



International
Labour
Office

ILO PARTICIPATORY GENDER AUDIT

**A tool
for organizational
change**

WHAT IS AN ILO PARTICIPATORY GENDER AUDIT?

A participatory gender audit is a tool and a process based on a **participatory methodology** to promote **organizational learning** at the individual, work unit and organizational levels on how to practically and effectively mainstream gender.

A gender audit is essentially a **“social audit”**, and belongs to the category of “quality audits”, which distinguishes it from traditional “financial audits”. It considers whether internal practices and related support systems for gender mainstreaming are effective and reinforce each other and whether they are being followed. It establishes a baseline; identifies critical gaps and challenges; and recommends ways of addressing them, suggesting possible improvements and innovations. It also documents good practices towards the achievement of gender equality.

A gender audit enhances the collective capacity of the organization to examine its activities from a gender perspective and identify strengths and weaknesses in promoting gender equality issues. It monitors and assesses the relative progress made in gender mainstreaming and helps to build organizational ownership for gender equality initiatives and sharpens organizational learning on gender through a process of:

- **Team building**
- **Information sharing**
- **Reflection on gender**

Follow-up action on the gender audit’s recommendations is crucial and this is where the ownership of the audit by the Work Unit/Office is important in advocating, intervening and scaling up action.

Often a gender audit works as an entry point for discussing wider substantive and operational concerns. Several “beyond gender” issues become highlighted, such as the organizational culture of overwork; long hours at the office; time pressures; the ‘bead curtain syndrome’ (where people are only in contact vertically with their superiors and peers); and the lack of proactive structures for sharing, learning and adapting. These features in an organization’s culture are particularly unfavourable to the promotion of gender equality.

“The Office must now work to ensure that commitment to gender equality is internalized throughout the ILO and reflected in all our technical work, operational activities and support services”.

Juan Somavia, Director General, ILO



A BRIEF HISTORY OF ILO PARTICIPATORY GENDER AUDITS

In October 2001, the ILO launched the first series of groundbreaking participatory gender audits in accordance with the ILO Gender Mainstreaming Policy. This was the first exercise of its kind to be introduced in the United Nations system. The objective of these gender audits was to promote organizational learning on how to implement gender mainstreaming effectively in the policies, programmes and structures of the institution and to assess the progress made in achieving gender equality.

- In the first series of gender audits (2001-2002), the main focus was on auditing ILO Offices and increasing gender awareness and capacity among all those involved in planning and delivering ILO projects and programmes. A global desk review of 700 key ILO policy documents and major publications provided quantitative and verifiable information.
- Between 2003 and 2005, a new dimension was added by extending the audits to major ILO constituents, such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) Secretariat in Brussels and four constituent organizations in Sri Lanka. The aim was to reach out to decision-making bodies at the policy level.
- A total of 25 Units/Offices have been audited since 2001 to 2005 (10 work units and programmes at ILO Headquarters, and 15 Field Offices in South and South East Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Africa and Latin America).
- Gender audits were also conducted in several UN agencies in Zimbabwe at the request of the Inter-agency Group on Gender in Harare. These audits contributed to enhancing individual and joint efforts to promote gender equality in their various interventions.
- Three intensive Training of Facilitators (TOF) were organized in Colombo and Harare. This resulted in a multiplier effect and the creation of a “pool” of trainers who are building capacity among local gender experts and focal points.

Commission on the Status of Women, 49th Session (Beijing +10)

The ILO was invited to share its gender audit experiences and lessons learned in boosting gender mainstreaming within its own structures and among its constituent members with national delegates, donor agencies, UN representatives and civil society groups at the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (Beijing +10).



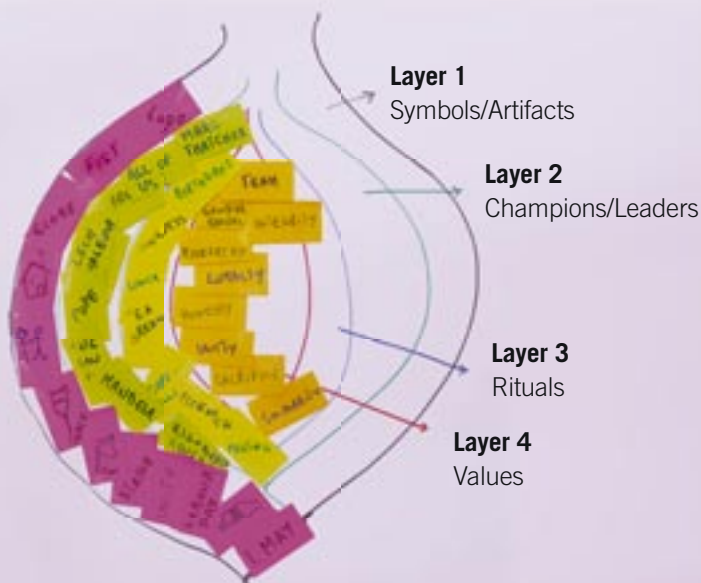
GENDER AUDIT METHODOLOGY

The methodology followed in the gender audit is based on four pillars of current thinking on gender and organizational change: **learning organization theory, qualitative self-assessment, adult experiential learning cycle, and gender and development approach.**

