

**Seventeenth World Meteorological Congress  
Gender Working Breakfast  
5 June 2015 (Gender Day), Espace Léman, CIGG, 8:00-9:15**

**Summary**

The Working Breakfast on Gender kicked off the celebration of June 5 as Gender Day at the Seventeenth World Meteorological Congress. The breakfast brought together about 50 delegates from all regions and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Secretariat staff to: (1) discuss issues pertaining to gender equality and the empowerment of women, and (2) formulate suggested actions for inclusion in a WMO Gender Equality Action Plan. The Action Plan will offer steps to enact the newly updated WMO Policy on Gender Equality. The breakfast also provided a networking opportunity for Congress Delegates, and furthered creation of an active core of gender advocates in the WMO community.

The event started with a collective exercise in which participants formulated a series of questions on issues and challenges around gender equality and the empowerment of women. Participants then discussed in small groups the five areas to which the majority of questions pertained: (1) governance, (2) employment and careers, (3) education and capacity building, (4) service provision, and (5) women and leadership. A rapporteur from each group documented the discussion and summarized the main actions suggested.

A list of participants is available in Annex 1.

**Opening Exercise: Issues and Challenges**

The following questions were raised by participants on issues and challenges related to gender equality and the empowerment of women:

- Why are women only 20% of delegates at WMO constituent body sessions?
- Why are women only 20% of candidates for fellowships?
- Why are there so few women Permanent Representatives?
- How to make the meteorological profession more interesting for women?
- Why do we not have paternity leave for men?
- Why limited information for women on access and use of weather and climate information in rural areas?
- How could the Secretariat lead by example through hiring women in higher positions?
- How to make the most of the unique qualities of women? Show the difference? Women providers make a difference?
- How to protect women when they go for further studies?
- How do we stop making gender an ad hoc issue?
- Are there laws on gender issues in various countries in the world?
- What prevents the world from taking women seriously?
- How to make shift work more family-friendly?
- How do we appreciate what women bring to management and leadership?
- Why do women drop out of the meteorological profession?
- Why only five women in the WMO Executive Council (EC) membership?
- How can we explain the importance of women in management?
- How can we get more women into science?
- Why only three men in the room?

- How can we celebrate organizations that do well on gender?
- Do we know the differences in giving weather information to men and women?
- How can we empower women to play a greater role in WMO?
- Why assume gender is only about women?
- Are there any mentoring programs for women? Sufficient?
- How can women deal with misogyny?
- How to harness opportunities?
- What concrete goals can we set in WMO?
- How can we encourage girls to study science?
- How can we measure progress on mainstreaming gender?
- How can we ensure equal opportunities for primary school?

## **Table Discussion: Good Practice and Suggested Activities**

### **1. Governance**

#### Group 1

Participants highlighted the importance of including gender issues in all kinds of policy, with the aim of reaching gender balance, especially at the leadership level.

*Quotas:* Although the first proposal on how to improve women's presence in governance was to establish quotas, the risk of inadvertently causing discrimination against men as well as encountering a potentially insufficient supply of competencies among women (hence leading to less-capable management), brought other solutions to the table.

*Capacity Building:* The creation of WMO training exercises for women, designed to improve managerial capacities, could increase the number of female professionals qualified to assume leadership posts. This should be complemented by actions to encourage academic institutions to facilitate women's access to tertiary education, especially master's degrees and PhDs. Examples of such actions include both fellowships and establishment of residences for women and their families.

*Work-Life Balance:* It was noted that the choice to turn down higher positions can be driven by the difficulty of managing a family while at the same time assuming more responsibility at work, which requires more flexibility in terms of timing, availability to travel, etc. Measures could therefore be taken to avoid turning a professional career into an alternative to being a mother and a wife. The creation of a women-friendly environment could begin with building kindergartens inside organizations or establishing special arrangements, such as flex-time.

*Gender Focal Points:* Another way of addressing gender issues in governance could be to reinforce the existing network of gender focal points among NMHSs by expanding it throughout all levels of the organization. Representatives could be identified in each department and at every level to detect problems and needs as well as to enhance communication and cooperation among women and with management. With this broader and thicker web in place, more actions could be undertaken to improve working conditions and provide capacity-building opportunities to female employees, as proposed above.

