whose gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. LGBTI is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons that is also used as shorthand for “persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity.”

Sex: Refers to biological and physiological attributes that define males and females. It is natural, determined by birth and, therefore generally unchanging and universal

Sex Disaggregated Data: It is data that is cross-classified by sex, presenting information separately for men and women, boys and girls. The data reflect roles, real situations, general conditions of women and men, girls and boys in every aspect of society. For instance, the literacy rate, education levels, business ownership, employment, wage differences, dependents, house and land ownership, loans and credit, debts, etc. When data is not disaggregated by sex, it is more difficult to identify real and potential inequalities. Sex-disaggregated data is necessary for effective gender analysis.

Sex/Gender Discrimination: Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex and/or gender which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by all persons irrespective of any other field

Sexual Orientation: Each person’s capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and/or intimate and sexual relations with a person of a particular sex/gender or the same sex/ gender or more than one sex/gender.

***“HOW IMPORTANT IT IS FOR US TO RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE
OUR HEROES AND SHE-ROES!”***

MAYA ANGELOU

v. CONTACTS

For further information and support, please contact directly:

Gender Coordination Unit gcu@iom.int

Media and Communications Division mediaHQ@iom.int

vi. ADDITIONAL SOURCES

- Gender mainstreaming (protection mainstreaming) training package [IOM](#)
- Gender mainstreaming guidelines [UNESCO](#)
- Gender sensitive indicators for media: framework of indicators to gauge gender sensitivity in media operations and content [UNESCO](#)
- Gender sensitive communication [UNDP](#)
- Gender issues in the media [Council of Europe](#)
- UN Women Training Centre [UN Women](#)