



**World Customs  
Organization**

# WCO Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

**Johanna Törnström**, Project Manager and  
Gender Equality and Diversity Expert

**Knowledge Academy**

June 2023

# Introduction

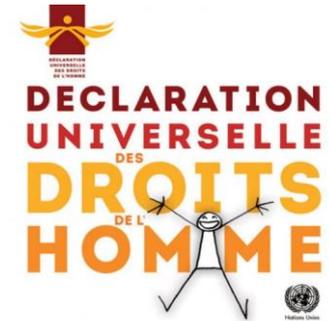


- **Why** is Gender Equality and Diversity **important** for Customs?
- Implementing Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs – **common challenges** identified
- **Gender balance** in Customs – current situation
- **WCO initiatives and tools** developed to support GED (GEOAT, e-learning modules, Declaration, examples of capacity building support)
- **Examples by Members:** South Africa, Germany, Uganda

# Why is Gender Equality and Diversity important for Customs?



- **Rights:** United Nation’s Declaration of Human Rights (1948).
- **International objectives:** part of the UN’s Goals for Sustainable Development for 2030, objective 5 – Achieve gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.
- **Results and sustainability:** Helps to improve general results and to secure the sustainability of activities.
- **Democracy:** Customs, as a public administration should represent the society which it serves.
- **“Smart Economics”:** Persons with different backgrounds bring different perspectives and ideas to the organization, which can increase efficiency.
- **Well-being:** Improved working conditions and work environment can enhance motivation and increase efficiency.



# Implementing Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs



- WCO represents 185 Members all over the world, thus a **large variety** in the different levels of engagement in diversity and inclusiveness issues.
- While some countries primarily focus on gender equality, others have a broader diversity and inclusiveness perspective.
- The level of engagement in these issues is often directly linked to countries **national policy framework**.

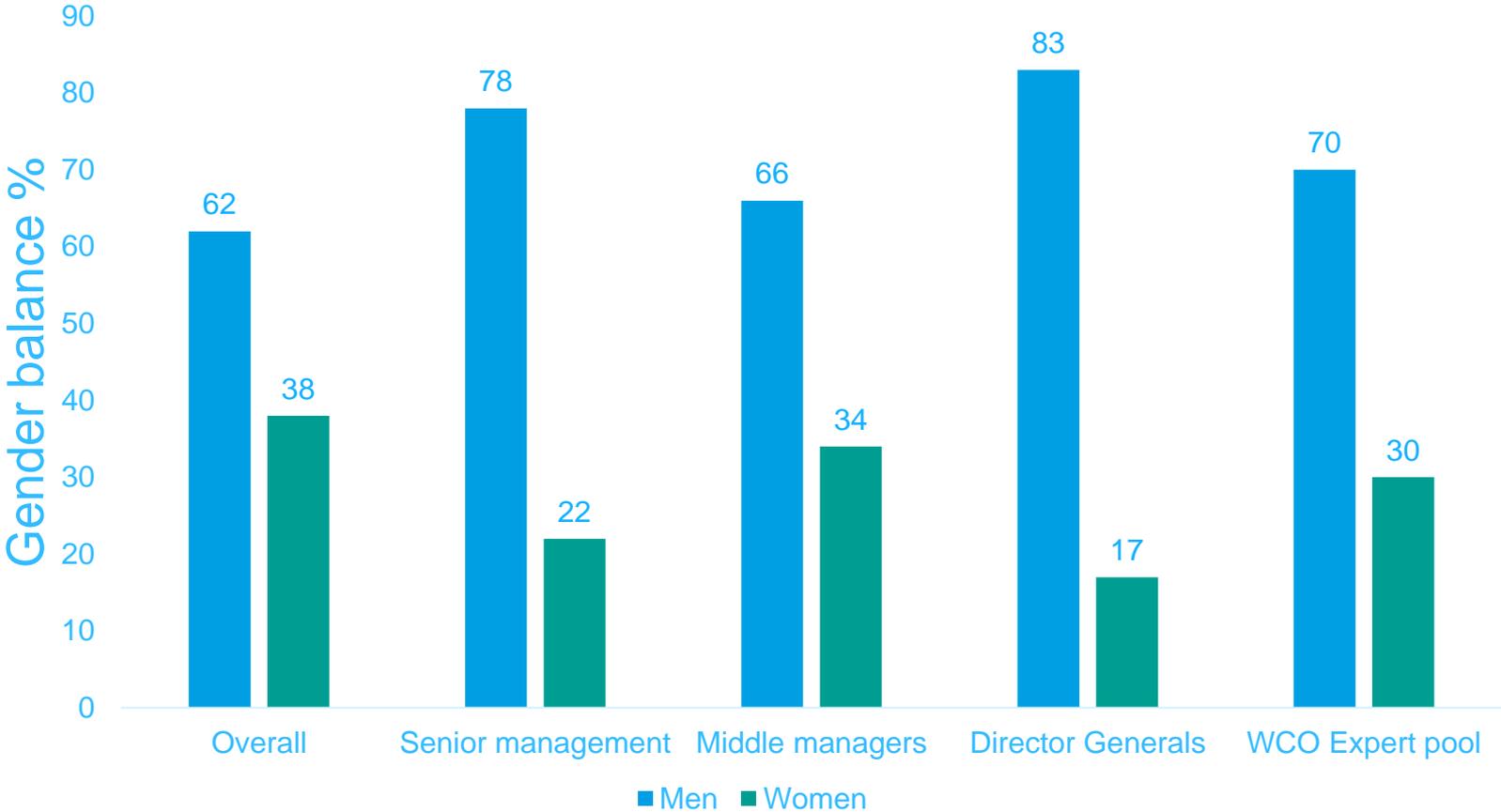
## Common challenges:

