UNOV/UNODC GENDER BULLETIN

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Newsletter of the Gender Team in the Office of the Director-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Office at Vienna/United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Colleagues,

We are happy to present to you Issue 5 of the UNOV/UNODC Gender Bulletin. This issue marks the end of the first UNOV/UNODC Strategy for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (2018-2021) and the commencement of its second iteration.

Ambassador Kitsell from the United Kingdom provides insight into her role as the co-chair of the ‘UNODC Group of Friends for Gender Equality’ and her motivations as an International Gender Champion. The Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section (HTMSS) has made great strides in integrating gender in their work; we spoke to Daya Hayakawa, Project Coordinator TIP and SOM, and Maria Biela Alonso, Project Officer STARSOM, to learn more. Additionally, Fariba Soltani, Chief of the HIV & AIDS Section, reflects on her extensive career in the UN system and the importance of integrating gender in projects combatting HIV and AIDS.

With the second iteration of the UNOV/UNODC Strategy for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (2022-2026) being launched next month, we would like to thank all staff and personnel for their continued efforts in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment in UNOV/UNODC. In this issue, we would like to especially highlight the winners of the 2021 UNOV/UNODC inaugural Gender Award.

Kind Regards,

Hanna Sands, Programme Coordinator (Gender)

UNODC ADVOCATES OF CHANGE

The Gender Team in conversation with Ambassador Corinne Kitsell (UK)

Vienna, March 2022 — Ambassador Corinne Kitsell joined the United Kingdom Mission in Vienna in October 2020. She has been a strong advocate for gender equality and women’s empowerment throughout her career and has been an International Gender Champion since 2021. Ambassador Kitsell and Ambassador Ruiz from Colombia have recently become the first chairs of the informal UNODC Group of Friends for Gender Equality and aim to strengthen gender mainstreaming efforts in UNODC.

In this interview, she talks about her motivations, her extensive career working on gender issues within the UK Foreign Ministry and her experience as the first co-chair of the Group of Friends for Gender Equality.

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

Ambassador Kitsell: I think that my "a-ha" moment probably came at the beginning of my career. When I was at school, I was part of a generation in the UK where there was the idea that you can do anything or be anything that you want regardless of gender. But when I first started my career in the Foreign Ministry there were almost no senior women and there were almost no female ambassadors. I realised that something definitely needed to be done.

When I was a very junior diplomat, I was lucky enough to be part of the UK delegation to the UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. I do not think I appreciated at the time how significant this moment was - I was in the room when Hilary Clinton gave her iconic speech! The conference
resulted in the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action and it seemed as if gender equality was sorted. It was a period, in the early 1990s after the end of the Cold War, when there was real optimism about multilateralism. Despite this, even though there have been lots of improvements for women worldwide, we have not made as much progress as we thought we would by now and there is still a lot more to do. I wanted to be an active part of that change. That is why I was keen to become an International Gender Champion when I arrived in Vienna and this of course led me to co-chair the Group of Friends for Gender Equality.

Gender Bulletin: You have had an extensive career working with international organizations and on foreign affairs. How do you believe the landscape and approaches to gender equality and women’s empowerment have developed, specifically in your country?

Ambassador Kitsell: I think there has been significant progress in the UK, especially if you look at it from a historical perspective going back to the suffragettes who fought for the right for women to vote in public elections in the UK more than a hundred years ago. Domestically, the most recent significant progress was in 2010 when the UK passed the Gender Equality Act. Under the Act, we in the UK are legally obliged to consider gender equality in all the programming that we do. This includes our multilateral programme work in organisations, including UNODC. Certainly, for the UK Foreign Ministry, gender equality and the empowerment of women is mainstreamed throughout all our work. In the UK Cabinet Office, we have the Government Equalities Office who led the work on implementing and monitoring the Gender Equality Act, including our international commitments on gender equality and women’s empowerment.

In the UK, the frameworks for mainstreaming gender are in place but there is still a long way to go. Just to give an example, in the UK there is the commitment to eliminate gender pay disparities and there is now the legal requirement for all organisations that have over 250 employees to publish data every year on their gender pay gap. The data has shown that there is still more to do domestically. For example, in the UK, like in other countries, there are more women studying law at university than men. Despite this, many women leave the criminal justice system in their 30s to start a family. That being said, we have a good paternity provision and maternity leave, so the formal processes are there. The challenge continues to be the softer stuff, such as stereotypes. There are still things to be done but we also recognise that we are doing well.

