

WIOMSA Gender Policy

1. 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 training courses, coordinating research grants programmes, advocacy, networking, and disseminating 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 main activities of WIOMSA is to promote marine research through the award of research grants under the Marine and Coastal Science for Management (MASMA) and the Marine Research Grant (MARG) Programmes. A few years ago, significant gender differences were reported in grant application behaviour (fewer women than men applying for MASMA and MARG grants). Gender disparities in research funding are a consequence of the long-standing gender divide in natural sciences that is apparent in a multitude of institutional features in the WIO region. WIOMSA is committed to ensure that preventive actions are taken to reduce and mitigate any possible adverse impacts that its research programmes may have on women or men due to gender. WIOMSA puts gender equality in the centre because we know that we cannot enhance marine science capacity in the region until all people have equal rights and opportunities.

The Women in Marine Science Network (WiMS) of the WIO region was established in 2017 to address the gender equality issues facing women marine scientists in the WIO region. WIOMSA believes that better networking amongst women will improve the participation of more women in marine science. Membership to WiMS is open to all women marine scientists that are members of WIOMSA. The efforts to close the gender gap has seen the number of women applying for funding increase in recent years. For example, in 2020, the female applicants and grantees outnumbered (58%) their male counterparts. However, WIOMSA is still striving to reach a positive gender balance in its decision-making organs to attain at least one-third of both the Scientific Programme Committees and Board of Trustees

In 2017, the WIOMSA Board of Trustees approved the WIOMSA Gender Policy. It sets out a policy framework for WIOMSA's approach to gender equality and includes strategies and recommended areas of intervention to advance its implementation. The policy's goal is to "support the achievement of gender equality as an essential component of WIOMSA's goal and contribution to sustainable human development." WIOMSA members cover a wide range of nations, each with a distinct development strategy but unified in their commitment to addressing gender inequality through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Leaving no one behind is a central promise of the SDGs. This revised policy is an essential pathway to gender equality and

empowerment and will contribute towards SDG 5: *achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls*.

This policy is the revised version of the WIOMSA Gender Policy of 2017. This policy, which has been informed by the expectations of WIOMSA members and the WiMS, will enable WIOMSA mainstream gender into its operational processes and the projects and programmes it supports. The WIOMSA Handbook, especially the chapter on “Gender Equity and Equality”, also provides information for the revision. This policy provides a clear strategic vision, purpose, structure, framework and set of high-level objectives and the gender mainstreaming measures. The policy is also relevant to the objectives of the WIOMSA’s Strategic Plan (2021 - 2025).

2. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

The Policy applies to all those 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).

3. ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

WIOMSA has several policies and guidance documents aimed at strengthening its overall operations. This stand-alone Gender Policy is an important step in demonstrating a commitment to make gender equality issues and concerns a priority. It will also serve as a catalyst for promoting the integration of a gender perspective into all aspects of the association's activity so that it becomes second nature.

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

4. PURPOSE

This Gender Policy reaffirms WIOMSA’s commitment to:

- Reduce gender disparities
- Transform gender relations
- Strengthen organizational structures and systems for gender equality

5. GOAL

The policy highlights WIOMSA’s aim to address gender equality across its services and the research programmes it funds. This will involve implementing gender mainstreaming throughout WIOMSA activities, programmes and project cycles as well as making sure that WIOMSA’s research support programmes do not exacerbate existing gender inequalities. The policy also aims to ensure that men and women have equal opportunities to participate and contribute at all levels of the organization.

6. 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 to achieve gender equality, including affirmative action.

7. POLICY PROVISIONS

This section presents the issues, objectives, policy statements and strategies to enhance gender equality at WIOMSA without compromising 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.

7.1 WIOMSA's Decision-Making Process

Issue: Women are under-represented in decision-making positions at WIOMSA.

Objectives: To promote gender equality in decision-making opportunities.