- **Lack of knowledge:** especially how these issues relates to and are important for the work of Customs and that successfully implementing gender responsive and inclusive measures requires proactive efforts both internally and externally.
- **Lack of written policies and documents:** Although practices are sometimes in place, they are not necessarily formalized or documented which prevents consistency and sustainability.
- **Lack of data and monitoring frameworks:** Which prevents Members from identifying gaps and measuring progress over time.
- **Lack of coordination:** For successful implementation of gender responsive and inclusive measures it is recommended to have an action plan/framework, and a structure that coordinates, supports the implementation and monitoring of initiatives.

# Gender ratio



## WCO Annual survey 2022 – WCO Expert pool

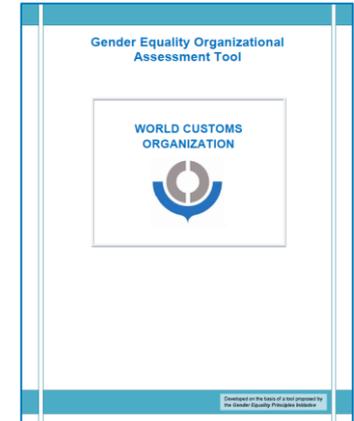


# Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs



## Tools:

- **Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool (GEOAT)** (developed in 2013 and updated in 2019, second update planned for 2023)
- **Blended Training Package:** Including a one week face to face training and two e-learning modules available in the CLiKC! Platform (**first** one launched in 2018 and the **second** one launched in 2021)
- **Compendium of Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs** (first edition launched March 2021, second edition launch in March 2023)



## Declaration:

- **WCO Declaration on Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs** (adopted by the WCO Council December 2020)

## GED survey in Customs

- Dedicated surveys conducted 2016 and 2019
- Since 2022 questions on GED are integrated into the WCO annual survey



# Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs



- **Bodies to promote an exchange of experiences:**

- **Virtual Working Group** for Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs (launched in 2017 meeting twice per year) and
- **Network** for Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs (launched in 2022 meeting once per year)
- **Regional chapters** of the Virtual Working Group and the Network for GED (launched in 2022)