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United Kingdom
Ambassador Kitsell: Female ambassadors were very unusual, and the few that did exist were mostly single. They had to dedicate themselves to their careers. I remember finding out that it was only in the year 2000 that there was the first female British ambassador who had children. I remember being shocked by that. Our previous Permanent Secretary was very committed to tackling this. He created something called the ‘mirror challenge’ in our Foreign Ministry headquarters in London. This is a display of the 25 most senior jobs in our organisation including ambassadors in places like Washington, Paris, Tokyo, the UN in New York and the most senior jobs in London. When the job has been done by a woman there is a picture of the woman on the wall and where no woman has ever filled that position there is a mirror. The idea is for younger members of the foreign service to look at the pictures and to look at themselves in the mirror to envision themselves in a senior position in the future.

We have made progress and have reached a point where all of our ambassadors in the G7 countries are women. We have female ambassadors in Paris, Berlin, Rome, Ottawa, Washington, the UN in New York, Tokyo and Beijing. I think the percentage of female ambassadors has not yet reached 50% but it has gone from almost nothing to roughly 40% in the space of 20 years.

Gender Bulletin: Have the discussions changed with the increased representation of female ambassadors?

Ambassador Kitsell: In the mid 1990s, when I first worked at the UK Mission to the UN in New York, all the senior people were men and there was more of a macho approach to negotiations. I think that having women in the room brings a different perspective. I am sure it was very difficult for the first women when they were alone in the negotiations. It also happens to be the case that the current UN ambassadors in Vienna for China, Russia, France, Germany, Italy and Canada are all men, so you find yourself in male dominated meetings, but I have never had a problem with that.

Gender Bulletin: You have now been the co-chair for the Group of Friends for Gender Equality for nearly half a year. What inspired you to co-chair the group and what do you hope to achieve?

Ambassador Kitsell: From a personal perspective as an International Gender Champion, I think it is very important to look for practical actions to integrate gender. But there are also a growing number of Member States who have ideas and objectives to bring a gender perspective into the work that we do at UNODC. However, we had no means to coordinate this. There was a need to create an informal group to coordinate these activities.

It was important to us that it wasn’t just the UK chairing the Group, so we are very pleased that Ambassador Ruiz, a male ambassador, was keen to join as well. It has given us an opportunity to bring people together and to encourage a chorus of voices of many countries and diverse range of regions. We are hoping that the membership of the Group continues to grow, and we are starting to consider how we can bring in voices from civil society organisations and NGOs. There is a lot that we can do and there is a limited amount of time, so we do not want to get carried away. Ambassador Ruiz and I have worked hard to create something, get it going and for it to be in a good position to pass on to the next set of co-chairs to take it forward.

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Read the full interview here.
Vienna, April 2022 — UNOV/UNODC have launched this initiative, recognising outstanding efforts of personnel towards promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Offices. After a shortlist had been selected by a high-level independent jury, the five winners here selected by 522 votes of all staff. The Executive Director presented the certificates in two categories (‘Promoting an enabling working environment in UNOV/UNODC’ and ‘Strengthening gender inclusivity in UNODC mandate areas’) on 25 April 2022.

**“Early Career Initiative for Women at UNOV/UNODC”**
Staffing, Diversity and Outreach Section (SDOS) of Human Resources Management Section (HRMS)

From September to December 2021, 45 women from headquarters and the field offices attended a virtual programme aiming to actively reflect upon and develop their individual career paths in the organizations. Thanks to mentoring sessions with senior female partners and the coaching sessions offered by the Talent Development Team of HRMS, the participants were provided with support, knowledge and a new network of peers and seniors to empower them in their career progression.

**“A Gender Empowering Workplace”**
UN Vienna Safety and Security Services (SSS)

The UNOV SSS management has been actively promoting an enabling environment in their workforce. They have carried out a range of gender-sensitive activities to empower female officers, these included trainings on women’s inclusion in the security sector and coaching opportunities for officers. They have successfully closed the once evident gender gap in the UN Vienna SSS.

Read more about the initiative [here](#)

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HIGHLIGHTS
**“Promoting Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment through the Container Control Programme’s (CCP) Women’s Professional Development Programme”**

CCP Women’s Network Team

The CCP Women’s Network worked together with the Australian Border Force and the RMIT University Melbourne to create the CCP Women’s Professional Development Programme. The aim of the programme was to help foster a more balanced representation of female officers in law enforcement. 58 officers from eleven countries have successfully graduated from the programme.

Read more about the project [here](#).

**“Including Gender in Research on Drugs for Public Action”**

Illicit Crop Monitoring Programme (ICMP), Colombia

For the past five years, the Territorial Studies Team of ICMP has carried out a series of investigations on the participation of women in the production of illicit crops in Colombia. Their research provided notable information on the role of women in the illicit and care economies and facilitated dialogue between experts and the communities. Today, this research is being utilized to promote the design of programmes on reintegrating female prisoners and is driving legislative discussion on the criminal policy framework for women.

