Dear Colleagues,

Vienna, March 2021

We are happy to present to you Issue 3 of the UNOV/UNODC Gender Bulletin. This issue celebrates the great work of staff throughout all levels of the organisation towards achieving SDG 5.

We spoke with Martin Nesirky, Director of UN Information Service (UNIS) in Vienna, about the role leadership and effective communication play in promoting gender equality. Ricarda Amberg and Anne Linn Jensen, Programme Officers with the Container Control Programme (CCP), reflect on the CCP Women’s Network’s progress over the past five years and future plans. Roberta Solis, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, and Melissa Evans, Consultant, share insights into the gender dimensions when working with artificial intelligence in the judiciaries. We took a closer look at the Gender Team’s gender mainstreaming workshops, including feedback from Country Office Nigeria staff. Alongside fascinating interviews, we share information on upcoming events and publications.

With the recent launch of the 5-year UNODC Strategy and its emphasis on gender equality and the empowerment of women, we look forward to the continued efforts from staff to integrate a gender perspective throughout the UNOV/UNODC mandated areas of work.

Kind Regards,

Hanna Sands, Programme Coordinator (Gender)

UNOV/UNODC ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE

Interview with Martin Nesirky
Director, United Nations Information Service

Vienna, February 2021 — Martin Nesirky, Director of the United Nations Information Service (UNIS), has had a long and distinguished career in journalism and has worked among others, with the news agency Reuters as well as various United Nations entities. He became aware of gender inequalities early in his career and has since strived to do his part to change inflexible structures.

A Gender Strategy Focal Point since 2019, Martin has actively supported the implementation of the UNOV/UNODC Strategy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2018–2021).

Gender Bulletin: When did you first become aware of gender inequality in the workplace?

Martin Nesirky: When I started working as a journalist with Reuters back in the 80s, it struck me what a male dominated workplace it was. Not just because women were few and far between, especially at the top, but also because of the general working environment, how women were treated and the opportunities they were excluded from. It was quite a shock coming straight out of university and still brimming with ideals of gender equality. The structures felt outdated and wrong to me and it was something that I made a concerted effort to change once I stepped into senior management roles. When I was posted in Moscow and in Seoul with Reuters for example, I made it my business to recruit, promote and champion strong female candidates and colleagues.
Gender Bulletin: When it comes to enabling change, communication is crucial, especially regarding gender equality. How would you describe your role in contributing to UNOV/UNODC’s efforts to enable change?

**Martin Nesirky:** One aspect is external communication — how we can make sure that the rest of the world becomes aware of persisting inequalities and learns about what the UN is doing in this area. The second aspect is internal communications, to encourage even greater awareness about this subject across the UN system. As a senior manager and as a Gender Strategy Focal Point, I try to ensure gender aspects are included in internal and external communications.

However, to lead change one has to also look inwardly and at the structures we have in the workplace. Having spent quite some time managing large teams during my career, I know that a good team is not defined by the gender of its members, but by its diversity and culture. We need to bring these elements together and make sure that people understand that to get the job done, we need to draw on the best talent available. This is where I see my contribution; I take part in selection processes and recruitment activities, both in my own domain, but more often helping other UN organisations with recruitment.

**Gender Bulletin: With the use of the internet and social media, communication activities are at an all-time high. What challenges do you believe there are in covering gender equality and women’s empowerment?**

**Martin Nesirky:** The onslaught of information connected to the COVID-19 pandemic is an example of the challenges in breaking through to the public on social media platforms and not drowning in the masses of information. As people are online more, social media has become a very crowded marketplace of ideas and opinions.

Creating awareness on how women and girls are disproportionally affected by the pandemic is important, but it is hard as there are so many competing topics out there, ranging from vaccines to joblessness.

What we have tried to do in our COVID-19 response communication across the UN System is to focus on individual human stories that illustrate a particular challenge and which provide hope and ideally a solution and call to action. For example, statistics show that a large number of girls are dropping out of school due to the pandemic, but by presenting only statistical data no interest is generated.

“But by focusing on the fate of one girl and telling her story, we are more likely to break through to the public. As UNODC has a strong field presence, this tactic could be very effective, allowing it to demonstrate the great work it is doing to support women and girls.”