- **New initiatives:**

- Develop a **pool of Recognized experts on GED** in Customs (2023)
- Plan to **update the GEOAT** under the WASP project component on gender equality



- **Internal initiatives WCO:**

- Internal GED organizational assessment based on the GEOAT (2021)
- Draft internal Action plan to be presented for the Policy Commission (2023)

# WCO Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool (GEOAT)



- A **self-assessment tool** that assists Customs Administrations to assess their current policies, practices and activities to address gender equality issues **internally (within the organization)** and **externally (towards the public)**.
  - Definitions
  - Implementing Gender Mainstreaming through project management
  - Cross cutting policies
  - Employment & Compensation (Recruitment, Salary)
  - Work-life balance & Career Development
  - Health, Safety & Freedom of violence (Prevention of harassment)
  - Governance & Leadership
  - Customs Administrations & Stakeholder Relations



*2023: Further updates will be made to cover areas including Communication, Integrity and Security.*

# Indonesia: Example how to use the GEOAT



## GEOAT: 5 PRINCIPLES AND 81 INDICATORS



# e-learning modules on GED in Customs



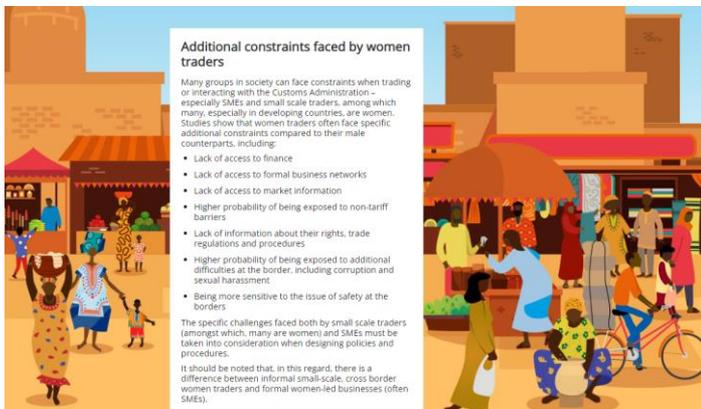
## 1<sup>st</sup> module – Gender Equality in Customs



- Why gender equality matters
- Understanding Gender Equality
- Internal policies
- External policies
- WCO supports gender equality
- Implementing gender equality

## 2<sup>nd</sup> module – Implementing Gender Equality and Inclusion in Customs

- Introduction
- Using the GEOAT
- Gender Analysis
- Gender Mainstreaming
- Gender Sensitive and Inclusive communication
- Stakeholder engagement



# WCO Declaration on GED in Customs



1. Calls on Customs administrations to **adopt a policy of non-discrimination** on the basis of gender, ethnicity and/or any other grounds as stated in anti-discrimination laws in Member's respective countries;
2. Encourages Customs administrations to **share their experiences** regarding the implementation of gender equality and diversity in Customs;
3. Encourages Customs administrations to **share best practices related to monitoring and evaluation** methodologies for assessing the progress on gender equality and diversity in Customs, including the collection of sex-disaggregated data, and to engage in voluntary reporting on the progress of this work;
4. Advocates for enhanced **cooperation with relevant stakeholders** on the topic of gender equality and diversity, including with other government agencies (OGAs), the private sector stakeholders (including associations representing women traders) and border associations, to foster a harmonized and coordinated approach in implementing a gender equal and inclusive Customs environment throughout the whole trade process;



## WCO Declaration on GED in Customs

5. Supports the **promotion of work-life balance** for Customs employees, offering flexible work arrangements whenever possible, to promote a healthy work environment for staff;
6. Underlines the importance of **preventing any type of harassment and/or gender-based violence** in all areas of Customs, among staff or committed by staff towards the public and vice versa;
7. Encourages Customs administrations to continue **promoting leadership development opportunities** for women and other under-represented groups through targeted initiatives such as mentor programmes; and
8. Encourages the **WCO Secretariat**, as a representative of the diverse WCO Membership, to commit **to and share its policies on gender equality and diversity**, as an encouragement to Customs administrations. |