*Collaboration between Women and Men:* Initiatives carried out by and with women (or men) cannot be completely effective without the involvement of the other gender. Collaboration is

particularly important on initiatives dealing with gender inequalities (e.g. Cg-17 Gender Breakfast, workshops): not only to raise awareness of the issue among males, but also to sensitize them to think in a more “gender-attentive” manner, and to find shared solutions.

*Funding:* Finally, it was suggested that setting aside a percentage of the budget for gender issues would provide more resources to start new initiatives for gender empowerment.

#### Suggested Actions:

- Organize trainings aimed at improving women’s management skills;
- Reinforce the network of gender focal points at all levels (not only at the top/managerial level);
- Raise awareness of gender issues among men;
- Create a women-friendly environment at the workplace (kindergarten, flex-time, etc.);
- Ensure a budget allocation for addressing gender issues.

#### Group 2

*Education:* Participants noted that the scarce number of women in governance was an issue at all levels: international, regional and national. Institutional solutions would not solve the problem, which is to a great extent socio-cultural in nature. Any approach should start with ensuring equal education for girls and boys.

In order to increase the pool of women in hydrometeorological services, a general increase in the number of girls choosing meteorology as a field of study is required. Two questions then arose: (1) “How can we make the study of meteorology more interesting?” and (2) “How can we increase the appeal of becoming a meteorologist?”

*WMO Brochure:* The brochure on meteorology and career opportunities is one of WMO’s most successful publications. It can be further developed.

*Encouraging Young Professional Women:* WMO as well as NMHSs should have interns and expose them to what being a meteorologist involves. Such an internship programme could further be complemented with a mentoring programme for interns and Junior Professional Officers at WMO. Men often find younger men to mentor. They should be encouraged to mentor younger women too. Senior female professionals should also do the same.

Training possibilities often focus on women who are already in leadership positions, and could be broadened to include younger women too. Having a Women’s Leadership Workshop at Congress is a good beginning, but WMO should reach out further to include women who have not yet been given the opportunity to increase confidence in their leadership capacities. This could also become a regular event at every EC.

*Other Policy Approaches:* Women in governance must no longer be an ad hoc issue but a subject that is promoted all the way through the chain. Adequate policies to attract and promote women must be in place, and such policies should be explicit in their content.

The pros and cons of introducing quotas were discussed. Whereas few women would like to be recruited for a job due to their sex, the Nordic experience has shown that quotas have been effective in increasing the number of women and have helped them gain necessary experience.

Many initiatives are taking place in the regions. It would be interesting to compile experiences and best practices.

#### Suggested Actions:

- Arrange for a gender delegation to meet with the new WMO Secretary-General;
- Build on the brochure on meteorology – target such communications at young people;
- Strengthen the internship programme in WMO;
- Mentoring;
- Fellowship programme for women;
- Training on gender issues for PRs;
- Expand on the idea of the Women's Leadership Workshop to include junior female delegates and leadership issues for them. Consider conducting it every year.
- Compile a list of good practices on gender from around the world;
- Encourage women to stay in the meteorological profession.

## **2. Careers & Employment**

### Group 3

*Increasing the Number of Women in Management:* Additional gender policies should be developed to ensure that a higher number of women are in management. Generally, the higher you move up the institutional ladder, the fewer women there are. MeteoSuisse has two head women in their seven divisions; all technical divisions are led by men. Forty percent of the China Meteorological Administration employees are women but less than 20% are in senior management positions. In Namibia, much effort was made following independence to place women in leadership positions. Seven women were hired in the meteorological service, of who three are in management positions. The major challenge for them is how to deal with shift work: it is difficult for women to have to wake up at night to do the night shift. Half of the heads in the Australian Bureau of Meteorology are women, and the last three senior appointments also went to women. This is mainly thanks to the CEO who makes an active effort to hire a wide range of people from both within and outside the Bureau.

In another meteorological service, one female professional who recently had a child dropped out of the job once her contract ended. She eventually came back but at a lower position. There is a need to examine the reasons preventing women from moving up the ranks.

*Female Role Models:* Female role models are needed in order to dispel the perception that science is a male domain. After Marie Curie, the first woman to win the Nobel Prize, a greater effort was made to search for women leaders in science; she was a role model, a catalyst. In the 1970s, there were more women working in Météo-France because they liked the shift work. It gave them more flexibility to look after their children, provided that their partner also worked in shifts and on a different schedule. However, this may be particular to the social situation in France at the time; it may not apply to other countries.

