

**WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN MARINE SCIENCE
ASSOCIATION (WIOMSA)**

**THIRTY-SIXTH WIOMSA BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MEETING**

VENUE: NOSY BE, MADAGASCAR

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WIOMSA Gender Policy

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

The Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) is a regional professional, non-governmental, non-profit, membership organization, dedicated to promoting educational, scientific and technological development of all aspects of marine sciences throughout the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region. WIOMSA has a particular interest in linking the knowledge that emerges from research to the management and governance issues that affect marine and coastal ecosystems in the region. Over time, WIOMSA has built a diverse range of experience in organization of training courses, coordinating research grants programmes, advocacy, networking, and dissemination of technical information relating to the region. The strength of WIOMSA lies in its regional character, multi-disciplinary membership, and good track record in implementation, broad experience and flexibility in its operations.

One of the core tasks of WIOMSA is to promote marine research through the awarding of research funds under the Marine and Coastal Science for Management (MASMA) and the Marine Research Grant (MARG) Programmes. WIOMSA has over the years made concerted efforts to consider gender in marine science research in the region. However, similar to other natural science based initiatives and organizations, the number of women that apply for and gain access to opportunities from WIOMSA is still relatively low. A recent evaluation indicates that there are gender imbalances even in WIOMSA's leadership team (the Secretariat and the MASMA Programme Committee), with a dominance of men, though there is a more balanced profile in the Board of Trustees, where three of its eight members are women, one of whom is the President.

Furthermore, WIOMSA is cognisant of the need to ensure a fair and safe working environment for all their staff and the beneficiaries of its services. Adopting this perspective allows WIOMSA to address any workplace inequalities on an on-going basis and integrate gender in all projects and programmes.

WIOMSA members hail from different countries, each of which professes a unique economic development agenda though unified with the intention to address gender through goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Complementarity to Goal 5 as well as national and regional statements on human resource and gender give guidance to the WIOMSA approach to mainstreaming gender in its programmes.

WIOMSA has developed this guidance document to ensure that it mainstreams gender into its daily operations and in the projects and programmes it supports, drawing from the expectations of its individual members and institutions. The WIOMSA Handbook, specifically the chapter on 'Gender Equity and Equality', also serves to inform this document.

For daily operations at workplace the Policy advocates gender best practice approaches, whilst for projects and programmes, demonstration of gender dimensions form part of the evaluation at minimum.

This Gender Policy thus seeks to strengthen the gender mainstreaming efforts by WIOMSA as an organization, and assists the Association in integrating gender equity goals and objectives into all its staffing and operational activities.

DEFINITIONS

For WIOMSA the definition of **Gender** is that adopted from the World Health Organisation (2002) whereby it describes the characteristics of women and men that are socially constructed, as opposed to sex that refers to those that are biologically determined. **Gender** is thus the learned behaviour making up gender identity and determining gender roles.

In line with this definition **Gender equality** is then the absence of discrimination on the basis of a person's sex in opportunities, the allocation of resources and benefits, or access to services.

And **Gender equity refers** to the fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men. The concept recognizes that women and men have different needs and power, and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalance between the sexes.

SCOPE OF APPLICATION

The Policy applies to all those who are involved in WIOMSA's decision-making processes (including the WIOMSA Board of Trustees, WIOMSA Secretariat, the Programme Committee, WIOMSA Trustees, Country Coordinators and members) and beneficiaries of WIOMSA's activities (including grantees).

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

WIOMSA has a number of policies and guidance documents aimed at strengthening its overall operations. This stand-alone gender policy is an important step in demonstrating commitment to make gender equality issues and concerns a priority. It will also be a catalyst for accelerating the integration of a gender perspective in all spheres of the organisation, so that it becomes a routine part of the Association's work.

The policy must be cross-referenced and read with existing policies, and should inform all other WIOMSA's institutional policies. The Policy also takes into consideration the gender considerations of agencies that support WIOMSA.