An ILO Participatory Gender Audit Manual guides the audit by addressing the following 12 key elements:

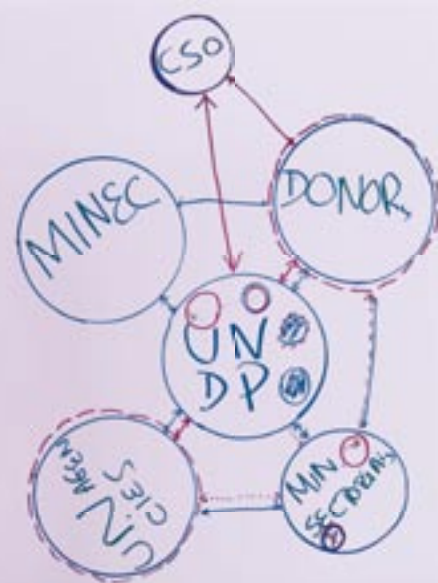
- Current gender issues, debate and relationship to the national gender machineries
- Mainstreaming as a cross cutting concern within the institution's objectives, programme and budget
- Mainstreaming in implementation of programmes and technical cooperation activities
- Existing gender expertise and competence
- Information and knowledge management on gender issues
- Systems and instruments in use for accountability, evaluating and monitoring on gender equality
- Choice of partner organizations
- Advocacy products and public image
- Decision-making on gender mainstreaming
- Staffing and human resources concerning gender balance and gender-friendly policies
- Organizational culture and its effects on gender equality
- Perception of achievement on gender equality

Examples of Participatory Exercises



Hofstede's Onion

Identifies, by peeling away layers of an imaginary onion, the prevailing work culture within an organization vis-à-vis gender equality.



Venn Diagram

Identifies to what extent an organization's relationships with internal/external partners and stakeholders are driven by gender equality concerns.

GENDER AUDIT PROCESS

- Unit/Office volunteers for gender audit and sends request to Bureau for Gender Equality
- Formal commitment is made on audit dates, focal point contact set up in Unit/Office
- Audit team members are selected and pre-audit preparations set in motion
- Document review begins two weeks prior to audit meetings with the Unit/Office
- Audit duration in Unit/Office is for two full weeks with an audit team of 3-4 members. Participatory workshops, interviews, briefings and consultations with constituents are all undertaken within this period
- Audit draft recommendations are discussed with the entire Unit/Office on last day of the audit and Action Plan set up
- Draft report is submitted to Unit/Office within a month for comments on factual details
- Report is completed within the following month
- Unit/Office is responsible for initiating implementation of audit recommendations
- Bureau for Gender Equality is accessible thereafter for technical assistance and advice on implementation of recommendations

Key Findings

Though committed in principle to gender equality, conceptual clarity on gender concepts and gender mainstreaming found to be rather limited

Gender is still considered an “add on” – need to make it “visible”, “specific”, “explicit”, “concrete” and integrated

Limited exposure to gender mainstreaming tools and methodologies

How to integrate gender into technical areas is the “million dollar question” posed by all

Need to develop mechanisms for accountability on gender mainstreaming

Lack of specific gender indicators that would help track progress made or obstacles encountered

Lack of consistency and sustainability of gender mainstreaming throughout institutional structures and mechanisms

Need for management to explore ways of highlighting and giving recognition to good practices in gender mainstreaming

Positive Outcomes

Gender equality built into the monitoring and evaluation of ILO's shared objectives

Project documents examined through a “gender filter”

Flexible working time and working from home arrangement to promote family friendly workplace

Improved efforts at gender mainstreaming in technical cooperation projects

New user-friendly tools on gender and child labour published

Advocacy strategies for promoting gender equality in IPEC Programmes strengthened

Gender focal team set up to monitor implementation of audit recommendations

Country-specific vision on gender equality and gender mainstreaming strategy developed

GENDER AUDITS OF ILO CONSTITUENTS



National Gender Audits in Sri Lanka

In 2004, gender audits were carried out with four constituent organizations in Sri Lanka: the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) and two trade union federations, Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) and Sri Lanka Nidahas Sewaka Sangamaya (SLNSS).

