

IOM GENDER EQUALITY POLICY (2024)

INTRODUCTION

The IOM Gender Equality Policy sets a common basis for IOM’s approach to achieving gender equality across all areas of its work. It also serves as a statement of IOM’s strong commitment to, and an indication of its capacity, role, and leadership in achieving gender equality internally, within the UN system, and in the context of migration.

The Policy sets a course for IOM to actively and effectively mainstream gender equality in its internal functioning and in migration policy and practice. This involves establishing a robust institutional setup that embodies the commitment to gender equality within the Organization, and which can deliver gender-responsive approaches that are inclusive of persons of all genders. This is particularly important against the backdrop of changing and increasingly challenging environments and circumstances faced by migrants.

RATIONALE

Gender shapes every dimension of migration, including its drivers and outcomes; risks and needs; resources and opportunities; and networks and channels. Existing gender inequalities that are rooted in gender roles, norms, expectations, responsibilities and power dynamics are often exacerbated in the context of migration. Failing to consider gender in migration governance and practice increases the risk of perpetuating and exacerbating gender inequalities, including gender-based violence.¹

Achieving gender equality requires actively addressing underlying structural barriers that entrench gender inequalities. It calls for both targeted and mainstream approaches to ensure meaningful inclusion of persons of all genders, as well as equitable approaches to provide the resources required to reach equal outcomes for persons of all genders. It also involves considering the intersection of different identities and characteristics as they relate to gender, including but not limited to sex, disability, race, ethnicity, age, and religion. Furthermore, it means safely, meaningfully and actively including and engaging persons of all genders, in all of their diversity, as agents of change.

It also requires practice of the principle of safety and do no harm, which promotes respect, protection and fulfilment of the rights of individuals and preservation of the safety, physical integrity, well-being and dignity of the persons whom IOM seeks to support. Careful attention will be paid to human rights-based, survivor-centered, protection sensitive, and community-based approaches, and awareness and consideration of any risks or safety concerns that might compromise the safety of individuals will be a primary consideration and sufficiently addressed and factored into all interventions and initiatives.

For IOM, this entails a whole-of-organization approach that responds to the emerging contexts and discourse on gender and migration, with consideration of the various contexts in which IOM operates. This

¹ See the [Institutional Framework for Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Crises](#)

includes ensuring that gender equality is core to IOM's organizational culture, is prioritized in decision-making at all levels and across all areas, and is mainstreamed into all planning and processes.

IOM's commitment to achieving gender equality in both management and operations has been implemented through several policies dating back to 1995.² In the context of these policies, achievements on gender equality include continuing progress toward gender balance in staffing; launching and implementing the IOM Gender Marker for project proposals; as well as developing a network of Gender Focal Points to support gender equality work globally. A number of frameworks and resources focused on the interlinkages between gender and migration were also developed to guide IOM's operational work.

Building on these achievements, this Policy serves as a high-level, outcome-focused guide for the work of IOM on gender equality, for both internal processes and its policy support and programming. It responds to recommendations from recent reviews and evaluations of IOM's work on gender equality,³ embodying an evidence-based, results-based and human rights-based approach. The Policy aligns with IOM's Strategic Plan (2024-2028) and Strategic Results Framework,⁴ which frame gender mainstreaming and achieving gender equality as a cross-cutting priority ('equality, diversity and inclusion') to achieve IOM's mandate, as well as meets inter-agency commitments on gender equality.⁵

Furthermore, implementation of the Policy contributes to meeting the goals and objectives set out in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action's 12 critical areas.⁶

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The implementation of this Policy is guided by the following principles in relation to achieving gender equality⁷:

- **Equality and non-discrimination:** all persons are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and entitled to their rights without distinction, including based on gender.
- **Equitable approaches:** with recognition that historical and social disadvantages continue to act as barriers to the full and equal enjoyment of rights, equity-based approaches that provide support and resources to ensure equal opportunity for people of all genders are required to create the circumstances in which gender equality can be achieved.
- **Diversity and intersectionality:** gender groups are not homogenous, and the intersection of gender with sex, disability, race, ethnicity, age, religious beliefs and other characteristics results in different experiences and different barriers to equality.