PURPOSE

To strengthen gender equality in WIOMSA's internal systems and processes as well as in its supported projects and programmes.

GOAL

The goal of this policy is to mainstream gender equity and equality in the operations of the Association and ensure that WIOMSA provides inclusive, objective and transparent services to all.

POLICY OBJECTIVE

The objective of this policy is to ensure that WIOMSA's core activities and programmes benefit all genders equally and contribute to gender equity in line with international best practice, and that women and men, have the same opportunity to participate and contribute at all levels of the Association.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles of this Gender Policy, which will serve as a framework for its application, include:

- Gender Equality is a fundamental human right;
- Gender Equity and Equality is an integral component of all WIOMSA's policies, programmes and projects;
- Every individual working at or for WIOMSA understands and demonstrates attitudes and behaviours that promote Gender Equality and Equity.
- Gender Equality is both everyone's responsibility at WIOMSA and an area that warrants specialised attention and resources;
- Women empowerment is central to achieving Gender Equality.
- Gender responsiveness will lead to enhanced effectiveness and sustainability of the WIOMSA's operational activities, and in no way should it adversely affect the quality of the operational activities that WIOMSA implements.
- Specific measures designed to eliminate gender inequalities are required in order to achieve gender equality, including affirmative action

POLICY PROVISIONS

This section presents the issues, objectives, policy statements and strategies to enhance gender equality at WIOMSA without compromise to research excellence. Key areas include WIOMSA's Decision-Making Process, Access to WIOMSA Funding, Composition of Research Teams, Gender Dimension in Research Content, and Awareness Raising and Capacity Building.

1. WIOMSA's Decision-Making Process

Issue: WIOMSA's decision-making team, including members involved in peer-review process (i.e. members involved in the drafting and the implementation of the various funding calls under WIOMSA) and the Secretariat, is imbalanced with a dominance of males.

Objectives:

1. To promote gender equality in decision-making.
2. To minimize the effect of bias on research funding outcomes, and to ensure that women and men have similar success rates in funding calls.

***Policy statement:* Gender balance is central to WIOMSA's being and doing. The Association aims to reach the international best practice target of 40% of the underrepresented sex in all organisational components, including its decision-making organs.**

Strategies:

- This policy acknowledges existence of clear guidelines for the election of six members of WIOMSA's Board of Trustees. Whenever gender imbalance exists in the Board, the two remain slots (for co-opted membership) shall favour the under-represented gender.
- Gender-balance on all the review and evaluation panels, recruitment, scientific and programme committees, with each comprising at least 40% of each gender.
- Identify and recruit more female evaluators and reviewers by:
 - Consulting databases of women scientists within the region,
 - Request for excellent scientists and stakeholder institutions to suggest female scientists who can join the evaluation and review teams.
- Encourage and promote gender-responsiveness in the appointment of members of the Secretariat.
- Ensure that the Association is addressing the practical and strategic gender needs (including maternal and paternal leave) of both women and men employees.
- Ensure gender responsive working environment (e.g. separate toilets and appropriate office spacing for male and female staff)

2. Access to WIOMSA Funding

Issue: The number of women, who regularly access funding from WIOMSA, and consequently, their success rate, is low.

Objective: To increase funding applications and success rate from women researchers.

***Policy statement:* Gender equality and women's empowerment issues will be systematically addressed in applications for WIOMSA-supported programmes and projects.**

Strategies:

- Encouraging women researchers to apply. A clause encouraging women to apply shall be included in the general call for proposals.
- Encouraging women researchers to re-apply if not successful in the first time.
- Set target values for the proportion of women to be funded under a specific call, taking into account the situation in the field.
- Apply affirmative action in case of equally qualified candidates or candidates who differ only slightly in their level of scientific qualification, in these cases 'the applicant representing the minority gender in the post group in question shall have first priority for the position'. The same procedure should also be applied for filling the reserve posts.
- Use career age (time from completion of doctorate), instead of biological age when

assessing career phase of applicants.