Alongside the challenge of reporting during COVID-19, there is also heightened scrutiny by the general public because of the growing lack of trust in expertise and authorities. It is always a challenge to engage with critical voices, but more so on social media platforms. You are most likely not going to persuade a person in a critical mind-set, but dodging a question does not work either. The solution is to address the criticism itself without directly...
addressing the person that posed it, in order not to fuel an acrimonious discussion or have it become personal.

Finally, misinformation is a particular challenge online, especially in regard to gender equality and women’s empowerment, which can easily become emotional and where there are all kinds of misconceptions which are hard to counter argue with sensitivity. Sticking to the facts can help. The Secretary-General’s policy briefs, which were published throughout the first phase of the pandemic, are a very good tool, as gender equality runs as a theme through a lot of these policy reports.

Gender Bulletin: What advice do you have for UN employees, on how they can continue to promote gender equality?

Martin Nesirky: Be mindful and contribute to a welcoming and enabling working environment. Mentoring can be very valuable; both being a mentor and receiving mentoring, however formal or informal it may be, can be beneficial.

A very concrete and simple action everyone can take is refusing to appear on a panel that is not gender balanced. No matter if virtual or in person, panels should have a balanced number of female and male experts and speakers. By refusing to be part of an unbalanced panel, we can all ensure that women who have the expertise are not overlooked.

The Gender Team would like to thank Martin Nesirky for his work as a Gender Strategy Focal Point, promoting gender equality within the work of UNOV/UNODC.
The CCP Women’s Network
In conversation with Ricarda Amberg and Anne Linn Jensen, Programme Officers

Vienna, 4 February 2021 — The Container Control Program (CCP) Women’s Network, established in 2015, aims to actively promote women’s roles and foster an inclusive dialogue around female participation, leadership, empowerment and freedom from discrimination in a sector often dominated by men. The network was one of the first of its kind within UNODC and continues to empower women working in law enforcement.

The Gender Bulletin sat down with Ricarda Amberg and Anne Linn Jensen, Programme Officers working with the CCP, to discuss their motivation, their achievements and their outlook on the future of the CCP Women’s Network.

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Gender Bulletin: What was the “a-ha” moment when you realized the importance of promoting gender equality within the Container Control Programme?

Ricarda Amberg: I don’t think there was a specific aha moment — it’s something that we just do in CCP. Drawing attention to the fact that women are underrepresented in CCP made us want to raise awareness about the issue and try to address the gender imbalances. We were motivated to be an agent of change, to raise awareness, and to move forward in terms of striving towards gender equality.

Anne Linn Jensen: We saw very clearly that men are overrepresented in the CCP Port Control and Air Cargo Control Units, so we were interested in getting to know why and what we could do about it. We are talking about law enforcement professions, which tend to be male dominated.

Gender Bulletin: Why is it important for gender equality and women’s empowerment issues to be recognized within the CCP?

Ricarda Amberg: We are aware that women’s participation in law enforcement professions can be extremely limited in some countries and is often marginalized to peripheral roles. The perception that women are unable to perform security related roles is prevalent in some of the countries that we work in. The prevailing attitude is that women should be at home looking after the kids, especially in the late afternoon and evenings and consequently that you can’t rely on them to do shift work through the nights if that is required. This means that women may be excluded by the recipient country administrations from participating in the CCP. Therefore, it is important for us to counteract that view and break that stereotype by raising awareness on the issue and by fostering an inclusive dialogue.

Anne Linn Jensen: Law enforcement professions should mirror the societies that they operate in — it is to the benefit of the agencies. This is something we try to promote when we talk to counterparts, countries and donors.

Gender Bulletin: In 2015, you established the CCP Women’s Network. How was this idea born?

“We thought to ourselves »It’s 2015, we have got to do something!« We therefore created a network to foster a conversation around women’s participation and to raise awareness about the many issues.”

Ricarda Amberg
Programme Officer, CCP
We were one of the first global programmes to create a dedicated network on gender issues and we are proud to say that we have created the Network without any special dedicated financial resources. We try to leverage existing expertise from UN Women or other organizations specializing in gender issues, for training and knowledge products.