² IOM Council adopted the [Staff and programme policies on gender issues \(MC/1853\)](#) in 1995. The [IOM Gender Equality Policy \(2015-2019\)](#) was subsequently adopted and in place until the entry into force of this Policy.

³ [Review of the Implementation of Recommendations from the 2017 Evaluation of IOM Gender Equality Policy and Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network \(MOPAN\) Assessment'](#) conducted by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in September 2021

⁴ [IOM Strategic Plan 2024-2028](#)

⁵ Including the [United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment \(UN-SWAP\)](#).

⁶ [A/RES/73/195](#); [A/RES/70/1](#); [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#)

⁷ Informed by the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) articles 1 and 2; and the [Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#).

- **Representation and participation:** ensuring representation at all levels and meaningful participation of people of all genders in decision making are crucial to ensuring equal enjoyment of rights and empowerment.
- **Accountability and responsibility:** achieving gender equality is a collective responsibility that requires the engagement of and action by all individuals, regardless of gender. Moreover, IOM has a responsibility to be accountable to migrants and others in all areas of its work, to ensure a do no harm approach is always applied and to ensure safety, and to lead by example on gender equality both internally and among relevant partners and stakeholders.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

IOM sets out the following objectives to achieve gender equality:

1. Ensure consistent, adequate, and sustained financial investment in institutional structures, capacities, and processes to effectively mainstream gender equality. *To do so, IOM commits to:*
 - a. raising adequate resources to achieve gender equality, including for the objectives set out in this Policy;
 - b. ensuring that resource allocation and investment prioritise long-term impact and transformative change on gender equality;
 - c. regularly tracking and reporting on its investment in gender equality.

2. Prioritize and ensure accountability for gender mainstreaming at all levels of the Organization. *To do so, IOM commits to:*
 - a. ensuring that senior management champions gender equality and the empowerment of persons of all genders, both within IOM and with external stakeholders;
 - b. developing and implementing coordinated and coherent approaches to mainstreaming gender and achieving gender equality in strategic planning, implementation, risk management, monitoring, evaluation, learning and reporting, across all its operations and functions, and at global, regional, and country levels;
 - c. ensuring that senior management takes responsibility for mainstreaming gender equality and that all personnel, departments, and offices actively contribute to, are accountable for, and are recognized for their work to achieve gender equality;
 - d. ensuring accountability through regular reporting, both internally and externally, on progress of implementation of activities contributing towards gender equality, including this Policy, and on their results in relevant fora.

3. Create an enabling environment and build an organizational culture that is inclusive and empowering for persons of all genders. *To do so, IOM commits to:*
 - a. developing and applying organizational and personnel policies that actively contribute to achieving gender equality by ensuring a respectful, flexible, and safe working environment for persons of all genders;⁸
 - b. championing a workforce in which diversity is valued and in which people of all genders can bring their full selves to work;

⁸ Including but not limited to: IN/15; IN/90; IN/100; IN/204; IN/217; IN/234; IN/254; IN/256; IN/257; IN/258; IN/275.

- c. actively striving to reach and maintain balanced representation of all genders, at all levels;
 - d. applying an intersectional approach in its organizational culture and workforce, which recognizes and responds to how different and intersecting identity traits and characteristics (including gender, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, age, and others) can correspond to additional barriers to equality;
 - e. continually building capacity of all personnel on issues of diversity and inclusion, including through staff training across the Organization on building a culture that promotes gender equality and its linkages with sex, disability, race, ethnicity, and age inclusion in the workplace;
 - f. ensuring meaningful participation and amplification of voices of personnel of all genders, and taking into account feedback and reporting from personnel on gender equality in the workplace.
4. Deliver, monitor, evaluate and report gender-responsive results. *To do so, IOM commits to:*
- a. working toward systematic collection, analysis and reporting of results related to gender equality and empowerment of persons of all genders, including by establishing targets and indicators to reflect progress;
 - b. ensuring gender-inclusive monitoring and evaluation of all of activities, and applying learning to enhance results;
 - c. applying a gender lens to risk management assessment and audits, and conducting gender-specific risks management assessments and audits;⁹
 - d. promoting gender-responsive practices across supply chain processes.
5. Ensure quality and coherence of gender-inclusive approaches in all of IOM's work. *To do so, IOM commits to:*
- a. funding a robust and extensive institutional architecture to ensure quality, coherence and impact of activities contributing to gender equality;
 - b. developing and disseminating technical tools and capacity building materials on gender equality in migration contexts;
 - c. sensitizing all relevant stakeholders, including IOM personnel, partners and beneficiaries, to the importance and relevance of gender equality and intersectionality, and building their capacity to apply this in their work and life;
 - d. continually building capacity of all personnel on mainstreaming gender equality, including through tailored learning tools in different functional and thematic areas of work;
 - e. actively participating and leading on gender equality in its partnerships and engagements with partner organizations and stakeholders.
6. Strengthen the global evidence base on gender-related considerations of migration for all relevant stakeholders. *To do so, IOM commits to:*
- a. designing safe data ecosystems that are gender responsive and enable systematic data disaggregation and analysis by sex and gender identity and other key characteristics, as relevant and with consideration of doing no harm, defined purpose, and in full respect of data protection principles and other data responsibility principles;¹⁰

