



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

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

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In 2006, the Working Group on Gender Issues (WGGI) decided it was time to take stock of gender mainstreaming throughout the Organization. Indeed, IOM had adopted a gender-specific policy on migrant women in 1995 to better identify the needs and meet the concerns of migrant women due to their heightened vulnerability during and after their mobility. Since the adoption of that policy a decade ago, the WGGI has spared no effort to highlight and attempt to alleviate gender inequalities affecting migrant women and girls but without detracting attention from the needs of migrant men and boys. These efforts were translated into a three-pronged strategy by the WGGI that has been applied since 1999: support to project development, training and gender-awareness raising activities for staff, and research and publications.

2. While the WGGI is convinced of the progress made in gender mainstreaming, thanks not only to the efforts of its members who have acted as catalysts of the policy throughout the Organization's Departments, Service Areas, and Missions but also to the guidance of the Deputy Director General and the support of the Director General, gender mainstreaming has still not reached the point of being an automatic process. For this reason, the WGGI considered it opportune to seek the objective opinion of the Evaluation Officer to review the status of gender mainstreaming in IOM after ten years of implementation. At the same time, the conclusions and recommendations of this Evaluation would assist the WGGI in determining whether the strategy adopted to date had proved to be the most effective and whether it could not be improved. This report will be posted on IOM's website.

II. ACTIVITIES IN 2006

Awareness raising

3. The WGGI organized an event and presentation addressed to male IOM staff members on *Fathers and Work/Life Balance* on 30 May. This was meant not only to specifically target men for a change, but also to take advantage of the visit of representatives from TDC, Denmark's largest telecom company, that was in Geneva to present its policy on maternity-paternity leave to various international organizations.

4. TDC's main theory was that its male staff that took advantage of the company's generous policy on paternity leave (eight weeks of absence before birth, 14 weeks after birth and 32 weeks of parental leave after the end of the 14 weeks, with full salary) did so with their CEO's personal endorsement. TDC found that these male staff members tended to be happier and better adjusted colleagues. At the same time this generous paternity leave made it possible for women to stay longer at work without missing potential career opportunities. This policy is also related to the country's gender equality policy that aims at recognizing the interests, needs, and priorities of **both** women and men. In so doing, the WGGI wished to recall that gender equality is not merely

a women's issue, it concerns and should engage **both** men and women. A lively discussion followed the presentation of TDC's "Dad's Hug campaign".

Other activities

- On the occasion of **International Women's Day (IWD)** in March, the WGGI organized the following activities:
 - The WGGI decided to take an innovative approach in commemorating IWD by addressing two international schools in Geneva and giving presentations to several groups of 8-16 year old students. The students were asked to illustrate through artwork what "gender", "migration" and "International Women's Day" meant to them. Their **artwork** was exhibited in Headquarters and was auctioned off to IOM colleagues and parents of the students in attendance. The proceeds of this sale went to a Geneva-based NGO that deals with integration issues of migrant women and their children. The artwork is posted on IOM's website.
 - At the same time, a **pamphlet** was produced compiling stories, articles and interviews of different migrant women – whether refugees, IDPs, victims of trafficking, or returnees. Each woman had an important story to tell relating to her life after she took the decision to migrate, what happened to her during her mobility and what she was able to achieve thanks to her mobility.
- In coordination with IOM's Permanent Observer Mission in New York and in cooperation with UNFPA, an Expert Group meeting was organized in May on "**Female Migrants: Bridging the Gaps throughout the Life Cycle**". The workshop focused on identifying the gaps and challenges through the life cycle of female migrants, looking at migration trends, the reproductive health needs of migrant women, migration and human rights, violence against women migrants and human trafficking of women and girls, filling research gaps relating to migration and sex-disaggregated data, and government policies that could play a positive role in the empowerment of women migrants by promoting gender responsive policies, legislation and programmes. The workshop proposed specific recommendations on how governments, IOM, UNFPA and other pertinent partner organizations could work together to ensure that the rights and needs of female migrants were addressed.
- In early July, a Ministerial round-table breakfast was organized to discuss the "**Gender Dimensions of Labour Migration**" the outcome of which was intended to contribute to the preparation of the United Nations High-Level Dialogue on international migration and development in September.