**Gender Bulletin: In 2020, the CCP Women’s Network celebrated its 5th anniversary. What are some of its greatest achievements?**

**Anne Linn Jensen:** We have been collecting sex-disaggregated data since the beginning to monitor the overall gender representation in all units, as well as the number of female unit leaders. Since 2015, the global average of female unit officers has increased from 11% to almost 16%. However, we still have a long way to go. In 2015, we had 32 operational countries and now we have over 60. Many units are male dominated, so we are pleased that the average has increased.

**Ricarda Amberg:** In 2019, to mark the 15th anniversary of CCP, we launched the ‘Champions for Change’ award to recognize individuals who champion gender and make a difference in this regard. It is important to showcase people who are doing good work and who can foster a dialogue on gender issues. It also acts as a promotional tool, highlighting CCP’s work on gender equality.

Finally, I am also proud of the Network’s quarterly newsletter. Every newsletter features an interview with a woman/role model/mentor within CCP. This has been really important to the network as the women who read it may think “Wow, I want to do more”. It is an effective tool to communicate what we are about.

**Gender Bulletin: What is the Network hoping to achieve over the next 5 years?**

**Anne Linn Jensen:** Sometimes we see that women only come so far and are not promoted, so one of the things we have been working on is a professional career development programme for female officers. We are excited to now have a donor on board who is developing this jointly with us. Hopefully we can offer this in the near future.

**Ricarda Amberg:** Once the results of the gender and diversity survey are known, we will be able to develop a plan for going forward. The survey was part of the fifth anniversary campaign and was available in 5 languages. I am hopeful that this will allow us to take the CCP Women’s Network in a direction that represents the needs of the people we want to serve.

**Gender Bulletin: What advice to you have for colleagues who would like to start a similar initiative in their line of work?**

**Anne Linn Jensen:** Understand your context-

**Ricarda Amberg:** -and then just do it! You need to know who you are working with and what the local expectations are. It’s important to talk to people and grow any initiative organically, from the bottom up, rather than imposing something from the top down.

**Anne Linn Jensen:** It’s important to realize that this will be a long-term commitment, there is no quick fix.

**Ricarda Amberg:** Things are obviously easier if you have dedicated resources. Plan your network and try to raise dedicated funds for specific activities.

*The full interview and more information can be found [here](#)*
Aden (Yemen), 19 January 2021 — The Yemen Coast Guard (YCG) lost a significant part of their capacity and capability during the war that ravaged the country. Female officers, whose duties were no longer deemed as a priority for operations, were affected disproportionately in the aftermath. To reverse the trend, the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea sub-programme of UNODC’s Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP) is currently developing a project alongside YCG, to specifically support gender mainstreaming and re-prioritize the integration and empowerment of women in the service.

Colonel Noor Abdullah was the very first female officer from the YCG to participate in UNODC GMCP’s Maritime Law Enforcement (MLE) courses. She referred to UNODC’s push for increased female participation as a big step forward in empowering women in Yemen and transforming the sector.

Read the whole story here
Read more about UNODC's Global Maritime Crime Programme here

Vienna, 17 February 2021 — Measures to prevent and address human trafficking and migrant smuggling and support the people affected by these crimes, must respect human rights and promote gender equality. For this purpose, UNODC has developed a toolkit for mainstreaming human rights and gender equality into criminal justice interventions to address trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, in the framework of the Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT) - a joint initiative by the European Union and UNODC being implemented in partnership with the International Organization for Migration.

The Toolkit is a collection of tools providing practical step-by-step guidance to staff, practitioners, and interested partners on how to: understand, analyze and mainstream human rights and gender equality considerations into all aspects of their work. From planning interventions, to engaging in legislative assistance, policy development, carrying out investigations or prosecuting cases of trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling, and identifying and protecting the victims and migrants in vulnerable situations.

“We recognize that criminal justice responses alone cannot effectively combat trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. Therefore, we work with our national, regional and international partners, including the UN Migration Network and the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, to prevent and address these two crimes.”