Before independence, there were no women TV presenters in the Namibian Meteorological Services. Once the first woman was hired, more women came to ask questions and seek employment in the field. Currently, there are more women than men working as TV presenters. Again, role models were very important. At the same time, there are more women TV presenters than men in most countries but for the wrong reasons. Men choose women as presenters for their appearance.

*The Power of Culture and Social Roles:* Culture and social roles are also significant factors. For example, women tend to have less power and authority than men in societies strongly influenced by Confucianism. In certain countries, women also tend to leave their job upon getting married in order to take care of their family. In Switzerland, young men are increasingly prone to sharing the child rearing responsibilities. Whereas paternity leave is still not possible in all sectors, fathers holding government positions have the right to work at 80%. Many men in MeteoSuisse have taken advantage of this opportunity.

Statistics have further shown that women are more self-critical than men when applying for promotion. Women are more likely to self-censor and decide that they do not have enough of the required skills.

*Strategies for Recruiting More Women:* In terms of recruitment, WMO is often hampered by the low number of female applicants for positions. Quotas may not necessarily provide a solution. It would be better to celebrate the outcome of having more women in an organization and use this as a model rather than to make it a requirement to appoint women. The Junior Professional Officers Programme could be a way to bring more young female professionals into the service. Congress should be encouraged to establish a trust fund to help countries pay for these young professionals, as it is not always easy for Members to finance such programmes.

In the Australian Meteorological Bureau, women are encouraged to do acting roles in a different division from where they usually work in order to experience what it is like to be in that position.

WMO should also provide paid internships. Most interns who work at WMO already live in Geneva or have enough money to be able to live there. There is great value in being able to work in an international organization and bring that experience back to one's country.

Meteorological services should further seek out undergraduates and show them the range of opportunities that are available in the area. They should offer them a chance to try different branches of work, provide scholarships, and be proactive in recruiting young female scientists. Female and male meteorologists could also do school visits and describe their jobs to children, with an emphasis on attracting girls to the profession.

#### Suggested Actions:

We need to look at the whole supply chain: starting from how to attract girls into the field at an early age all the way to encouraging women to take on leadership positions later in their career.

- Attract women to the meteorological profession at an early age;
- Promote role models (e.g. women role models to go to schools and describe their work);
- At the university level: actively seek out undergraduates to give them a chance to see what opportunities are available in the hydrometeorological services;
- More gender policies need to be developed with a view to increasing women's involvement in management;
- Encourage women to do acting roles in a different division from where they usually work, to get them see what it is like to be in that position;
- Allow men who are fathers to work part-time;
- Establish a trust fund to encourage countries to pay for Junior Professional Officers and paid internships in order to allow young professionals who are not residing in Geneva to gain experience at WMO.

#### Group 4

*Challenges:* Participants highlighted that there is an underlining challenge posed by the fact that fewer women study scientific subjects, therefore providing a “smaller pool” of candidates to fill positions in meteorology.

The group identified two factors which might play a role: lack of confidence among women in their own capacity and the challenge of work-life balance. The group agreed that shift work represents an issue for female staff working in meteorological services around the world, making it difficult to balance their work and family duties.

*Good Practices:* Some good practices were highlighted in the course of the discussion. For example, the Meteorological Service of Hungary put in place policies that tackle gender balance and equality, which resulted in a ratio of 50-50 women and men in professional positions. Staff can benefit from maternity and paternity leave which can be extended up to three years. Moreover, female staff with young children are exempt from shift work.

#### Suggested Actions:

- Document good practices of countries and other organizations;
- Feed the lessons learnt into the WMO Gender Action Plan.

The group highlighted additional aspects that can support women in advancing their careers such as:

- Managers shall support female staff not only to be good staff members but also to take a lead in specific aspects of work in a team.
- Women should go towards challenges, not avoid them, while striving to learn more to overcome them.
- Women shall recognize that as mothers they have the power to change their sons' mentality.

### **3. Education & Capacity Building**

#### Group 5

Gender inequality in education and training in different parts of the world is due to a variety of factors, including social conditions, culture, accessibility, different level of vulnerability to natural hazards resulting in different perceptions of studying science, and particularly meteorology.

In Indonesia there is a school of meteorology, which offers graduate education to young people, and gives them the opportunity to be hired at the meteorological service.