Read more about the project [here](#).

**“Why not me? Encouraging Women’s Participation in Security and Justice in the Sahel”**

Sahel Programme Team

The Sahel Programme Team launched a communication campaign, “Why Not Me?”, to support the recruitment of women and gender-sensitive criminal justice responses within the G5 Sahel countries. Through an innovative approach using new technologies and edutainment strategies, “Why Not Me?” aimed at deconstructing gender stereotypes, rethinking the perceptions of the security and justice sectors as male-only, and ultimately promoting social cohesion and peace in the region.

Read more about the project [here](#).
UNODC Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section

Gender in the work of Human trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section (HTMSS)

Vienna, April 2022 — Gender helps us understand how and why crimes are committed the way that they are. Through carrying out a gender analysis we can understand the relationships, the needs and barriers that exist for victims and the modus operandi used by perpetrators. This is no different in the work that UNODC carries out in addressing trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants.

To gain a deeper understanding into the capacity development work carried out by the HTMSS, the Gender Team spoke to Daya Hayakawa, Project Coordinator, Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants from the Liaison and Partnership Office, Brazil, as well as Maria Biela Alonso, STARSOM (Strengthening Trans-regional Action and Responses against the Smuggling of Migrants) Project Officer, UNODC Costa Rica.

Daya Hayakawa
Project Coordinator, LPO in Brazil

Gender Bulletin: Why is gender equality and women's empowerment relevant to drug trafficking, especially in your area of work? How do you tackle these issues in your programme?

Daya Hayakawa: According to the last Global Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report 2020, women and girls continue to be the main victims of trafficking in persons. In 2018, for every 10 victims detected globally, roughly five were adult women and two were girls. This is a large prevalence from a gender perspective. Also, an increase in human trafficking cases with the purpose of exploitation for criminal activities was reported. This entails recruiting and exploiting persons to commit crimes for the monetary benefit of traffickers, including forcing a person, often children, to grow, transport, traffic or sell drugs.

UNODC, with the support of the Government of Sweden, conducted a study in Brazil on possible TIP victims who were exploited for the transport of drugs. One interesting finding is that 74% of “drug mules” were women. Therefore, understanding the links between the exploitation of TIP victims and the transport of drugs is crucial to better tailor policies in these areas, and to seek a more effective criminal justice response, benefiting both women and girls.

Gender Bulletin: In the UNODC mandated areas of work, the way gender influences certain thematic areas is not always evident. Can you elaborate on less obvious gender dimensions in your area of work?

Daya Hayakawa: The National TIP Report (2017-2020) published by UNODC in partnership with the Brazilian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, suggests that most TIP victims of sexual exploitation are women and girls, whilst men are mainly trafficked for labor exploitation purposes. This information is in line with global trends, as 67% of TIP victims for forced labor are men. However, it should be cautiously assessed, as women and girls are subject to abusive and exploitative situations which are culturally invisible and/or deemed acceptable.

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This concern is evident through data, with only 5% of the total workers rescued in Brazil between 2003 and 2018 being women. That is an incredibly low figure considering that today women constitute most of the workforce in the country.

**Gender Bulletin: How does gender mainstreaming improve the operational effectiveness of your programme? What are the challenges?**

**Daya Hayakawa:** We mainstream gender within our projects in many ways. From an institutional perspective, we make sure to hire female staff and consultants to achieve gender parity at the workplace. Additionally, whenever we organize a seminar or a training, we make sure to invite female panelists and trainers. This is very important for representation purposes and for engagement—sometimes examples and experiences brought by female panelists and trainers will resonate in different ways among the audience.

Content-wise, we make sure to mainstream gender in our studies, reports, modules and trainings on specific topics related to women, girls and LGBTQI+ individuals. More specifically, on the above-mentioned study on TIP victims who are exploited for the transport of drugs, gender-sensitive responses within the criminal justice system will be improved through providing a better understanding of this complex issue to the professionals. However, there continues to be a challenge in reaching as many institutions and actors as possible to raise awareness.

**Maria Biela Alonso**

**Gender Bulletin: How and why is gender equality and women’s empowerment relevant to your area of work?**

**Maria Biela Alonso:** Are human rights relevant to our work? There is no doubt about it. Gender equality is relevant to everyone. Without understanding gender, we cannot understand the bigger picture. Men and women have different experiences in the irregular migration processes, when being smuggled and in trafficking. They migrate for different reasons, have different experiences during transit, have different security needs, and are treated differently on arrival in their destination country. If we do not consider this throughout our work, we cannot understand and effectively tackle trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants.