Policy statement: Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, to attain at least 1/3 at the Secretariat, the WIOMSA Board and the Programme Committees.

Strategies:

- This Policy acknowledges the 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 remaining slots (for co-opted membership) shall favour the under-represented gender.
- Scientific and job evaluation panels and other panels will have a gender-balanced composition; including at least 1/3 participation by each gender
- Identify and recruit more women evaluators and reviewers by:
 - Consulting databases of women scientists within the region,
 - Request for excellent scientists and stakeholder institutions to suggest women scientists who can join the evaluation and review teams.
- Encourage and promote gender responsiveness in the appointment of members of the Secretariat.

7.2 Participation in Research and Access to WIOMSA Funding

Issue: Gender differences in research funding success rates

Objective: Strengthen integration of gender into WIOMSA research programmes.

Policy statement:

WIOMSA will ensure that gender dimension is integrated into all phases of the research granting process from setting priorities for research to funding decisions. The goal of integrating sex and gender is to ensure excellence in research.

Strategies:

- Gender analyses: Gender equality means recognizing that women and men often have different needs and priorities, face different constraints, have different aspirations, and contribute to development in different ways. To enable the exploration and understanding of gender differences, we will systematically deploy and continuously improve tools to assess the needs of both women and men in research granting and monitoring and evaluation;
- Gender-sensitive research design: Require that all project proposals submitted to WIOMSA advance gender equality. Projects must demonstrate gender-integrated implementation (Project implementation strives to achieve equitable economic and social benefits for women and men);
- Promoting gender-diverse composition and balanced distribution of responsibilities and activities within research teams applying for project grants;
- Promote academic mentorship for young women scientists by experienced researchers. Supporting the mentorship activities of the WIO Women in Science Network;
- Fostering women Principal Investigators of research projects through temporary special measures;
- Monitoring the success rates of women and male applicants among other gender indicators in WIOMSA funded research;
- Ensuring gender balance among the nominees in prizes/scientific awards.

7.3 Gender Dimension in Research Content

Issue: Women and youth are the most disadvantaged groups in most of the WIO region's coastal communities regarding economic status and participation in decision-making processes. As a result, research methodologies and proposed solutions must account for the impediments women may experience while participating in economic activities and/or decision-making processes. Therefore, WIOMSA supported research should promote gender dimension in their design.

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

Policy statement:

WIOMSA will foster participatory research projects that guarantee gender diversity and allow disadvantaged segments of society to benefit from research processes and outputs.

Strategy:

- Require all applicants to indicate whether potential sex and/or gender dimension may be present or could arise during 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 a research proposal in which gender dimension is not relevant, require the applicants to outline why.

7.4 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 genders. 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 the enhancement of the Association's organisational capacity to engage with gender equality issues to achieve institutional change.

Policy statement: Gender mainstreaming is a core part of WIOMSA. A gender equity perspective informs all organisational rules, procedures, systems, mechanisms, projects, and programmes in the Association to translate mainstreaming into concrete actions.

Strategies:

- Put in place institutional procedures that ensure that women's and men's needs are all met equitably in research support and other services;
- formulate measures to ensure that gender-specific needs and capacities of women and men are systematically identified and addressed;
- Ensure that data on beneficiaries is disaggregated by sex for needs assessment and programme planning and gender analysis is integrated into MASMA programme design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation;
- Design strategies for capacity building in gender mainstreaming as part of institutional development programmes with particular attention to staff, Board and reviewers training on gender considerations;
- Ensure a gender-responsive working environment and events (e.g., separate toilets and appropriate office spacing for female and male staff). WIOMSA events like the Symposium should respond well to the different needs of women and men;
- Ensure that WIOMSA's communications and publications are gender-sensitive;
 - Choose a non-sexist language, and images that portray a balanced representation of both sexes, in all documents for internal and external use to avoid biased, discriminatory or demeaning interpretations.

