



World Customs Organization (WCO)

Gender Sensitive and Inclusive communication

WCO Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool (GEOAT)

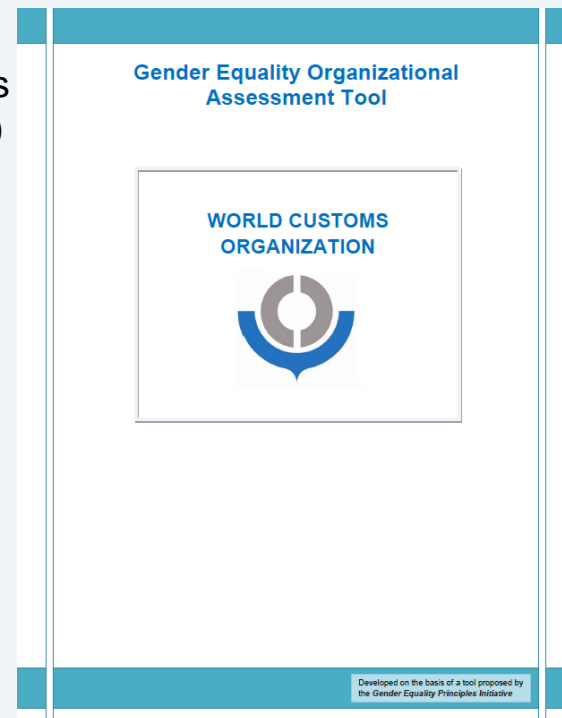
- A self-assessment tool, launched in 2013, that assists Customs Administrations to assess their current policies, practices and activities to address gender equality issues **internally** (within the organization) and **externally** (towards the public).

Includes 5 principles:

- Employment & Compensation,
- Work-life balance & Career Development,
- Health, Safety & Freedom of violence,
- Governance & Leadership,
- Customs Administrations & Stakeholder Relations

Updates from 2019:

- Definitions of gender related concepts;
 - A chapter on how to implement gender mainstreaming through project management,
 - New cross-cutting indicators which must be considered on transversal basis, revisions of the language
- **Cross cutting indicator 10** – highlights the importance of explicitly mentioning Gender Equality & Diversity in the Communication Strategy and the importance of using a gender inclusive language



Gender sensitive and inclusive language

Gender inclusive language:

- **Definition:** Speaking and writing in a way that does not discriminate against a particular sex, social gender or gender identity, and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes.
- Given the key role of language in shaping cultural and social attitudes, using gender-inclusive language is a powerful way to promote gender equality and eradicate gender bias.
- (United Nations – Gender Inclusive language Guidelines)

Gender sensitive language:

- **Definition:** Realization of gender equality in written and spoken language attained when women and men and those who do not conform to the binary gender system, are made visible and addressed in language as persons of equal value, dignity, integrity and respect. (European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) Toolkit on Gender sensitive Communication)

Gender discriminatory and Gender neutral language:

Gender-discriminatory language:

- “Directors and their wives are invited to attend the ceremony.” (*Better to say: “Directors and their respective partners are invited to attend the ceremony.”*)
- “Men just don’t understand.”
- “I’ll get one of the girls from my office to help me.”

Gender-neutral language:

- This is not gender-specific and considers people in general, with no reference to women or men. It is also called “gender-blind language”.
 - “*Customs Officer*”
- The neutral terms often takes the **male perspective as a norm**, and needs and diverging interests of women/girls and men/boys can be missed out.
- **Gender neutral language:** “*Customs are responsible for the safety of employees.*”
- **Gender neutral language:** “*Representatives from the private sector will be invited to the stakeholder engagement meeting*”.
- *Giving visibility to gender* is an important way for public policy to positively affect all members of society even if the gender perspective may not immediately be obvious.

When to use Gender-neutral or gender-sensitive language?

- *Decide on a case-by-case basis.*
- *Will mentioning gender clarify key aspects of the issue you are discussing?*
- *Are you referring to people in general or a specific group?*
- **Masculine and Feminine forms:**
- *Many languages including Latin languages such as French and Spanish include masculine and feminine forms, while the male term normally is the norm and the male form in plural is the plural form for both women and men.*
- *It is important to explicitly include both the feminine and the masculine forms to be inclusive.*

Examples:

French: Douanier(s) m (pl)
Douaniere(s) f (pl)

Spanish: Funcionario/Inspector de aduanas (s) m (pl)
Funcionaria/Inspectora de aduanas (s) f (pl)

Gender Biased Language	Gender sensitive language
Manpower	Workforce, labor force, workers
Mankind	Humanity, human beings, people
Man-made	Of human origin
Gentleman's Agreement	Honorable agreement
Salesman/Saleswoman	Sales person/ sales representative
Policeman	Police Officer
Career woman	Business person / Business executive
Male nurse	Nurse
Repairman	Repairer, technician
Mother tongue	Native/ First language
Congressman	Member of Congress
Spokesman	Spokesperson
Chairman	Chairperson / Chair
Miss / Mrs.	Ms.

Why using a gender-sensitive and inclusive language?

Using gender-sensitive language can:

- Make it easier to see **important differences** between the needs of women and men as well as avoiding omission;
 - Challenge **unconscious assumptions and stereotypes** people have about gender roles in society;
 - Raise awareness of how **language affects our behavior**;
 - Help creating a more **respectful work environment** by avoiding trivialization and subordination;
 - Lay the foundation for **greater gender equality** throughout society.
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- **Using inclusive language helps us to reflect on other things:**
 - *How do you include and refer to **minorities** in our country?*
 - *How do you refer to **persons with disability** ?*
 - *Better to use "A **person with disability** than **handicapped**"*
 - *Better to say that **someone has a condition or impairment** than that they "**suffer from**" which was a negative tone*

Avoiding stereotypical images

- Make sure that the images you use in your communication material do not reinforce gender stereotypes or power relations by including a wide mix of people in different environments.



Practical examples from WCO Members:

- **Australia:** Have adopted “Inclusive Writing guidelines” to inform staff on how to use inclusive language.
- Also part of a national public service network that plans to develop national guidelines on gender sensitive and inclusive communication.
- **Indonesia:** Are providing sign-language classes for staff as part of the Administrations GED partnership programme with stakeholders to be able to meet and serve clients/the public in sign language. The Administration has also developed a video on this initiative to raise awareness.

Language and gender

Use gender-inclusive language to avoid creating bias towards a particular sex or gender. For example, using the generic term **man** excludes other sex and gender diverse people and the use of **ladies and gentlemen**, reinforces gender stereotypes that may not be inclusive of some people in an audience.

It is important to use gender-inclusive job titles and roles that do not use gender-specific pronouns, such as **him/her, his/her or he/she**.

In general, if a person's sex or gender is unknown, do not to make assumptions.

For example:

√ business manager or business person

X business man or business woman

√ chairperson, chair or spokesperson

X chairman or chairwoman

Use gender-neutral titles when addressing your audience.

For further information:



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