John Brandolino
Director, Division of Treaty Affairs, UNODC

Read more about this subject here
Download the toolkit here
AI in Judiciaries: Gender Dimensions

Interview with Roberta Solis, Judicial Integrity Team Leader, and Melissa Evans, Consultant

Vienna, 5 February 2021 — The Global Judicial Integrity Network, as part of the Doha Declaration Global Programme, assists judiciaries across the globe in strengthening judicial integrity and preventing corruption in the justice sector. In 2020, the Global Judicial Integrity Network won an award for its project focusing on gender bias and discrimination in artificial intelligence (AI) systems used in judiciaries. The project is a continuation of the Network’s previous work on gender-related issues in the judiciary as well as their work on the ethical use of AI.

The Gender Bulletin sat down with Roberta Solis, the Judicial Integrity Team Leader, and Melissa Evans, a consultant in the team, to discuss their project and the role that gender plays in AI in judiciary processes.

Gender Bulletin: What was the “a-ha” moment when you realised the importance of promoting gender equality in your area of work?

Roberta Solis: As a lawyer, I have always known that female representation in the judiciary and in the legal profession has been and continues to be an issue. This is just the tip of the iceberg; it shows much deeper issues that have grave consequences, for example access to justice, the right to a fair trial, the right to be treated with equality and impartiality, and in some cases, even the right to basic civility in the treatment of the parties. So, it was very clear from day one of planning the Global Judicial Integrity Network that gender issues have to be at the forefront of our work. Once we also started to work on the use of AI in the global judiciaries and other emerging issues, it became clear that both issues should be connected and not looked at separately.

Melissa Evans: I think for me, I realized the importance in a UNHCR meeting on AI and data governance. They were talking a lot about the human rights implications of AI systems and it drove home how important it is and how it impacts human rights. AI programme development has to be pursued cautiously as unknown aspects may have very serious implications.

Gender Bulletin: When talking about Artificial Intelligence, one would not directly assume that gender-based discrimination plays a role. Why should gender be recognized in the use of AI? And more specifically, what role does it play in the use of AI in judiciary processes?

Roberta Solis: AI applications are built using data sets and find patterns to provide analysis and solutions. As a result, any AI application is only as good as the data it is built on. Gender-based discrimination, whether it is conscious or not, is a reality in every judiciary. The datasets that judiciaries use to develop the applications also reflect these historical biases.

“So, unless judiciaries are aware and recognize these historical biases, any AI application they develop would simply perpetuate or even deepen discrimination.”

This is not just true for gender but also for other forms of discrimination such as those based on race or poverty. If this is not addressed, then there could be grave consequences to using AI applications in the judiciary and any other sector. This is recognized in discussions worldwide on the ethical use of AI across industries and sectors. It is crucial to address this in the framework of justice systems because the freedom of persons, their equal access to justice and their
right to a fair trial could be deeply affected.

**Gender Bulletin: The framework that you are developing aims to ensure that AI systems do not replicate or deepen gender-related issues in judiciary processes. Could you give an example of the practical implications of the framework?**

**Roberta Solis:** We are seeing a shift to AI being used as a means of allocating cases to judges and to assigning priorities to cases when they reach the judiciary. When we consider cases of gender-based violence, which are naturally urgent cases, AI systems must be taught to correctly recognize and prioritize these cases in order to prevent any further physical harm to those involved. This could not only have a direct impact on the well-being of the women involved in the cases but also on the overall access to justice. If the cases are not treated in the right way, people may be discouraged from seeking judiciary protections. I think this is one of the strongest examples of how AI should be correctly developed to address the specific case needs.

Another interesting example is that AI is being used to calculate the recidivism risk of prisoners to determine their release. Again, biased case data can come into play here. We also have to question whether issues predominantly faced by women, for example women being single mothers, are being factored into the AI recidivism calculation. This is impacted by how the data is collected and stored. If for example, a judiciary is developing applications that perform these calculations based only on data related to the male prisoner population, there won’t be specific considerations about the needs of female prisoners.

The framework that we are developing will map out all the potential instances in which AI could be used by judiciaries and then try to identify the potential risks and considerations related to gender. This will have real practical implications on how it will be used for judiciaries.

**Melissa Evans:** Another example worth mentioning relates to the use of predictive AI, where the AI system gives the judge a suggested outcome for the case based upon historical case data.

As Roberta mentioned, if the case data is biased then the outcome is also going to be biased.