My area of expertise is migration and policing. Gender mainstreaming is vital here. I have found that if police do not recognize the gendered nature of trafficking in persons or smuggling of migrants, they are less likely to identify female victims of trafficking or perpetrators and they cannot record them. This means that the necessary sex-disaggregated data and trends are not recognized to inform trends, security needs, policies and programmes. As a result, even though trafficked women cross borders every day, they remain invisible. The same may occur with the smuggling of migrants, their experiences of inhumane treatment and sexual abuses remain unreported and unseen.

Policewomen, no matter the region, experience the ‘glass ceiling’. I led a training for legal advisors of high directorates and in this training only two women were nominated, compared to the ten men in attendance. During capacity building activities, men make up the majority of those in decision-making positions, meaning that women’s skills and opinions are often less
visible. This hinders women from bringing innovative methods to their work. However, the problem is, when you try to design initiatives to address this, such as trainings specifically for policewomen, there are questions of why men are being excluded.

Personally, it was a difficult realisation that men and women, especially those from minority groups, have different opportunities in law enforcement. This became evident to me a few years ago, when I collected testimonies from black female police officers and they told me about their experiences of being deployed in harder areas, compared to their white counterparts (both male and female). They explained that they were seen as ‘tougher’ than their colleagues and that set the path for their professional career.

**Gender Bulletin: In UNODC mandate areas of work, the way gender influences certain thematic areas is not always evident and women are often reduced to victims. Can you elaborate further on this?**

**Maria Biela Alonso:** We need to start by not viewing women as passive actors and to instead recognise their agency in the migration process. Women are not simply objects of a crime or victims. Associating gender with only women and their vulnerabilities prevents us from recognizing the control that women do have. For example, we need to understand why women chose to migrate. We should not view women as vulnerable but understand vulnerabilities as the conditions in which women act in. Victim assessments are key to implementing a human rights-based approach and to ensure that victims of trafficking are fairly prosecuted, even if they participate in crimes.

Over the last 50 years there has been an effort to incorporate gender into theories of international migration, however the role that men and women play in the assessment of crime is not always evident. The assessments of crime often fail to adequately address the conditions in which women migrate or are smuggled, the roles and activities of women in law enforcement, the identification of crimes and the awareness of the senior roles women play in organized crime.

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To answer these questions, we need to apply feminist perspectives, which may challenge more orthodox views on the issue.

I also think it is important to highlight, that when I have worked with smuggled or trafficked men and women in refugee camps, I have seen resilience, strength, courage and compassion, beyond the vulnerable conditions of their journey.

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*Read the full interviews [here](#)*
IN THE SPOTLIGHT: GENDER STRATEGY FOCAL POINT

Leave No One Behind: Integrating a Gender Perspective in HIV Prevention and Treatment
In conversation with Fariba Soltani, Chief HIV/AIDS Section & Global Coordinator for HIV/AIDS

Vienna, March 2022 – HIV/AIDS is a key issue under the mandate of UNODC, as persons who use drugs are disproportionately affected by blood-borne infectious diseases. UNODC works closely with governments and civil society organisations (CSOs) to provide HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support for persons who use drugs and for persons in prisons for drug-related offences. However, HIV/AIDS is as much of a public health issue as a gender issue, in that women often suffer more from stigmatisation and inequality.

To shed light on the gender perspective in UNODC’s work related to HIV/AIDS, the Gender Team met with Fariba Soltani, Chief of the UNODC HIV/AIDS Section and Global Coordinator on HIV/AIDS-related topics for UNODC within the UNAIDS family, to discuss her work and experiences.

Gender Bulletin: When did you first become aware of the importance of gender equality?
Did you experience an “a-ha” moment? How has it impacted your professional life?

Fariba Soltani: There was never a single, particular moment when I realised that gender mattered - as an Iranian woman, gender considerations have had prominent impacts on me all throughout my life. When I started my career at the Tehran University of Medical Sciences, as a young woman lecturer, there were many issues related to my gender that I had to deal with, so achieving gender equality became an integral part of my being.

When we talk about gender equality, I know it is more than just women’s empowerment, and what I realised throughout my career is that we need to continue putting women’s empowerment at the centre of our work. A lot more needs to be done if we want to achieve equality and equity between women and men.

Twenty-two years ago, I joined UNODC working on drug demand reduction focusing on the health and social consequences for persons who use drugs in Iran. In addressing the health needs of these persons, through field visits and meeting with this community, I realised that women who use drugs face much stronger stigma, discrimination, and gender-based barriers to accessing services. So, this might be the closest to an “a-ha” moment for me. Only when understanding female drug users’ reality can we work towards reducing the discrimination and stigma, thereby expanding their access to services.

