

Women's Network Newsletter



Did you know?

Women on the web

Online training is an invaluable tool for women's empowerment. Several factors, such as increased computer literacy, enhanced motivation for learning and competing family responsibilities, have driven women to opt for online learning. In turn, women tend to outperform their male peers in these trainings. Not least because the online modality, perceived as less intimidating and more accessible, allows women to gain confidence in their knowledge and engage more in discussions with their colleagues and counterparts.

Since March 2020, when CCP began delivering online training as a way to adjust to COVID-19 restrictions, the Programme has noticed a similar trend. Of the online trainings organized in 2020, up to 27% of the participants were women officers. This shows a significant increase compared to CCP's historical face-to-face women's participation data of 13%, 16% and 17% in 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively.



Source: Unsplash

Shaping the leaders of tomorrow

CCP kicked off 2021 with the delivery of an online Train-the-Trainers workshop for experts from PCUs in South and Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Eight women and eleven men participated in the training. CCP is committed to empowering women PCU/ACCU officers and supporting their career advancement goals by enhancing their leadership and management skills.

*This workshop was funded by the Government of Japan, and supported by the Australian Border Force (ABF).

8 March - International Women's Day 2021

International Women's Day is right around the corner with UN Women's chosen theme, "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world".



Source: UN Women

Much has been said about the differential impact of the pandemic on women across the world. Measures to combat the crisis, including curfews, confinements and school closures have placed a disproportionate burden on women—one that is especially acute for those working on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. Women all over the world are at the helm of institutions carrying out effective and inclusive COVID-19 responses, from the highest levels of decision-making to frontline service delivery. Women leaders' contributions have been central to this global effort, but their dedication is rarely recognized and rewarded.

With this in mind, the Container Control Programme joins UN Women on 8 March in celebrating the work of women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. As we aim to "build it back better" we need to heighten our efforts to fight against pre-existing and new social constraints that hinder women's participation and leadership. Let's commit to supporting women by opening access to the decision-making processes that will ultimately determine their future.

Every response matters! - CCP Gender and Diversity Survey

If you haven't yet participated in our Survey, there is still time!
The Survey will remain open until 31 March 2021. We appreciate your support!

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Meet the women of CCP - Akosita Valamalua

Akosita Valamalua is Principal Customs Officer at the Port Control Unit in Suva, Fiji.

CCP: How did you become involved in CCP as a Port Control Unit (PCU) officer?

AV: In my earlier days in Customs, I was part of the Manifest Screening Team, where I gained many of the skills I would later apply in my work at CCP. I worked through the ranks and served in various departments of Customs Service, at seaports and airports and in other cargo-controlled areas. This experience and the passion that I have for Customs enforcement work allowed me to see how I could contribute to the CCP and other Customs border units.

CCP: What do you think is the importance of PCU Suva being the first CCP Unit in the Pacific?

AV: This personal and professional achievement must be attributed to the Unit's efforts. I am very pleased to be part of this team, which is providing border security assurance to Fiji and the Pacific region. The PCU in Suva plays a crucial role in ensuring that risks associated with transshipped goods are mitigated. Fiji is a hub for all maritime cargo movements in the South Pacific. The PCU will support the rest of the Pacific by sharing targets and high-risk cargo information with a coordinated

border management approach and the intent to revamp maritime security in the region.

CCP: Are there any specific challenges you think women in law enforcement face?

AV: Career opportunities always come with their own set of challenges, and Customs enforcement duties are no exception. Work-life balance is crucial, and as a woman, it's important to strike a balance between managing expectations and meeting these challenges and achieving deliverables. Our cultural barriers and traditional norms have led us to give men more power instead of demanding equal standing, especially in decision-making processes. The Fiji Revenue and Customs Service strives to uphold good values and recognizes women in leadership roles, and I am very proud to be able to serve by overcoming the cultural and traditional barriers that still exist in most developing countries.

CCP: What can be done to better support and promote women in Customs?

AV: Firstly, I believe formulating an Affirmative Action Policy will ensure a gender balance at recruitment, training, rotations and in decision-making platforms. Secondly, providing motivational speakers and mentors where women are guided towards achieving their individual goals; and thirdly, recognizing women officers' efforts and contributions through a remuneration and award system.

CCP: Why do you think it is important for CCP to support the role of women in its Units?

AV: Working in CCP Units offers women great opportunities in terms of capacity development and international exposure. It allows women to positively contribute towards the prevention of cross-border movement of illicit goods. Likewise, certain attributes women possess, like being detail-oriented, having the ability to multi-task and possessing good communication skills, add value towards achieving the mission of the CCP.

CCP: What advice do you have for other women in the Customs and law enforcement professions?

AV: The law enforcement field is exciting but challenging. Know your potential, set clear goals, strive towards them and more importantly, believe in yourself. For women in or aspiring to join CCP Units, remember to be faithful to the little things you do and remain humble. I salute those women who have started this journey in CCP, and I am honored to be part of a greater network of women that enables us to grow beyond our limits.

* The Port Control Unit in Suva was established with the support of the Government of Australia.

Women Standing Out Online

Public speaking can be a delicate situation, a factor that remote platforms can exacerbate for those who have the option of working online. Various aspects can influence one's ability to contribute and drive the conversation, especially for women who historically face greater adversity. A recent study found that "1 in 5 women has recently felt ignored and overlooked by co-workers during video calls, and 1 in 5 working people have witnessed more discrimination at work since the outbreak of Covid-19" (Catalyst, 2020). If this is a situation that you encounter, there are tips you can try to better support yourself and your team. The first is to implement guidelines for your remote communications, such as the meeting leader muting participants until raising their hands to speak or going in alphabetical order to provide input.

If you struggle with contributing during a call, make a game plan before meeting with questions and comments you may foresee. Having cues can make all the difference in preparedness and confidence. During the call itself, there are ways to solidify your presentation and collaboration. Firstly, approaching the meeting the same way that you would a physical one. If home-working, continuing to wear work attire may encourage your typical work dynamic. Additionally, just as eye contact is key in any in-person meeting, the same applies to a virtual conversation. Try not to stare at your lap or scan through emails and look directly at the camera while you're on video; this way, your colleagues will feel sure that you are engaged with them.



Source: Unsplash