Following completion of the audits, a meeting was held with all participating partners to share lessons learned on effective solutions to gender gaps. Linkages were made with the ILO's Decent Work Agenda and Plans of Action were set up for each of the audited institutions. This intensive exercise drew attention to various measures and strategies that could be used to address gender equality issues in the national context of Sri Lanka.

Initiatives in Sri Lanka after audit:

- **Gender Bureau set up in Ministry of Labour and Employment, vision and mandate determined, roles and budget clarified and activities initiated**
- **Role and status of Women's Division in SLNSS strengthened**
- **Gender task forces set up in all audited units effectively monitoring implementation of audit recommendations**

“The gender audit opened our eyes to the constant need to be responsive to gender equality in trade union activities.”

Mr. Leslie Devendra, General-Secretary, Sri Lanka Nidahas Sevaka Sangamaya (SLNSS), Sri Lanka

“The gender audit paved the way for a broader debate on equality issues within our organisation, not only related to gender, but also in terms of the wider organisational culture.”

Mr. Gotabaya Dasanayaka, Director General, Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC), Sri Lanka



The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

The first major ILO gender audit of an international federation was carried out with the ICFTU in 2005. It was also the largest single gender audit facilitated by the ILO to date.

The call for an ICFTU gender audit came with the resolution “Unions for Women, Women for Unions” which was adopted at the 18th ICFTU World Congress in December 2004. The gender audit was perceived as a significant step towards furthering the ICFTU's work to promote gender equality.

The findings and recommendations of the audit were reported to the ICFTU Executive Board in December 2005. A Plan of action was discussed in the Women's Committee in March 2006.

“Although the gender audit covered the ICFTU Secretariat only, the exercise raised issues that have broader implications for the whole confederation. It taught us that we have still some way to go to ensure our programmes and activities are mainstreamed, but it also showed us that we are slowly moving in the right direction.”

Helen Creed, Chairperson, ICFTU's Women's Committee

THE WAY FORWARD FOR ILO PARTICIPATORY GENDER AUDIT

The ILO gender audit has added impetus to the process of integrating gender equality into the ILO by setting in motion an institutional learning mechanism. The challenge now is to rigorously monitor the implementation of its recommendations.

The ILO constituents and the UN system are increasingly interested in conducting gender audits in order to accelerate gender mainstreaming within their own organizations. ILO is responding by modifying and revising the audit methodology to meet their specific needs.

The ILO will focus on conducting Training of Gender Audit Facilitators (TOFs) at the regional and national levels to help enhance the capacity of local experts in carrying out audits to strengthen institutional mechanisms for gender equality promotion. Gender audits are also planned to be conducted with labour related institutions such as labour market institutions, employment services, social security systems and labour inspectorates.



Gender Audit of the UN Agencies in Zimbabwe and Mozambique

Between 2004 and 2005, gender audits were conducted in several UN agencies in Harare, Zimbabwe: FAO, ITU, UNAIDS, UNDP/UNIASU, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. The World Bank also participated.

In Mozambique, ILO assistance was provided for a gender audit of the UNDP Office in Maputo.

Impact of UN audits (2004):

- Sensitization on gender strengthened within UN agencies
- Gender equality issues receiving more focus in interventions with national partners
- Gender task force set up to monitor gender equality

“At the UN Country Team level in Zimbabwe, the gender audit strengthened our capacity to institutionalise gender equality in our policies, programmes and structures.”

Mr Agostinho Zacarias, Resident Coordinator, UN Country Team, Zimbabwe

ILO BUREAU FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The primary goal of the ILO is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. The ILO considers gender equality as a key element in its vision of Decent Work for All Women and Men for social and institutional change to bring about equity and growth.

Reporting directly to the Director-General, the ILO Bureau for Gender Equality acts as a catalyst and adviser for ILO Constituents and staff to be more effective in increasing gender equality in the world of work, thereby advancing decent work as a global goal. It also serves as the liaison with the ILO Governing Body concerning gender issues within the organization.

The Bureau conducts participatory gender audits within the office and among its constituents. Gender audits provide a rigorous and collective self-assessment of progress and gaps in institutionalizing gender mainstreaming – within the ILO or national institutions – and develops recommendations on how to enhance the process.

Through technical cooperation, the Bureau works to strengthen the gender mainstreaming capacity of ILO constituents at country level and offers targeted support. The Bureau also coordinates knowledge sharing initiatives on gender equality and publishes an electronic newsletter, the ILO Gender News.

The Bureau coordinates the ILO Gender Network and also acts as liaison in relations concerning gender issues with the UN system, NGOs and academic and women's organizations.

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