In addition to the work that I am doing on women who use drugs, I was also the focal point for UNODC on staff awareness-raising and training on HIV. The Vienna Based Organisations started this training programme for all staff in 2005. The purpose of the training was to raise awareness among UN staff on how to protect themselves and their families from HIV. We realized that we need to do specific sessions for women as it is easier

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Fariba Soltani
Chief, HIV/AIDS Section & Global Coordinator for HIV/AIDS
for women to discuss issues that are specific to them in a women-only group with women facilitators. All this work combined is what I mean when I say it was not a specific ‘a-ha’ moment, but it has been with me all throughout my career.

Gender Bulletin: What has a gender analysis uncovered in your programming and what have the challenges been?

Fariba Soltani: When I visited prisons in different countries, I noticed that the situation for women in prisons was much worse than that for men. There are fewer women prisoners than men and therefore fewer women’s prisons. In many countries, not only was the infrastructure appalling but the women's prisons were often located very far from the residence of the women prisoners, resulting in more isolation and separation from their families and support networks.

These women are such a vulnerable population; they are under-served, sometimes even forgotten, even in countries where there are programmes specifically for women and for HIV. They do not include women-specific components for women who use drugs or women in prisons. In times when we, as the lead agency addressing HIV among people who use drugs and people in prisons, do raise it, we get the response that “oh, we didn't even think about this group of women.” You see, it is a very, very difficult situation for this vulnerable population who have been particularly left behind.

It is also important to understand that women are at a higher risk of contracting HIV than men. This made me realise that we really need to have a much stronger programme for women who use drugs which takes all these aspects into account. Ever since then, this has been a part of our work on the health portfolio of drug users and HIV prevention. In our programmes, we must ensure women's personal safety and confidentiality and provide sexual and reproductive health services, including prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV services, and childcare.

Recognising that women use drugs is the first step to developing specific programmes that are tailor-made to their needs. For example, some years back we started the first HIV prevention programme in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Nepal specifically for women who use drugs and women in prisons. At the time, the women in Afghanistan could not leave the house without a 'Mahram' i.e., a father, brother, son, or a male relative. The number of people who use drugs in Afghanistan is very high, especially for women because it is their coping mechanism. To make sure our programme actions actually reach them, we had to recruit female outreach workers as well as their 'Mahram' to enable visits to women in their houses. Depending on different countries, different means, and cultural situations, we have to take all these factors into consideration when tailoring the programmes within this context. It has proven to be of benefit for the women, as well as their families and communities as a whole.

Read the full interview here
**News**

- **Launch of the Second Online Course on Crime Statistics from a Gender Perspective**
  In collaboration with the United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, the UNODC KOSTAT Centre of Excellence for Statistics on Crime and Criminal Justice in Asia and Pacific launched a four-module course to highlight the need for mainstreaming gender into crime statistics. This self-administered interactive training touches upon data collection of gender issues in crime and the use of 'R' to compute SDG indicators. Read more about it [here](#).

**New Publications**

- **UNODC, Charting a Path for Gender Efforts - Insights and recommendations from a desk review and the 2021 Gender Equality Forum (2022)**
  In June 2021, UNODC organised the Gender Equality Forum to discuss the gender dimensions of organised crime, corruption and criminal justice responses to gender-based violence. One of the main outputs of the event was an outcome document setting out key recommendations for furthering gender mainstreaming efforts in UNODC’s mandated areas. ([English](#))

- **UNODC, Handbook: Framework to measure and report on gender-related SDG results (2022)**
  Improving efforts to measure the progress and comparison of gender equality linked to normative, research and technical assistance support provided by UNODC, ensures the better usage of resources, both financial and human and improves the monitoring and reporting of a programme. ([English](#))

- **UNODC, Women in the cocaine supply chain, Cocaine Insights 3, 2022**
  The publication, developed in the framework of the CRIMJUST programme in cooperation with partners and stakeholders at national, regional and international levels, delivers latest knowledge and trends on issues related to cocaine markets in accessible and informative format. ([English](#))

**Conferences and Events**

- **15 June 2022, Launch of the second iteration of the UNOV/UNODC Strategy for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (2022-2026)**
  In this hybrid high-level event, the second iteration of the UNOV/UNODC Gender Strategy will be launched and the role of gender in UNODC’s thematic areas will be explored through conversation between the panelists. More information will follow soon. Pre-register here: [LINK](#).
The Gender Bulletin is an electronic newsletter published by the UNOV/UNODC Gender Team at 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:

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