#### Suggested Actions:

- Raise interest and promote the study of meteorology among the young generation, and particularly girls, by:
  - Including relevant topics in the school curricula;
  - Organizing regular visits to meteorological services, observation sites, etc.;

- Organize lectures by lead experts in weather, water and climate in schools, sharing their expertise and explaining the advantages and benefits of their work.
- Exploit the fact that women/girls have a stronger will to study, and are more hard-working.
- Apply best practices from different countries and societies to promote science. For example:
  - In Geneva there is an “open day” for science. A similar day could be organized with a focus on meteorology.
  - Another practice is to organize Parents’ Job Day in which parent-meteorologists explain their job to their children’s’ classmates.
- In the countries where higher education in meteorology is not available, a student-exchange programme could be designed to send students interested in this field to universities abroad.

Besides promoting education, it is also very important to further develop and strengthen existing capacities in the countries, particularly for female experts. To this end, it is necessary to:

- Nominate female candidates to the WMO Fellowship Programme;
- Establish agreements with advanced NMHSs for short-term visiting scientist programmes, especially for female staff.

#### **4. Service Provision**

##### Group 6

Participants focused on the proportion of women involved in the provision of climate services, and the impact of warnings on women’s protection in the event of a disaster.

*Service Providers:* The discussion centered on the proportion of women involved in the provision of climate services. In Peru, more women than men work in this area (around 60%), especially in the warning field, which improves the impact among the population. Women seem to enjoy a career in meteorology. At the beginning of their studies, the proportion of men and women is roughly the same. Halfway through their academic career, many men change faculty, leading to an increased percentage of women graduates at the end of the study programme. Concerning hydrological services, men represent 80% of employees.

In Paraguay, 90% of the Dirección Nacional de Aeronáutica Civil (DINAC) are men. All three directors are men. However, many young interns were hired recently, the majority of whom are women. Young women are better aware of the opportunities that meteorology presents as a profession, as compared to older generations.

In Tanzania, women do not seem to like scientific careers.

In Ethiopia, women do not study meteorology. Very few women work in this area, although the gender balance is better among technicians and other services.

*Climate Service Users:* The discussion focused on the impact of warnings on women’s protection in disaster events.

Most of the casualties of a recent flood in Tanzania were women and children. It seems that men tend to run away in the event of disasters. In terms of service provision, it is important to understand why women stay behind and whether it is due to warning systems not reaching them.

For example, warning dissemination in Tanzania is mainly achieved through radio and television. Since women are away all day tending to daily chores (e.g. fetching water, collecting firewood), they do not have access to these media when a warning is released. Men run away when they hear the warning, while women stay behind. The Tanzania Meteorological Agency is currently considering dissemination through cellphones to address this issue.

The Ethiopian Government is engaged in training women on how to use meteorological data. A special effort is needed to reach out to women.

Other difficulties related to evacuating women arise from their position of vulnerability, both socially and biologically. It is difficult for pregnant women to run away in the event of a disaster. Women also often do not own or have access to a car, and thus stay behind, while men are able to leave the dangerous area.

The discussion closed with a few questions and remarks:

- How can vulnerable people be assisted in the event of an evacuation? Issuing warnings is only part of the solution. Community plans or assistance can help but only for events that happen on a regular basis.
- How can the vulnerability of a particular area be understood? And is it the responsibility of the meteorological service to do so?
- How can women be helped in Africa?

#### Suggested Actions:

- Surveys are needed to understand situations where women comprise a higher proportion of victims. Many assumptions are made, but in fact the only way to know is by asking. Organize a survey in Tanzania, with the help of volunteers, such as students, the Red Cross or local NGOs.
- Special out-reach activities targeting women.

## **5. Women's Leadership**

### Group 7

Participants in Group 7 discussed many issues around women and leadership, identifying a number of measures to help improve perceptions of women as leaders and to increase the number of women in leadership positions at WMO and in weather, climate and water fields more generally.

*Women's leadership styles:* Participants discussed whether women as a group have a different leadership style than men. Some members felt that women did. They noted that the experience of being in a management group as the lone women simply feels very different than working in a group with more gender balance. In seeking to identify what qualities exemplify a 'female' leadership style, members shared experiences that, in general, women as leaders are more collaborative, and give more credit directly and publicly to others. This style unfortunately

sometimes can mean that women are perceived as weaker leaders than men. Women leaders also have very strong multi-tasking skills.