Update on Human Resources Initiatives, Projects and Publications

5. In order to better meet the second dimension of IOM's gender policy, that of "ensuring equal opportunity and treatment for male and female staff members", one of the WGGI's top priorities is to ensure that women and men working for IOM are provided with equal opportunities to develop and utilize their skills and are offered a supportive work environment that serves their equal advancement. In this regard, the WGGI issued new **Guidelines on**

Implementing the IOM Staffing Policy on Gender Issues¹ in 2005. In order to strengthen the impact of those guidelines on the daily lives of IOM staff in Headquarters and in the Field, the WGGI launched a series of fact sheets on specific gender issues in the workplace. It is hoped that these fact sheets will help to ensure that IOM staff fully understands the guidelines and are able not only to implement them but also to use them to improve their working environment.

6. The first of the series was dedicated to the particular issue of ***Guarding against Gender Stereotypes in the Workplace***, followed by ***Challenges to a Work/Life Balance***, and ***Negative Workplace Behaviour and How to Deal with it***. This initiative has met with appreciation by a great many staff members.

7. IOM's new website features an expanded section on gender issues but is still under construction.

Ongoing Activities

- Participation in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Gender and Humanitarian Assistance.
- Vacancy notices continue to be circulated to all IOM Gender Focal Points and posted on the United Nations website of "Women Watch" to ensure that more qualified women receive them.
- The Head of the WGGI continues to attend all meetings of the Appointments and Postings Board as a non-voting *ex-officio* member to ensure that gender balance is borne in mind in the review of vacancy notices and applications by candidates.
- Quarterly publication of the *Gender and Migration News Bulletin* which is posted on IOM's website.
- A report can be found in the Annex on specific projects activities in 2006.

CONCLUSIONS

8. The value of gender mainstreaming no longer requires proving in most environments. The Working Group on Gender Issues will continue to devote increased attention to gender mainstreaming among all its stakeholders: States, migrants and staff. What is needed is the ongoing support of its leadership and the Member States.²

¹ *Guidelines on Implementing the IOM Programme Policy on Migrants and Gender Issues* were also issued by the WGGI in December 2005 and aimed at providing the required guidance to all staff to better address the special needs and concerns of migrants, particularly of migrant women, while meeting those of other stakeholders including Governments.

² A request for funding from the Council for future project support, ongoing training events and new initiatives can be found in the Programme and Budget for 2007 (MC/2203) – Staff and Services covered by Discretionary Income, Chapter IX.8, Gender Issues Activities.

Annex

**STATUS REPORT
ON THE RESULTS OF WGGI-SPONSORED PROJECTS IN 2006**

1. Publication on the impact of “Remittances in Colombia from a gender perspective” (IOM Bogota).

Project Summary: Remittances constitute one of the most visible and real impacts of the migration phenomenon in countries of origin and different sectors have begun to consider remittances in their development strategies. This is the case with Colombia that has more than USD 3 billion entering the country each year from its migrants abroad. A thorough study on the subject in Colombia was undertaken and three volumes were published entitled “International Migration and Impact of Remittances”. This project involved the publication of a fourth volume with the objective of analysing the impact of remittances in Colombia from a gender perspective to better develop public policies on the subject or promote development through migration.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Department of Statistics, “Alma Mater” from the academic sector and the United Nation’s International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), a combination of a desk review of existing documents, information and studies on the subject, followed by a field research were undertaken.

