

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR DEPARTMENTAL FOCAL POINTS

Secretary-General's bulletin: Annotated Terms of Reference for Departmental focal points, October 2009

Departmental focal points for women in the Secretariat

The Secretary-General, pursuant to Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/282 of 5 January 1996, entitled "Policies to achieve gender equality in the United Nations," hereby promulgates the following:

Section 1. Functions

1.1 Departmental focal points for women shall be appointed in each department, office, regional commission and mission (hereinafter department/office/mission).

Good Practice 1. The Adjustment of Number of Formally Appointed Departmental Focal Points by Size of Department/Office/Mission

- Large departments may wish to have more than one focal point, as some departments/offices/missions have done: CTED, DM/OCSS, DM/OPPBA, DPI, DPKO/DFS, DSS, OIOS, UNCTAD, UNJSPF, and OCHA.

Good Practice 2. USG's Announcement of Departmental Focal Points at Staff and/or Town Hall Meetings

- Some USGs have announced departmental focal points and their alternates at staff and/or town hall meetings: CTED and DPI, DPKO/ DFS.

Good Practice 3. USG's Introduction of Departmental Focal Points to Staff via Email

- Some USGs have introduced their departmental focal points to staff via email: CTED, DPI Vienna, DPKO/DFS, OCHA and UNCTAD.

Good Practice 4. USG's Introduction of Departmental Focal Point to Staff via Posters

- A USG has made focal point existence and functions more visible to their department by creating a poster that highlights what they do, comparative statistics on gender balance in the UN secretariat, and the names and contacts of the departmental focal points: ICTY.

Good Practice 5. Departmental Focal Point Websites

- Some focal points and alternates have created a focal point website for their department in order to facilitate regular communication and consultation with all staff on issues related to women and gender equality: OCHA, OHCHR, ICTY.

1.2 Departmental focal points shall provide support to the head of department/office/mission in fulfilling his or her responsibilities for the achievement of gender equality in the department/office/mission.

Good Practice 6. USG's Regular Meetings with Departmental Focal Points

- Some USGs have monthly/ quarterly meetings with departmental focal points and alternates: DPI and DFS/LSD, OHCHR.

1.3 The network of the departmental focal points shall be coordinated by the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women.

Good Practice 7. Monthly Meetings for the Network of the Departmental Focal Points

- The network of departmental focal points meets on a monthly basis, with additional special meetings as required. Informal meetings are held every two months.

1.4 The Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women shall be responsible for providing the departmental focal points with relevant training in order for the focal points to carry out the functions set out in the present bulletin.

Good Practice 8. Training Sessions for Focal Points Organized by OHRM and the OFPW

- The Office of the Focal Point for Women coordinates with OHRM to train departmental focal points in areas needed to fulfil their role (e.g. in navigating human resource systems, competency based interview training and collaborative negotiation skills).

1.5 Further details on the functions of the departmental focal points are set out below.

Section 2. Support for the head of department/office/mission

2.1 Departmental focal points for women shall support the head of department/office/mission in fulfilling his or her responsibilities for the achievement of gender equality in the department/office/mission by:

- (a) Promoting greater awareness of gender issues and a gender-sensitive work environment in the department/office/mission;
- (b) Providing advocacy and counsel to female staff in the department/office/mission;
- (c) Monitoring progress towards the achievement of gender targets;
- (d) Contributing to the development and realization of gender targets as set out in the human resources action plans and the senior managers' compacts;
- (e) Advising in the staff selection process, with a view to ensuring that the goal of reaching gender balance is taken into account.

Good Practice 9. Development of Gender Guidelines

- Some departmental focal points have developed 'A Note on 'Advancing Gender Equality via the Staff Selection Process'. These guidelines are systematically provided by the Executive Office to each new Program Case Officer (PCO) to ensure that the civilian staff selection process complies gender balance related rules and regulations, and advances the objectives of gender balance and the focus is on the steps that are within the purview of the PCOs: DPKO (See Annex 1).

Good Practice 10. A New Approach to Maternity Leave

- Some departmental focal points have assisted in developing a new departmental approach relating to the extension of contracts of temporary and fixed-term staff on maternity leave: DPKO/DFS (See Annex 2).

Good Practice 10b. Ensuring respect for the UN's Breastfeeding Policy

- One departmental focal point has helped ensure that the Breastfeeding Policy (ST/SGB/2003/14) is fully respected within the relocations warranted by the Capital Master Plan: DPKO.

Good Practice 10c. Combine Work/ Life balance with UN's Breastfeeding Policy

- The departmental focal points of ECLAC have succeeded in reaching agreement with Administration such that lactating staff members may choose to combine the two hours granted under the breastfeeding policy for breastfeeding purposes to the end of the working day. In effect, this arrangement allows breastfeeding mothers to work without breaks from 9:00 to 14:30 and then go home: ECLAC.

Good Practice 11. Presentations on Gender Balance Issues

- OSAGI/ Office of the Focal Point for Women and departmental focal points have given presentations about gender balance issues relevant to the particular department/office/mission: CTED and OCHA.

Good Practice 12. Posting Articles on iSeek that Encourage the Use of Flexible Work Arrangement Policies

- Some departmental focal points have posted articles on iSeek showcasing managers who have implemented flexible work arrangements within their teams while maintaining high standards and quality outputs: DFS and DPKO.