# Examples of capacity building support:



- GED organizational assessments (diagnostics) based on the GEOAT
- **2020-2022:** Brazil, Philippines, South Africa, India, Liberia and Zambia (on virtual basis under the framework of the United Kingdom funded Accelerate Trade Facilitation Programme)
- **2023:** Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo (in country missions under the framework of the West Africa Security Project (WASP) funded by the Germany)



# GED training based on the WCO Blended Training Package



- **2018 (in South Africa):** For the benefit of 8 Customs administrations under the framework of the Finland East and Southern Africa (ESA) Programme
- **2019 (in Mauritius):** For the benefit of 9 Customs administrations under the framework of the Finland ESA Programme
- **2021 (virtual):** For the benefit of 4 Customs administrations under the framework of the ATF Programme funded by the UK and the SIDA- WCO Capacity building programme funded by Sweden
- **2023 (in Uganda):** For the benefit of 11 Customs administrations under the framework of the SIDA- WCO Capacity building programme funded by Sweden





# South Africa Revenue Service (SARS):



- Started implementing a **Gender Mainstreaming programme in 2016**
- Developed several **policy documents** including its Employment Equity Plan, Code of Conduct, Recruitment Policy, Sexual Harassment Prevention plan.
- Established a **Wellness office** that organizes several events on work life balance.
- Appointed an officer in charge of **Gender Based Violence (GBV)** and has drafted a **pledge** to make the administration a **GBV free zone**.
- Appointed **Equity and Disability Ambassadors** among staff who act as spokespersons and a liaison between staff and management, raise issues of concern or to be improved.
- Developed a **“Women in Leadership” programme** to support women in their career development.
- **Organizes trainings and events**, for instance on disability, GBV and “Women’s Month”.



# German Central Customs Authority



- **Legal system to support GED** – most recent law “*Federal Act on Gender Equality*”, which instructs all federal agencies, including Customs Authority, with approximately 42.000 staff among which 42 % are women, to implement measures to improve GED.
- **“Gender Equality Officers”**
  - (who are always female) in each office, elected by the female employees.
  - Relieved from 50-100% of their daily duties to allow them to dedicate sufficient time to the GE tasks.
  - Supported by 1-3 deputies and – and when appropriate – assistants to complete the work.
- **Gender Equality Officers are responsible for:**
  - **advising and monitoring** the administration in the implementation,
  - **execution and evaluation** of the legal measures related to gender equality
  - **Drafting and publishing** handouts and newsletters about relevant topics such as maternity protection and parental leave, sexual harassment, as well as care of family members and relatives.
  - Can also **take initiatives** and/or **launch campaigns** to set priorities in areas that needs further improvement.
- German Customs is also **promoting the advancement of women within its administration**, from the recruitment phase, staff development and training and also in promoting work-life balance.
- German Customs **conducted the GEOAT assessment** in collaboration with various units.



# Uganda Revenue Authority



- 2017: Survey identified **unique challenges** faced by women cross border traders
- 2018: Conducted 38 sensitization trainings on customs procedures for women traders reaching approximately 400 women;
- Provide **free storage of goods (warehouses)** at OSBPs.
- Developed **simplified information material** on trade procedures and translated it into several **local languages**.
- Provide **fully furnished facilities** at the OSBPs equipped with computers to allow women traders to get organized.
- Developed specific **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** for officers working at border posts with responsibility to implement gender responsive measures.
- **Organized stakeholder meetings** with representatives from other border agencies, including **police, security agencies and immigration authorities** to advocate for support to implement gender responsive measures.





**World Customs  
Organization**

**Thank you!**

**Johanna Törnström**, Project Manager and Gender Equality and Diversity Expert

[Johanna.Tornstrom@wcoomd.org](mailto:Johanna.Tornstrom@wcoomd.org)



Gender Equality VWG

