



THINK EQUAL BUILD SMART INNOVATE FOR CHANGE



In recognition of International Women's Day, which was celebrated on March 8, 2019, the World Customs Organization (WCO) joins the international community in promoting the theme "Think Equal, Build Smart and Innovate for Change". The theme advances the focus on innovative ways to promulgate gender equality, particularly in relation to social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure.

Discrimination against women and girls has slowly been diminishing over time. However, gender inequality remains largely problematic for women, depriving them of basic human rights and opportunities. In response to this situation, the international community acknowledges that a change in ideology will be critical to the sustainability of rights and opportunities for women and girls worldwide. As such, the **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 5 - Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls**, is considered an important component of the United Nation (UN)'s Agenda 2030. In meeting the objectives of SDG 5, transformative shifts, integrated approaches and innovative solutions are required to advance the plight of equality for women. The empowerment of women requires the tackling of structural issues such as unfair social norms and attitudes, as well as developing progressive legal frameworks that will promote equality between women and men.

The Executive Director of UN Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, in her International Women's Day address, purports that "Together we can make the voices of women and girls vibrate everywhere." Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka believes that it is through international collaboration, that the SDGs and gender equality will be accelerated.



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Gender Equality and Diversity Prioritized by the WCO

Gender equality and diversity remains a high priority on the WCO's agenda. Beginning with the Women in Customs, Trade and Leadership Conference which was organised by the WCO in 2013, gender equality and diversity features prominently in WCO capacity building activities. With impetus from the 2013 Conference, the WCO launched the Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool (GEOAT) in that same year. The GEOAT enables Customs administrations to assess their own policies and procedures in the advancement of gender equality. In its commitment to actively assist Customs administrations worldwide, the WCO will launch an updated version of the GEOAT at the WCO Capacity Building Committee meeting scheduled for April 2019. The updated version will feature additional chapters, for instance, on how to implement gender mainstreaming through project management, with cross-cutting indicators, definitions of gender equality and diversity related topics.



In his International Womens Day address, the Secretary General of the WCO Kunio Mikuriya stated that "It is crucial for the WCO's Members to ensure that they have a responsive gender equality policy in place that reflects the dynamic and innovative role played by women in Customs across the globe. International Women's Day provides the ideal opportunity for the Customs community to take stock of progress made and work ahead towards attaining our gender equality goal, which is one of the pillars to achieving sustainable development as well as a more balanced and inclusive society."



WCO Initiatives on Gender Equality and Diversity

e-Learning Module

- How to advance gender equality in Customs

Virtual Working Group (VWG)

- VWG on Gender Equality and Diversity

Gender Equality and Diversity Survey

- Second Survey on Gender Equality and Diversity

Gender Equality in the Jamaica Customs Agency

The Jamaica Customs Agency (JCA) is one of the few Customs administrations around the world that has a woman at its head, as well as a cadre of women operating at the senior management levels within the organization. The CEO/Commissioner of the JCA, Mrs. Velma Ricketts Walker acknowledges the increasingly pivotal role that women play in advancing Customs in the 21st Century, stating that “the demonstrated competence, talent, skills and expertise which women have added to the workforce have better equipped Customs administrations with the balanced, highly resilient, and responsive human capital it requires. To demonstrate our commitment to gender equality and women’s empowerment, we must ensure that such policy is institutionalized within our Customs administrations.” In recognition of International Women’s Day, Commissioner Ricketts Walker further emphasized that, “On this auspicious occasion, in order to achieve gender equality and female empowerment, we must recognize the capacity, ingenuity and fortitude that women bring to any environment or position.”

The JCA has been actively engaged in Customs modernization, ensuring that equitable access to training opportunities is afforded to all staff, including traditionally marginalized persons. With a complement of over thirteen hundred (1300) employees, the JCA has a very unique gender balance, with a staff ratio accounting for 65% female and 35% male. The JCA has been certified for Gender Mainstreaming by the Bureau of Gender Affairs (BGA) and is scheduled to establish a Gender Equality Committee, which will be BGA trained. The JCA is equipped with a gender focal point and practices an inclusive employment policy, which enables a workforce of persons of all capacities. Capacity building is highly prioritized by the JCA, which takes a targeted approach to staff training, facilitating equal opportunity and gender diversity. With the CEO/Commissioner of the JCA already establishing precedence for international leadership, several female customs officials have successfully participated in highly competitive international programmes, designed to enhance their leadership capacities. Key among them are the Executive Program on Customs and Business Administration (Korea CCF), the WCO Fellowship Programme, with its leadership and management component and the WCO/Japan Scholarship Programme, where successful candidates have earned masters degrees in strategic areas of Customs management.



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The International and Industry Liaison Unit is committed to raising the level of awareness on topics relating to the Caribbean Community, as well as issues concerning the wider topic of international trade, to both our internal and external stakeholders. Our monthly newsletter seeks to highlight global trade topics and their importance to Customs Administrations worldwide and specifically how they affect the Jamaica Customs Agency. As we realize our vision of becoming a modern Customs administration delivering excellent service, we recognize the importance of knowledge transfer in delivering our objectives and use this forum as our way of contributing to the vision of the JCA. The International Liaison Unit is located at the Myers Wharf head office and our officers are available to respond to your queries and clarify any points of concern.

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