8. Institutional Action to Mainstream Gender

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 programme's potential impact on their rights of access to opportunities and outcomes in a particular sector. Clear and measurable indicators of progress will be developed.

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 attained. 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 the 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 at least two Board members to address any matters relating to sexual harassment. Procedures for confidentially managing sexual harassment cases shall be developed without delay.

There shall be a focus on the prevention of sexual harassment through targeted action, including routine public staff awareness activities. In addition, 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 are kept informed of developments and trends and contribute to key gender issues, including 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, made up of structures and other management tools to support a coordinated gender mainstreaming response.

All must share the responsibility for gender mainstreaming, 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 in developing gender analysis skills within the organisation and creating a conducive environment for gender mainstreaming.

9. Responsibilities

Successful realization of this policy will require consistent and active participation by all staff at WIOMSA Secretariat, the WIOMSA Board and WIOMSA members and networks. WiMS will act as the focal network for the implementation of WIOMSA's gender action plans and work hand in hand with the WIOMSA secretariat and its members to implement the policy.

The WIOMSA Secretariat is responsible for:

- considering the social differences in women and men when designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating its programmes;
- conducting a systematic review of the Association's procedures to put in place gender analysis as part of programming or improving the existing systems;
- re-enabling a gender balance in the different levels of the structure within the Association, in particular, to involve more women in the decision-making processes at all levels.
- ensuring equal opportunities among female and male staff members in recruitment, promotion, benefits, training and working conditions.

The WIOMSA Board is responsible for:

- approving the Gender Policy;
- assessing the policy implications for women and men, thus ensuring that all WIOMSA policies and programmes are gender sensitive.

10. 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:

- Ensure that reporting and accountability mechanisms for activities and results in gender mainstreaming are put in place. Develop a 5-year action plan;
- 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 mainstreaming to all relevant oversight structures including the Board of Trustees, 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 mainstreaming 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. These gender-disaggregated statistics shall be collected annually and made publicly available on WIOMSA website and annual reports.

11. REVIEW OF THE POLICY

This Gender Policy will be reviewed every five (5) years to consider emerging issues and trends.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

Affirmative action includes specific measures designed to eliminate gender inequalities. Special temporary measures may be taken to help women overcome the results of past discriminations or present inequalities that affect their performance at work. Once these discriminations have been overcome these special temporary measures may be removed.

Gender analysis is a process of examining roles, responsibilities, or any other situation with regard to women and men, to identify gaps, raise concerns and address them, investigating and identifying specific needs of women and men for policy and programme development and implementation.

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.

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 by them because of their gender.

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).

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.

Gender dimension means integrating sex and gender analysis into research

Gender equality is the absence of discrimination based on a person's gender in opportunities, in allocation of resources and benefits, or access to services. It refers to the equal treatment of women and men, boys and girls so that they can enjoy the benefits of development including equal access to and control of opportunities and resources.

Gender equity is the principle and practice of fair and equitable allocation of resources and opportunities for women and men – a stage in achieving gender equality. To ensure fairness, measures must be taken to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field.

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

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.

Gender refers to socially constructed roles played by women and men that are assigned on basis of sex. Gender is used to distinguish similarities and differences between women and men without direct reference to human biology but rather to the behavioural pattern expected of women and men and their cultural reinforcement. The roles are usually specific to a particular area and time.

Gender responsiveness refers to action taken to correct gender imbalance.

Gender sensitivity is the act of being aware of the ways a person thinks about gender. Taking into account the impact of policies, projects and programmes on men, women, boys and girls and trying to mitigate the negative consequences thereof.

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

Gender-disaggregated data is the collection of information, from a sample group that includes both female and male participants, on the different experiences, needs, interests, and access to opportunities and resources of women and men to establish an accurate picture of the local context.

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

Sex describes the biological differences between females and males, which are universal and determined at birth.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when either: The conduct is made as a term or condition of an individual's employment, education, living environment or participation in a University community.

Women empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps women gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in women, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important.