- Introduce specific calls for women researchers.
 - Pay particular attention to funding young women researchers, considering that marine sciences is a discipline where women are underrepresented.

3. Composition of Research Teams

Issue: Most research teams in WIOMSA supported programmes are gender imbalanced, with a dominance of males.

Objectives: To increase proportion of females in research teams in WIOMSA supported programmes.

Policy statement: **WIOMSA will foster gender balance within research teams in WIOMSA supported programmes to address the gaps in the participation of women in research.**

Strategies

- Include gender balance in the leadership of the research team among the ranking factors when analysing proposals. Prioritise proposals that have the equal gender scores at panel stage, in order to reinforce applicants' engagement at proposal level;
- Require commitment of successful applicants within grant contracts to aim, as far as possible, for gender balance at all levels of personnel assigned to the research, including at supervisory and managerial levels;
- Promote achievements of women in science and research, e.g. to promote the achievement of female researchers in the region, past and present, by issuing of a press release in the various WIOMSA's communication systems such as WIOMSA website, Newsbriefs and Symposium Newsletters.
- Consider gender balance for researchers and invited speakers when organising events, like workshops and conferences

4. Gender Dimension in Research Content

Issue: In most of the coastal communities in the region, women and the youth are the most marginalized in terms of their economic status and influence in decision-making processes. So it is necessary that research methodologies as well as solutions proposed take into consideration obstacles women may face in participation in economic activities and/or decision-making processes. WIOMSA supported research should promote gender dimension in their design.

Objectives: Integrate the gender dimension in research content, in order to improve the scientific quality and relevance of the produced knowledge and technology to the community.

Policy statement: **An analysis of gender is a crucial part of all WIOMSA supported research and will be included in all research projects unless proven irrelevant.**

Strategy:

- Require all applicants to indicate whether a potential sex and/ or gender dimension may

- be present or could arise in the course of their proposed research
- Require all applicants to outline how sex and/or gender analysis will be integrated in the design, implementation, evaluation, interpretation and dissemination of the results of the research proposal;
- For research proposal in which gender dimension is not relevant, require the applicants to outline why.

5. Awareness-Raising and Capacity Building on Gender Equality

Issue: The concept of gender equality is still to a large extent considered a women's issue and not a societal issue that concerns and should engage all gender. Furthermore, members working for and/or with the Association (including those involved in decision making) do not have the knowledge and skills necessary to implement and mainstream gender in its operations.

Objective: To generate and stimulate sensitivity to issues related to gender inequality, and strengthen knowledge and skills necessary for enhancement of the Association's organisational capacity to engage with gender equality issues in order to achieve institutional change.

Policy statement: **Gender mainstreaming is a core part of WIOMSA. A gender equity perspective will inform all organisational rules, procedures, systems, mechanisms, projects and programmes in the Association as a means of translating mainstreaming into concrete actions.**

Strategies:

- Training regarding gender issues in relation to the evaluation process shall be organised for committee and board members, evaluators and reviewers, as well as administrative staff of WIOMSA who participate in processing the applications.
- The evaluation and review team be made aware of the existence of and the need to abide by WIOMSA's gender policy.
- Ensure that the WIOMSA Secretariat has the ability and capacity to develop strategies, plans, and budgets that are gender sensitive.
- Provide guidance for WIOMSA peer-reviewers on evaluating a potential sex and/or gender dimension in research proposals;
- Organise training workshops on the integration of sex and/or gender dimension within research for people involved in decision-making processes (i.e. peer-reviewers, evaluators and WIOMSA staff involved in the drafting and the implementation of WIOMSA funding calls).
- Organise sessions for researchers on identifying and addressing the sex and/or gender dimension in the development of research proposals during WIOMSA conferences/symposiums.
- Ensure that WIOMSA's communications and publications are gender-sensitive.
 - Choose non-sexist language, and images that portray a balanced representation of both sexes, in all documents for internal and external use in order to avoid biased, discriminatory or demeaning interpretations.

