

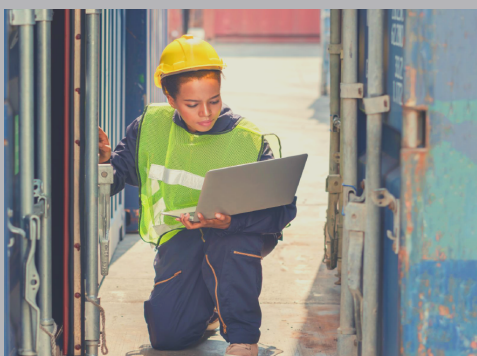
# Women's Network Newsletter



## News from CCP

### CCP MENA leads regional gender equality initiative

In June 2021, the CCP Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), launched a new initiative under the name of 'Customs, Cargo & Women – A Talk for Her!', to promote women's empowerment and gender equality in the region.



The first of its kind, this new regional initiative aims to bring together women officers working at CCP Units, and other women customs and law enforcement officials in the MENA region for regular meetings online. During these sessions, participants will have the opportunity to discuss the challenges they face in their daily work, attend special coaching sessions facilitated by peers and external experts, and jointly develop a roadmap on how to make the CCP more women-friendly and inclusive in the MENA region.

The Programme looks forward to furthering the overarching goals of the CCP Women's Network and replicating this initiative in other geographic regions.

### Women's Professional Development Programme launched by CCP



Following months of meticulous planning, the Women's Network officially launched its first Women's Professional Development Programme (WPDP) for CCP officers in South, Southeast Asia and the Pacific in July 2021. Implemented in partnership with the Australian Border Force (ABF) and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University, this four-week training offered 58 participants from 11 countries a unique chance to engage with speakers from universities, governments, policy institutes, and law enforcement leaders from around the world.

Guided by experts, officers learned to identify their personal strengths, recognize their leadership potential, and market their skills for better career advancement, all while gaining knowledge about best practices, changes in the customs landscape and shifting trends in counter-trafficking. Along with technical knowledge, training participants gained a network of CCP women operating in the region with whom to exchange experiences and intelligence.

The WPDP was remarkably well received by the participants, signalling a strong appetite for professional development opportunities among CCP women officers. Participation far exceeded the typical engagement levels of online programmes, reaching a 165% attendance rate during live sessions. Officers spent an average of 53 hours interacting with the course material on the online platform.

Four weeks following graduation, participants continue to stay in regular contact by hosting "Zoom Cafés". During these gatherings, participants not only keep the bond generated during the WPDP strong, but also reinforce their commitment to fostering regional cooperation in the fight against illicit trafficking.

The Women's Network is proud to have delivered this innovative programme, and grateful for the dedication of implementing partners ABF and RMIT, and participating officers.

## Meet the new CCP Champions for Change:



CCP recognizes that promoting gender equality and women's advancement within the Programme requires a concerted effort. Yet, positive change is also often achieved thanks to the persistence of a few individuals. This is why CCP recognizes the work of CCP collaborators under the "CCP Champions for Change" initiative. On this occasion, CCP is pleased to announce the selection of two new Champions: Avani Nissanka and Michelle Bond. Individuals chosen under this initiative become part of a network of women and men affiliated with the CCP who actively promote and encourage gender equality in their everyday work. **Congratulations to our new Champions! CCP salutes your commitment to making the world a more equitable place.**



**Avani Nissanka**  
Assistant Superintendent at the  
Department of Sri Lanka Customs

“Customs and law enforcement can be very challenging work environments. The working hours and arrangements can be especially difficult for women, who must often balance competing work and family commitments. In these sectors, it becomes even more important for women to showcase their capacities and leadership skills. For this reason, it was a privilege to participate as a panellist at the inaugural WPDP on the topic of Cooperation, which is a key characteristic of good leadership. Being recognized as a CCP Champion for Change was a very special moment in my career as Customs Officer. I am honoured to be a CCP Champion and eager to continue working to promote women's contributions within the Programme. The sky is the limit if you are willing to fly. My sincere gratitude to the CCP for the recognition given not only to myself but also to the Department of Sri Lanka Customs.

~ Avani Nissanka

Avani Nissanka joined the CCP Port Control and Air Cargo Control Unit in Sri Lanka in 2017. Avani is actively involved in the CCP Women's Network, contributing with her time and experience to the development of campaigns and training. She is passionate about discovering and promoting new dimensions within the career and advocating for the advancement of women within the customs and law enforcement sectors.

Click [HERE](#) to find out more about the CCP Champions for Change

“Women play a very important role within customs and law enforcement agencies. They bring unique and valuable qualities that have a positive impact on the communities they serve. My drive to empower women to be future leaders in their respective border enforcement agencies provided me an opportunity to work together with a fantastic and supportive team to deliver a programme that exceeded all partner and participants expectations. I feel very fortunate to have been part of the CCP-WPDP as a co-organiser, mentor and participant. I am very humbled, honored and extremely grateful for the awards I have received.

~ Michelle Bond



**Michelle Bond**  
Inspector at the Australian Border Force

Michelle Bond is a 20-year veteran customs professional with extensive experience in customs compliance, liaison, operations and enforcement positions. Michelle was recently recognised for her initiative, contribution and exemplary leadership and mentorship in delivering the WPDP, and received the RMIT Excellence in Mentoring Award and an ABF Assistant Commissioner Award, in addition to the CCP Champions for Change award.