Results: 1,000 copies of this publication within the series of “International Migration and Impact of Remittances” will be published at the end of the year in English and Spanish. These will be distributed to all partners of the Colombian country alliance on international migration, governmental institutions, private sector enterprises, NGOs and international organizations.

Constraints: none

WGGI funding: USD 13,000

2. Report on Internal Migration and Gender: Opportunities, Constraints and Challenges in Bangladesh (MRF Dhaka)

Project Summary: Over the last two decades women’s internal migration in Bangladesh has rapidly increased. By generating employment opportunity for more than two million rural poor, particularly women, the ready-made garment (RMG) sector in Bangladesh has been instrumental in accelerating women’s mobility. Women’s migration and employment away from home in major cities and women’s changing roles gave rise to a range of new challenges that require shifts in policy making and programme implementation with renewed attention to gender equality. For these to be effective, the need for research is obvious. In terms of analysis, data and policies, however, the gender aspects of migration remain marginalized. By adopting a gender-specific analysis of internal migration and looking in particular at women’s migration and

impacts of migration on female strategies and roles, the report attempts to offer a better understanding of the constraints, opportunities and challenges that underlie migration motivations, experiences and impacts, and recommend policy measures from the gendered needs assessment and priority consideration.

Poverty and push factors are important determining factors for women's migration, yet women's experience in this regard differs from that of men. While men's migration is often taken for granted, women's migration depends not only on their marital status, class and fallback position both within the family and outside, but also by constraints and opportunities at the micro-level and the dynamics of conflict and cooperation at the micro or household level. In the process of migration decision-making, the women's role can be passive, active, consensual, cooperative and even conflictual depending on their position in the family, marital status, level of poverty and access to family resources and support, and the cognitive perception of the benefits and losses from the migration of male members.

Results: A number of policy recommendations result from the report for programmatic intervention, the most salient of which are: (1) Setting up a gender-equitable employment policy: in order to raise productivity of female labour and formulate a gender sensitive policy, the RMG sector should be brought under a regulatory framework of public policy in order to ensure fair minimum standards with regard to minimum wages and working conditions; (2) Implementing gender based education and skills development programme: the report confirms that women are underrepresented in technically skilled jobs and in senior grades in industry and also that there is a wage gap between men and women at all levels. Thus, a gender-equitable spread of students at secondary and tertiary levels of education and revision of curriculum and teaching practices could achieve more scientific orientation keeping in pace with technological advances in a globalized world; (3) Introducing low-cost housing programme: migration and gender responsive policies must cover a broad range of support services, e.g. access to low-cost housing, basic amenities, health care and awareness about STIs and HIV/AIDS, cheap and safe transportation and child care services at affordable prices; (4) Introducing gendered health insurance and safe-net programme: considering the human rights implications and the threat of health hazards, including STIs and HIV/AIDS, it is important to have sex education and awareness programme for women workers about their reproductive rights.

Constraints: Statistics gleaned from surveys illustrated the need for a gender sensitive approach.

WGFI Funding: USD 3,500

3. Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on HIV/AIDS Prevention for the English speaking Caribbean (MRF Washington)

Project summary: Though migrants are sometimes perceived as contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS across borders, research has shown that they are often more vulnerable to HIV infection than local populations and face greater barriers in accessing health care and support if living with HIV/AIDS. Recognizing the need for a better understanding of the interaction between HIV/AIDS and population movements in the Caribbean, IOM undertook the study

HIV/AIDS and Mobile Populations in the Caribbean: A Baseline Assessment in Barbados, Curaçao, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. This report found that young women are particularly at risk for HIV-infection in the Caribbean. Studies in other regions have shown that mobility alone is not a risk factor for HIV/AIDS but that the circumstances of movement – whether voluntary or involuntary, legal or clandestine – can impact the potential risk of HIV-infection for migrants.