⁹ In line with IOM's Risk Management Framework and Policy, IN/213 Rev.1

¹⁰ [IN/138 – IOM Data Protection Principles](#); [IASC Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action](#).

- b. ensuring quality gender and diversity-responsive analysis of the data collected, and enhancing access to the results of this analysis within IOM and beyond, as relevant and with consideration of doing no harm, defined purpose, and in full respect of data protection principles and other data responsibility principles;¹¹
 - c. applying gender analysis to inform policy, strategy and programming.
7. Promote good migration governance in line with international standards, including gender-inclusive and -responsive approaches in policies, legal frameworks, strategies and decision-making, risk management, and support governments in developing and applying these at the global, regional, and national level. *To do so, IOM commits to:*
 - a. promoting development and implementation of evidence-based gender-responsive measures and policies with governments, partners and other relevant stakeholders;
 - b. building capacity of governments, partners, and other relevant stakeholders on gender-responsive migration governance;
 - c. promoting partnerships and working with diverse stakeholders, including grassroots organizations working with or led by migrants themselves, to ensure gender-inclusive and impactful results.
8. Feature persons of all genders in well-informed, balanced narratives on migration, with recognition of their human rights and contribution to humanitarian response, development, and peace. *To do so, IOM commits to:*
 - a. safely portraying persons of all genders as agents of change in diverse and varied contexts and circumstances;
 - b. actively consulting, involving, and reflecting persons of all genders in migration narratives in a safe and dignified manner;
 - c. ensuring knowledge products and materials are gender-inclusive and accessible to all, including through alternate versions and multilingual options.
9. Uphold and promote the human rights and dignity of persons of all genders, provide crisis-affected populations of all genders support, and reduce barriers to assistance and protection. *To do so, IOM commits to:*
 - a. applying gender-responsive approaches to ensuring basic needs and minimum living conditions are met;
 - b. taking into account gender in needs assessments and analysis for all humanitarian and assistance activities;
 - c. consulting key gender groups, in all of their diversity, at all stages.
10. Deliver gender-responsive humanitarian assistance and programming that is grounded in humanitarian principles and in line with transparency and accountability standards. *To do so, IOM commits to:*
 - a. applying gender-responsive approaches in planning of long-term impact of humanitarian response;
 - b. developing and delivering gender-responsive humanitarian assistance and programming that is supported by adequate and quality operational support, partnerships and coordination;

¹¹ [IN/138 – IOM Data Protection Principles](#); [IASC Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action](#).

