

Border Management Branch



Women in Leadership

When researching why there are few women in leadership, the identified obstacles are often similar to those found when looking into the underrepresentation of women in law enforcement professions: recruitment, career progression opportunities, general biases and family responsibilities. On the other hand, we know that businesses that have women in leadership do better financially, have more transformational leadership and in the context of law enforcement, such agencies cannot afford to miss out on the perspectives of 50% of the population both in terms of countering and targeting crime as well as care for women witnesses and victims.

With this in mind, UNODC Border Management Branch (BMB) has increased its focus on women in leadership in law enforcement. In the last quarter of 2023, several activities targeting this topic were organized. Happy reading!

South Asia:

Leadership in law enforcement and fisheries

20-21 November: Under the Blue Enforcement project, the Passenger and Cargo Border Team (PCBT) and the Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP) delivered a regional training on women and leadership for 18 participants from Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Representing marine law enforcement and fisheries departments, the all-women audience received training and discussed topics like gender, biases and intersectionality, women in leadership, communication, leadership styles and innovation. Asked if the workshop was useful and applicable to their everyday work, the participants showed great enthusiasm for the themes, which were partly brand-new training developed by the Border Management Branch.



West Africa:

Women in aviation

In Q4, PCBT continued to host "Virtual Coffees" for women in AIRCOP with participants

from Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Lomé, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria (Abuja and Lagos), and The Gambia. The series focused on "climbing the ladder" for women working in law enforcement and airports, including advice from experienced female agents, challenges they overcame, and tools they were able to harness in advancing their careers. Guest speakers from INTERPOL joined the anglophone meeting. Moreover, key speakers from the JAITFs of Abidjan, Banjul, and Bamako delivered presentations, and newly recruited women from Lomé could ask pertinent questions and seek advice from senior agents in neighboring countries.

" Fisheries law enforcement in particular is an area where women's active engagement has increased significantly over the past years. Forums like this would greatly contribute to keeping up that trend with the empowerment it does for women."

"The concept of this workshop itself has given a strong message to each of the institutes from where the participants were nominated, regarding the importance of recognizing women in the field of fisheries law enforcement in terms of their skills, capacities, attitudes and potential."

During both meetings, women exchanged best practices and challenges related to career progression, including mentoring, networking, and harnessing professional skills. Moreover, exchanges were made related to strengthening gender-sensitive working environments such as I) enabling flexible working arrangements for women with dependents and personal obligations, II) male and female colleagues publicly and privately defending female colleagues who experience harassment, III) ensuring that female agents have access to trainings and networking opportunities so as to enable their upward mobility in the task force, IV) normalizing a culture of female authority and team leadership for both men and women agents at all levels, among other key issues.

*Gheethamali Chandrasiri
Assistant Director
Department of Fisheries
and Aquatic Resources,
Sri Lanka*



Latin America: Focus on human rights and gender

Through the Container Control Program (CCP), PCBT implemented training modules on human rights and gender equality in Latin American countries during Q4. These activities, focused on promoting gender-sensitive practices and behaviors that favor inclusion, gender equality, and respect for human rights, are designed to strengthen the capabilities of CCP's specialized units. The training modules included theoretical courses and practical assignments focused on topics such as gender equality as a human right, diversity, equality, inclusion, and belonging in organizational spaces, programmatic implementation of gender policies in law enforcement institutions, recognition and reporting of sexual harassment, and the development of leadership skills with a gender focus.

PCBT appreciates the invaluable cooperation received from a number of institutional counterparts in each country. In Panama, support was received from the National Customs Authority (ANA), the National Police (PN), and the Aeronaval Service (SENAN); in Guayaquil, Ecuador, the Integrated Center for Port and Airport Analysis (CIAPA) and the National Customs Service of Ecuador (SENAE) actively participated; and in Rosario, Argentina, the General Directorate of Customs (DGA) and the Argentine Naval Prefecture (PNA) collaborated with us.

Similar initiatives are planned for the early months of 2024.



BMB staff capacity initiative

To ensure that BMB staff knowledge is coherent and up to the latest standard, comprehensive capacity building workshops on gender mainstreaming were held in Q4 2023. Approximately 50 BMB personnel from across the globe joined the hands-on training webinars which looked at common obstacles and opportunities, project development and implementation.

North Africa and the Middle East

On 7-9 November, PCBT organized a regional gender training for high-level managers from human resources and other relevant departments from Customs Administrations in Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. The activity took place in Geneva and was facilitated by an expert trainer with over 20 years of experience supporting gender mainstreaming efforts in the security sector. In addition to two full days of theoretical training, the activity was complemented with practical study visits to two Geneva-based institutes with a longstanding record of implementing successful gender policies: the Small Arms Survey and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. This regional training served as a follow-up to previous efforts by PCBT MENA to support structural change for more gender-equal and diverse border management agencies.

Southeast Asia: Women in marine law enforcement



The Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP) continues to uphold gender equality in the programmes it pursues such as the Women in Maritime Law Enforcement (WinMLE) Forum in Southeast Asia. Entering its 9th iteration, the WinMLE Forum in Bangkok, Thailand, targeted ca. 30 participants from maritime law enforcement agencies in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, and Viet Nam. The Forum spanned across two days and investigated several angles necessary to seal the gap in different opportunities provided to both women and men operating in maritime law enforcement agencies. During the first day, GMCP highlighted several best practices and success stories collected across the country-study reports conducted in the region. The knowledge sharing was also complemented by the experience of institutionalising a gender and development programme and experiences shared by a panel of pioneer women from Thailand at different levels of seniority within the organisation. The second day focused on leadership and topics such as dismantling stereotypes, various communication and leadership styles, as well as organisational initiatives that could be established to support women holding maritime law enforcement roles. Senior-level officers from the Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency and the Philippines Coast Guard also provided inputs on communication strategies and mentorship circles they had implemented during their careers. The Forum was successful in inspiring women officers to continue to break the glass ceiling in their enforcement careers and provided them with skillsets to do so.