The group also identified the characteristics of a top manager and a good leader, and recalled statistics showing that women clearly have all these qualities and often outnumber men, especially in change management.

*Work-Life Balance:* The group also talked about the importance of work-life balance, with several participants holding that the best examples of successful female leaders are those who maintain a family life as well as exemplifying professional leadership.

*Primary barriers to leadership:* The group identified three primary barriers that block women from gaining and retaining leadership positions: (1) self-doubt; (2) bias (social and cultural, often-invisible); and (3) family roles and pressures that can conflict with the responsibilities of leadership positions. Real but often largely unspoken societal pressures mean that, as women start families, they can drift into taking on time-consuming household management roles that bog them down.

*Outstanding needs:* Participants identified a broad need to change beliefs about women's ability to lead. They also identified a specific need to market management more effectively in weather, climate and water professions – to communicate that being a manager and leader is to master an attractive new subject/new profession. This need emerged from experiences among group members where some such women, happily engaged with their 'professional' (technical) subjects, have been reluctant to take on management posts.

### Suggested Actions

The group suggested a number of actions to improve perceptions of women as leaders, and to increase the number of women in leadership positions:

- (1) Female managers need to put forward other women for leadership positions.
- (2) Women need to articulate what they bring to the table as leaders.
- (3) Efforts should be made to frame management positions to appeal to female scientists, as a new 'profession' or subject, in order to recruit more women from technical weather, climate and water posts.
- (4) Advocates should identify and publicize good female role models – successful women leaders who have also achieved work-life balance.
- (5) WMO should establish women's mentorship programmes across countries.
- (6) Individually, women need to take inventory of their skills in order to identify and value their strengths.
- (7) Women also need to make a conscious effort to organize their lives, when starting families, to facilitate professional as well as family success.

### Helpful Tools:

- (1) Laws that promote disadvantaged populations – people of color, women
- (2) Capacity-building programmes
- (3) Mentorship programmes

Quotas for women leaders were discussed as a possible tool, but, having negative as well as positive results, were not endorsed. As one participant said, "Who wants to go into a leadership position, knowing she is only there because of a quota?"

## **Annex 1: List of Participants**

1. Assia Alexieva, WMO (facilitator)
2. Vida Auguliene, Lithuania
3. Grinia Avalos, Peru
4. Sue Barrell, Australia
5. Maja Carrieri, WMO
6. Raquel Carrillo, Paraguay
7. Caroline Corvington, United States of America
8. Amelia Diaz, Peru
9. Aida Diongue Niang, Senegal
10. Irina Divakova, Belarus
11. Laura Furgione, United States of America
12. Bonnie Galvin, WMO
13. Maria Germenchuk, Belarus
14. Mary Glackin, United States of America
15. Veronica Grasso, WMO
16. Flaviana Hilario, Philippines
17. Anahit Hovsepyan, WMO
18. Mina Jabbari, Islamic Republic of Iran
19. Michel Jarraud, WMO
20. Merima Kassa, Ethiopia
21. Agnes Kijazi, United Republic of Tanzania
22. Mahesh Lancon, media
23. Li Mingmei, China
24. Ziyanda Majokweni, South Africa
25. Linda Makuleni, South Africa
26. Maria Mamaeva, Russian Federation
27. Elena Manaenkova, WMO
28. Ciara Marsigli, Italy
29. Karen McCourt, United Kingdom
30. Vicki Middleton, Australia
31. Woldemariam Mihret Mulugeta, Ethiopia
32. Konstantina Mita, Greece
33. Jennifer Moetie, Namibia
34. Sara Oppenheimer, WMO
35. Mary Power, WMO
36. Kornelia Radics, Hungary
37. Samueline Rahariveloarimiza, Madagascar
38. Nelly Florida Riama, Indonesia
39. Isabel Riboldi, WMO
40. Carolin Richter, WMO
41. Federica Rossi, Italy
42. Celeste Saulo, Argentina
43. Gabriela Seiz, Switzerland
44. Stefan Sigrist, Switzerland
45. Lina Sjaavik, WMO
46. Johanna Stansfield, WMO
47. Robert Stefanski, WMO
48. Marianne Thyrring, Denmark
49. Juliana Ukeje, Nigeria