“For instance, in cases of violence against women, if women in similar cases aren’t seen as credible witnesses for biased reasons, then that bias would carry over into the outcome of the AI system.”

**Melissa Evans**
Consultant at the UNODC

I think even in these kind of predictive justice applications the gender bias could also be perpetuated.

*The full interview can be found [here](#)*

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The Global Judicial Integrity Network is currently welcoming inputs from colleagues who have an interest and expertise in this subject matter to further strengthen the framework.

Please [contact Roberta Solis at Roberta.solis@un.org](mailto:Roberta.solis@un.org) for more information.
Practical Gender Mainstreaming Workshops for Programme Teams

Tailor-made workshop provided by the Gender Team

Vienna, 2021 — Gender dimensions are a pivotal but often underestimated factor in the work in UNODC mandated areas. Recognizing that integrating gender aspects can be challenging, the UNOV/UNODC Gender Team conducts tailor-made workshops for programme teams at HQ and field offices on how to integrate gender aspects in their everyday work.

The workshops focus on gender mainstreaming in the work of the team/office being trained, and in technical assistance activities in projects being developed and implemented by UNODC and partners. The participants practice how to perform a gender analysis and develop expertise to include gender issues within the scope of UNODC projects and programmes.

The interactive online workshops are facilitated by Hanna Sands (Programme Coordinator, Gender) and Marian Salema (Programme Officer, Gender).

Feedback & Examples from CONIG

Hadiza Abba, National Programme Officer – Human Rights and Gender, speaks about her experiences with the gender mainstreaming workshop conducted for the Country Office Nigeria (CONIG) in December 2020:

“The practical workshops on gender mainstreaming gave us much needed insight and brought about a radical shift in perspectives from the usual business where gender was given little consideration, to adopting a gender lens in designing and implementing programmes. As the workshop was hands-on and used our own project proposals as case studies, participants were able to identify gender aspects to include in their work and got familiar with UNODC gender mainstreaming tools and how to use them when developing, implementing and monitoring programmes.”

If you are interested in a practical workshop on gender mainstreaming for your team please contact the UNOV/UNODC Gender Team either via unov-unodc.gender@un.org, or by contacting Hanna Sands or Marian Salema directly.

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News

• Mexico, 29 January 2021 – The Liaison and Partnership Office in Mexico (LPOMEX) UNODC launches programme to counteract the challenges of the increase in violence against women and the elderly in Mexico. "Hand in Hand for your Safety" seeks to address this situation, especially in the context of the COVID-19. Link

• Vienna, 8 March 20201 – UNOV/UNODC Gender Team launches campaign on the occasion of the 2021 International Women’s Day. UN Women announced the 2021 theme as “Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world”. With a series of interviews, UNOV/UNODC is celebrating women throughout field offices and HQ who have shown leadership in advancing gender equality. Read the interviews here

Publications

• UN Women, UNODC, & International Association of Women Police (AWP) (January 2021). Handbook on Gender-Responsive Police Services for Gender-Responsive Police Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence. Link


• UNODC Justice Section (To be launched in March 2021). Study: The Impact of COVID-19 on Criminal Justice System Responses to Gender-Based Violence Against Women: A Global Review of Emerging Evidence.

Conferences & Events

• May-June 2021 – 2021 UNODC Gender Equality Forum: Unleashing the power of gender equality, the just way to combat organized crime, terrorism and corruption

From May-June 2021, the Gender Team will be organizing a series of seminars on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Women Peace and Security Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from a UNODC perspective. The series will gather experts from Member States, civil society, academia and the private sector to discuss the role of UNODC’s mandate in making the world safer from drugs, organized crime, corruption and terrorism. In this context, the seminars will identify gaps, challenges and areas of concern in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment. More information on the seminars will be made available on the UNODC gender page here in due course.
The Gender Bulletin is an electronic newsletter published by the UNOV/UNODC Gender Team in the Office of the Director-General/Executive Director informing UNOV/UNODC staff and Member States of relevant developments, events and news concerning gender equality and women’s empowerment at the Offices.

We appreciate your interest in gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you should have any questions or would like further information on the work of the Gender Team: unov-unodc.gender@un.org

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