- c. ensuring that humanitarian response, assistance and programming is accountable to people of all genders, and addresses barriers of access related to intersectionality.
11. Embed gender-responsive approaches to addressing drivers and structural factors to forced and irregular migration. *To do so, IOM commits to:*
 - a. ensuring efforts to address, adapt, and build resilience to crises, health emergencies, climate-related disasters and multi-hazard risks are gender responsive;
 - b. developing and implementing gender-responsive recovery and development strategies that seek to transform socio-economic, cultural, natural, environmental, and political inequalities related to gender;
 - c. addressing the gender-specific drivers and structural factors that contribute to labour migration, including through developing and implementing gender-responsive policies and programmes that enhance social protection for and promote the economic empowerment of migrants of all genders.
12. Empower people of all genders as agents of change, enabling them to contribute to sustainable development in their host and home communities, and create safe and secure living environments. *To do so, IOM commits to:*
 - a. actively engaging persons of all genders in needs assessment and planning, implementation and long-term sustainable building of recovery and rehabilitation initiatives.
 - b. promoting access to information related to migration pathways that is relevant, timely, accessible, and inclusive for persons of all genders;
 - c. ensuring the ability for migrants of all genders to make informed decisions and access support services across the migration continuum;
 - d. ensuring strategic inclusion of migrants, returnees and members of transnational communities (or diaspora) of all genders in the development and implementation of local and national sustainable development policies, action plans and initiatives.
13. Protect people of all genders from violence, exploitation, abuse, marginalization, security risks, crime, and violation of their human rights, and ensure access to rehabilitation, redress, and compensation in line with international law. *To do so, IOM commits to:*
 - a. using a gender lens to create approaches to reducing and mitigating risk factors related to violence, exploitation, and abuse, and setting gender-responsive objectives to protect and promote the rights of all migrants;
 - b. creating and promoting gender-inclusive needs assessments in peacebuilding, security sector reform, and community policing;
 - c. promoting equal access for persons of all genders to restitution and reparation mechanisms, and compensations and support.
14. Ensure meaningful inclusion of and support for migrants, displaced persons, transnational communities, and returnees of all genders in policy and processes for transition, recovery, and sustainable development, with consideration of their social cohesion and prosperity. *To do so, IOM commits to:*

- a. ensuring equitable access to essential services, including housing; health; education; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); energy; and social security, among others.
 - b. ensuring equitable access to sustainable livelihood and economic opportunities, including required education, training and resources;
 - c. promoting financial literacy and ensuring access to financial systems for persons of all genders;
 - d. empowering migrants, displaced persons, transnational communities and returnees as development actors, allowing them to contribute to sustainable development in their host and home communities;
 - e. ensuring local communities create inclusive environments to promote social cohesion and inclusion of migrants, displaced persons and returnees of all genders.
15. Ensure access for migrants of all genders to safe, orderly and regular inclusive pathways, as well as non-discriminatory resettlement, repatriation and reintegration solutions. *To do so, IOM commits to:*
- a. providing support for persons of all genders to return to their homes voluntarily, safely and in dignity, and addressing gender-related barriers to this;
 - b. facilitating access to legal identity solutions for persons of all genders, and providing support to comply with legal and administrative requirements in different contexts;
 - c. providing protection of persons of all genders from smuggling, trafficking, and transnational organized crime, and addressing gender-related challenges in these contexts;
 - d. promoting gender-responsive border management policies and programming, strategies and systems that are evidence-based and grounded in the protection, respect and promotion of human rights, dignity, safety and security;
 - e. identifying and referring migrants to gender-inclusive healthcare options along migration routes.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Policy is valid indefinitely from its entry into force, with a requirement for review, and consideration of update within five years.

Contributing to achieving gender equality is the responsibility of every individual working in IOM, and especially those in senior management positions. The implementation of the objectives and commitments outlined in this Policy are likewise the responsibility of IOM as a whole, with roles for all personnel, but also for specific units, divisions, and departments. Accountability for IOM adhering to this policy and achieving its objectives and commitments sits with the Director General and the Executive Office.

The Policy is implemented globally by all of IOM, including at headquarters, in regional and country offices, and in all other settings. At the headquarters level, recurring and time-bound implementation plans containing specific actions, targets and indicators will guide work of all departments, divisions and units on gender equality. For Regional and Country Offices and IOM presence in other settings, the Policy serves as a basis for specified and tailored strategies, actions and workplans on gender equality.

The Gender and Diversity Coordination Structure (comprising a steering committee, working group, and focal points at all levels, which are supported by the Gender and Diversity Coordination Unit) will facilitate

collaboration between all relevant parts of IOM in implementing this Policy and accompanying implementation plan(s).¹²

Implementation of the Policy will be monitored regularly through the Gender and Diversity Coordination Structure. The Policy will be evaluated at the time of its update, with interim reviews as relevant and required.

¹² Establishment of the Gender and Diversity Coordination Structure to be established with the adoption of the Policy.