Institutional Action to Mainstream Gender

In order to realise the objectives and overall goal of the WIOMSA Gender Policy the following steps shall be undertaken:

Planning

Planning shall be informed by the following guiding frameworks:-

- The WIOMSA Strategic Plan
- The WIOMSA Handbook

All existing plans shall be reviewed to ensure that gender equality is explicitly recognised as an objective and guiding principle; this policy shall also apply to all new planning processes. At every point in the WIOMSA Secretariat planning cycle, gender equality issues and concerns shall be integrated. Plans shall be approved when this process has been undertaken, which should include clear and measurable indicators of progress.

Programming

All WIOMSA programmes and projects must demonstrate gender responsiveness. This means all programmes must show evidence of systematic consideration of the differences between the conditions, situations and needs of women and men and the potential impact of the programme on their rights of access to opportunities and outcomes in a particular sector. This should be supported by clear and measurable indicators of progress.

All existing programmes shall be reviewed for gender responsiveness within a defined time frame, and all new programmes are to adhere to this policy.

Resource allocations

The WIOMSA budget is a key management tool for ensuring that gender mainstreaming is effected. Integrating gender into the budget shall be need driven and shall fall within the fiscal budgeting framework. It increases the understanding and uptake of gender issues. This shall facilitate institutionalisation of gender processes at different levels within the Association.

A gender audit of the WIOMSA budget will serve to establish: Budgetary allocations for creating and implementing an employment equity plan, as an overall target/indicator; the extent of identifiable budget lines for gender specific projects; the extent to which allocations at the programme level reflects gender sensitivity, and address key gender priority areas; and the extent to which there have been specific budget allocations for gender analyses, tracking information and developments on gender, gender training and research.

Sexual harassment

Any form of sexual harassment is discriminatory and a gross violation of the rights of the individual.

WIOMSA will form a committee, comprising of at least two Board members, to address any matters relating to sexual harassment. Procedures for confidentially in managing sexual harassment cases shall be developed without delay.

There shall be a focus on prevention of sexual harassment through targeted action, including routine public staff awareness activities. This corporate sexual harassment policy shall be well disseminated and steps taken to create a conducive environment for women and men to report incidences of sexual harassment.

Awareness and attitudes

WIOMSA shall integrate specific information and undertake activities in line with the internal information and communication strategy to ensure that all staff is kept informed of developments and trends, and also contribute to key gender issues, including the sensitive and controversial ones.

Gender Management System

To sustain gender mainstreaming, the process shall be anchored by an effective gender management system (GMS) within the Association, which is made up of structures and other management tools aimed at supporting a coordinated gender mainstreaming response.

The responsibility for gender mainstreaming must be shared by all, and especially driven from the senior management level while ensuring that specific responsibility and expertise are vested in strategically positioned structures within the Secretariat. The gender structures have a key role to play in developing gender analysis skills within the organisation as well as creating a conducive environment for gender mainstreaming.

GENDER MONITORING AND REPORTING

The gender impact of results and delivery on the operations of WIOMSA shall be measured through gender indicators as part of the monitoring and evaluation system. Indicators must be both qualitative and quantitative.

The Secretariat shall keep regular, accurate and updated gender disaggregated statistics. It shall also be essential to record who is benefiting, from a gender perspective, from the programmatic work that WIOMSA is undertaking.

WIOMSA thus, undertakes to do the following:

- Include gender sensitive indicators as an integral part of all key result areas at planning, project and programme levels.
- Each programme/ project shall have the responsibility for routine reporting on progress on gender to all relevant oversight structures including the Board of Trustee, evaluation and review panels
- Gender equality should be a standing item on the agenda of management meetings.
- Gender disaggregated reporting

WIOMSA shall monitor the implementation of gender as a crosscutting issue. The gender report shall explore the representation of women and men in the Board of Trustees, evaluation and review panels, the Secretariat, WIOMSA funding applicants (including principal investigators and teams), success rates by gender and size of grants, and projects with gender dimension in the project design in different funding calls. This gender-disaggregated statistics shall be collected annually, and made publicly available on WIOMSA website and annual reports.