This HIV and AIDS prevention project started in January 2006 with the financial support of WGGI. In close collaboration with the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), the AIDS Institute and the Art Center College of Design, MRF Washington developed a HIV and AIDS public information campaign that resulted in the development of three public service announcements for the English-speaking Caribbean. The project contributed to promoting healthy behaviour and reducing the risk of HIV and AIDS among youth, migrants and mobile populations, in addition to promoting awareness of gender issues as they relate to HIV and AIDS in the English-speaking Caribbean.

Results:

- The design and development of three public service announcements for television (“The Pharmacist”, “Snap-Shots” and “AIDS Affects us All”).
- The validation of these PSAs during the XVI International AIDS Conference (Toronto, August 2006), with participation from CARICOM Youth Ambassadors.
- The design, development, and distribution of T-shirts, one-page HIV and AIDS information sheets, and banners for outreach purposes during the XVI International AIDS Conference, and future events.
- An invitation to present the PSAs partnership experience in a specialized workshop at the United Nations 59th Annual DPI³/NGO Conference, under the title “Mobilizing Youth about the HIV/AIDS Epidemic: An Innovative Health Communication Partnership between NGOs and the International Aid Community”.
- Dissemination of the PSA, “The Pharmacist” by the Kaiser Family Foundation-Caribbean Broadcast media partnership on HIV/AIDS at no additional cost for the project.
- The creation of strategic alliances with PAHO and Ministers of Health participating in the Caribbean Caucus to further discuss migration health challenges in the Caribbean.
- Awareness raising of migration health issues, especially the gender disparities among males and females in relation to HIV and AIDS.

³ Department of Public Information

Visualizing the role that gender plays is important in delivering a clear and concise HIV prevention message and was proof that gender analysis is a concrete tool when addressing the issues of HIV and AIDS. In this way, IOM seeks to raise awareness of these issues in order to inform and protect women and girls and to educate men about their unique responsibilities and susceptibilities regarding HIV and AIDS.

Constraints: none

WGGI funding: USD 20,000

4. Documentary on child trafficking and exploitation in West Africa (MRF Dakar)

Project summary: Cultural and traditional beliefs in West Africa are being misused to abuse children across a region where an estimated two million children are thought to be victims of human trafficking or exploitation. The informal and traditional African practice of poor parents sending their children to friends, relatives and to informal schools such as Koranic schools or Daaras because they do not have the resources to send them to conventional institutions, has long been regarded as a form of community support. Education in these schools for both rich and poor is widely respected in teaching people to appreciate material deprivation and to help people become responsible adults. However, the practice, which is unregulated, can make children vulnerable to human trafficking and is open to abuse.

The children who are entrusted to some of these schools are being forced to become street beggars and are punished or beaten if they refuse to beg or do not collect enough food and money at the end of each day's work. Although the teachers claim that making children beg is essential to the survival of the Daaras as well as being an important lesson to learn on the harsh realities of life, parents are usually ignorant of what is happening to their children, particularly if they have been sent to other West African countries or to big urban centres.

Senegal is now the centre of the Daara system in West Africa, receiving boys from various West African countries. But it also receives many girls from the region, trafficked or exploited as domestic workers. The girls, also sent to distant family and friends as part of a long respected tradition, can be as young as seven or eight and forced to work for very long hours with little to no pay.

Other examples of child exploitation and trafficking include Malian children in Mauritania working as domestic workers, Malian children working in exploitative conditions in the cotton fields of the Côte d'Ivoire and Burkinabe children in Mali being forced to work on farms instead of receiving an education.

Working with partners on the ground including national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and with funding from the US State Department, IOM is working to both raise awareness of child trafficking and to help the victims. Assistance includes returning children who have been trafficked from other countries back home to be reunited with parents who are informed of what has happened to their child.

Results: A 15 minute documentary has been made and will be used by IOM as an awareness raising tool to address the problem. A video news release has also been edited and is available for broadcasters to use from the IOM website and distributed via the European Broadcasting Union.

Constraints: none

WGFI funding: USD 10,000