

Guidance Note: ILO Gender Focal Points

The global ILO Gender Network – coordinated by the Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch (GED) – comprises Gender Focal Points (GFPs), Gender Coordinators at headquarters, and field-based Gender Specialists. The network is a key institutional mechanism for operationalizing the 1999 ILO gender equality policy. GFPs act as catalysts to assist gender mainstreaming in respective offices and units. While they may be involved in implementing some gender-specific activities, GFPs' main focus is to aid colleagues and management to identify strategies and work methods that enable and build capacity to mainstream gender into colleagues' own areas of work. This is critical to avoid gender-related work assigned only to focal points.

Managerial Issues

- 1. Appointing Gender Focal Points:** GFPs or a team of several focal points are appointed by the respective management at field office or headquarters-unit level. At headquarters, consultation with GED and relevant Gender Coordinators is useful, while in offices this can include the Gender Specialist. GED needs to be informed by the Director of the office or unit about a newly-appointed GFP or team so that it can provide necessary information, briefings and other support. The GFP position can be rotated about every two years so that responsibilities are shared and capacity is built among colleagues. Effort should be made to alternate between men and women and to avoid consistently appointing young junior women.
- 2. Allocating time and resources:** The manager needs to ensure that adequate time, conditions and financial resources are allocated so that the GFP can perform the tasks required. It is also important that managers bear in mind that these functions are not be regarded as an add-on to an already-full workload.
- 3. Activities and capacity building:** Ideally, GFPs should be systematically involved in meetings and decision-making processes related to programming of activities of the office or unit, as these are critical entry points for gender mainstreaming. The relevant tasks should be included in the workplan of the GFP and reflected in their performance appraisal. Opportunities for GFPs need to be provided for acquiring gender-related expertise and advocacy skills. The manager, the Human Resources Development Department, and GED have a responsibility in this regard such as in cost-sharing and training events.

Terms of Reference

Following are possible tasks that can be agreed by the manager and GFP in their terms of reference:

- Participate in preparing programming activities with gender-responsive objectives and workplans.
- Act as a “help desk” on where to find information and materials on ILO-related gender issues.
- Assist in organizing capacity building for colleagues on decent work and gender equality.
- Encourage gender parity in unit/office events, training and projects, and among ILO staff.
- Act as liaison with GED, including for any gender audits for the office or unit.
- Contribute to sharing knowledge and promote the unit or office's relevant good practices.
- Help colleagues identify processes and contacts for strengthening links with gender equality machineries/expertise including at country level and contribute to relevant gender networks.
- Encourage staff to identify gender issues for meetings, trainings, and events with constituents.
- Promote inclusion of gender-specific objectives, outcomes and indicators, and activities in the work of offices, in conjunction with headquarters units or vice versa.

Gender Network Support

All GFPs will receive information, access to ILO gender-related tools and resources, and technical support from the ILO Gender Network. Opportunities will be given for GFPs to participate in network meetings, thematic panels, gender audit trainings and facilitation teams, and ILO inter-regional gender learning forums.