REVIEW OF THE POLICY

BOT 36.8

This Gender Policy will be reviewed every five (5) years to take into account issues and trends.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

Affirmative Action means a policy programme or measure that seeks to redress past discrimination through active measures to ensure equal opportunity and positive outcomes in all spheres of life. Discrimination means any distinction, exclusion or restriction which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, by any person of human rights, and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.¹

Gender Analysis is a process of examining roles, responsibilities or any other situation with regard to women and men, with a view to identifying gaps, raising concerns and addressing them; investigating and identifying specific needs of women and men for policy and programme development and implementation.²

Gender audit is a self-assessment tool for identifying staff perceptions regarding how gender issues are addressed in programming and in internal organizational systems and activities. It is also a process for creating ongoing gender action planning, and to identify challenges and opportunities for increasing gender skills and organizational equality.³

Gender awareness is the recognition and understanding of the differing needs, interests and priorities of women and men and the different contexts, opportunities and constraints faced them as a result of their gender.⁴

Gender balance is commonly used in reference to human resources and equal participation of women and men in all areas of work, projects or programmes. In a scenario of gender equality, women and men are expected to participate proportionally to their share of the population. In many areas, however, women participate less than what would be expected based on the sex distribution in the population (underrepresentation of women), while men participate more than expected (overrepresentation of men).⁵

Gender dimension in research content means taking into account the biological characteristics and the evolving social/cultural features of both women and men. It invites researchers to conduct sex and gender analysis in the research process, when developing concepts and theories, formulating research questions, collecting and analysing data and using the analytical tools that are specific to each scientific area.⁶

Gender imbalance refers to a situation where there is not gender parity.⁷

¹ SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008).

² Adapted from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) Gender Policy (2009).

³ InterAction Gender Audit Handbook (2010). A Tool for Organizational Self Assessment and Transformation. ISBN 0-9678813-3-1

⁴ BRAC Gender Policy (2007): Towards Gender Equality. Gender Justice and Diversity Section, HRD.

⁵ Gender Equality Glossary and Thesaurus <http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/thesaurus/terms/1148> accessed on 31st March 2017 at 13:46:45).

⁶ European Commission - Guidance on Gender Equality in Horizon 2020. eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/h2020-hi-guide-gender_en.pdf.

⁷ Modified from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) 2009. Gender Policy.

Gender mainstreaming is 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 the 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. The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.⁸

Gender responsiveness refers to action taken to correct gender imbalance.²

Gender sensitive means acknowledging and taking into account the specific gender needs of both men and women at all levels of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.¹

Gender stereotyping is the assigning of roles, tasks and responsibilities to a particular sex on the basis of pre-conceived prejudices.²

Gender-disaggregated data is the collection and separation of data and statistical information by sex to enable comparative analysis.⁹

Non-sexist language is language that does not suggest, advocate, or involve traditional stereotypes regarding what is appropriate for or exclusive to males or females.¹⁰

Sex describes the biological differences between men and women, which are universal and determined at birth.¹¹

Sexual harassment means any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another whether or not such sexual advance or request arises out of unequal power relations.¹

Women's empowerment refers to the process of women gaining power and control over their own lives. It constitutes an important part of the efforts to bring about equal opportunities for men and women and involves awareness raising, building self-consciousness, expanding choices, increasing access to and control over resources and actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality.¹²

⁸ Commonwealth Secretariat Gender Equality Policy 2012.

⁹ SADC Secretariat Workplace Gender Policy.

¹⁰ <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/nonsexist> accessed on 7th April 2017 at 11:12:27

¹¹ UNESCO's Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Framework. Baseline definitions of key concepts and terms. portal.unesco.org/en/files/11483/10649049699Definitions.doc/Definitions.doc

¹² Commonwealth Secretariat Gender Equality Policy (2012).