2.2 Executive, administrative and other relevant responsible offices shall systematically provide the departmental focal points for women with the information they need in order to effectively exercise their functions, including:

- (a) Staffing statistics of the relevant department/office/mission;
- (b) Information on forthcoming vacancies in the department/office/mission, including temporary ones;
- (c) Names of candidates for posts in the department/office/mission;
- (d) Rosters of recommended candidates for posts in the department/office/mission.

Section 3. Participation in the staff selection process

3.1 Departmental focal points for women shall contribute to the evaluation of candidates, in the context of the staff selection process in departments/offices/missions, by:

- (a) Reviewing applications from candidates, including those on the rosters, to ensure that all eligible women candidates are given due consideration;
- (b) Reviewing the list of recommended candidates prior to submission to the respective central review bodies to ensure that women candidates have been duly considered, and providing comments to the head of department/office/mission, as appropriate;
- (c) Assisting programme managers in promoting gender balance on the interview panels;
- (d) Observing, where feasible, interviews of candidates and expressing their views to the programme manager and the head of department/office/mission.

Good Practice 13. Availability of System Access for Focal Points to View All Applicants

- The provision of systematic access to Galaxy or the new Talent Management System shall be made available for focal points to access the PHPs of all applicants.

Good Practice 14. List of Regular and Temporary Vacancies Circulated to Focal Points Monthly

- Some executive, administrative and other relevant offices share the list of eligible candidates for vacancies at the professional level with focal points and provide them with five business days to comment on the recommendations before forwarding cases to the CR bodies: CTED, DFS/LSD, DPI, and UNJSPF.

Good Practice 15. Focal Points Provided with Written Verification in Cases where PCOs are Unable to Identify Any Female Candidates Meeting the Interview Requirements.

- Some executive, administrative and other relevant offices inform focal points when there are no female candidates on the interview list: UNJSPF.

Good Practice 16. Development and Implementation of Gender Guidelines (same as Good Practice 9.)

3.2 Departmental focal points for women may provide comments, through the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, to the relevant central review bodies in cases where eligible women candidates are not on the list of candidates recommended for vacancies in their departments/offices/missions.

3.3 At departments/offices/missions away from Headquarters where the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women cannot be represented on the local central review bodies, departmental focal points for women shall serve as ex officio advisers on the local central review bodies.

3.4 The departmental focal points for women shall advise the head of the department/office/mission with a view to ensuring that the gender perspective is taken into consideration in the selection of staff for vacant posts in the Professional category or above, including compliance with requirements in section 9.2 of administrative instruction ST/AI/2006/3 of 15 November 2006, entitled “Staff selection system”.

3.5 The departmental focal point shall assist the head of department/office/mission in workforce planning with a view to promoting and retaining women in Professional posts in order to reach gender targets.

Good Practice 17. Participation in Interview Panels

- Some department focal points have worked with their respective personnel offices to fulfil the goals of gender balance requirements and geographic representation by participating in interview panels for position openings: CTED, DPI, DFS.

Good Practice 18. Improvement of Gender Aspects in the Interview Process

Some offices are working on improving gendered aspects of the interview process. They are doing this in two ways: 1) Training interviewers in gender sensitivity; and 2) Developing interview materials for female staff so that they are prepared for future job selection processes: The Hague.

Section 4. Advocacy and counselling

4.1 The departmental focal points for women shall be available to counsel, advise and assist women staff within their departments/offices/missions on:

- (a) Issues affecting their career development (e.g., career planning, work/life balance) or conditions of service, bringing their concerns, as necessary, to the head of the department/office/mission, staff of the Office of Human Resources Management or the local personnel office or Executive Office, and staff of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women;
- (b) Methods to resolve and/or report situations involving harassment, including sexual harassment, discrimination or abuse.

Good Practice 19. Training for Focal Points on the Prevention of Workplace Harassment

- OFPW to provide guidance and training for focal points on how to refer cases of harassment, including sexual harassment, discrimination or abuse to the appropriate officials in the system in accordance with their specific mandates.

4.2 Departmental focal points for women shall provide advice and support training initiatives within departments/offices/missions on gender sensitivity, work/life balance and career path strategies, and encourage greater participation of women in training programmes.

Section 5. Monitoring

5.1 Departmental focal points for women shall regularly monitor progress made towards the achievement of the gender targets and participate in joint meetings between the Office of Human Resources Management or local administrative offices and department/office/mission managers to assess such progress.

5.2 Departmental focal points for women shall assist the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women in monitoring efforts to achieve gender balance, including 50/50 gender distribution at the Professional level and above, and in evaluation procedures taken to develop and maintain a gender-sensitive and supportive work environment and to enhance training and career development opportunities.

Good Practice 20. Development of the Gender Balance Scorecard

- The gender balance scorecard includes the following information: statistics on gender representation, information on the use of flexible working arrangements, functioning of the gender focal point system, selection of women from the roster, and other relevant indicators as well as innovative measures taken to facilitate recruitment, promotion and retention of women.

Good Practice 21. Periodical Review of the Gender Balance Scorecard

- The gender balance scorecard will be reviewed by the Management Committee twice yearly (June & December) as part of the assessment of performance and progress made by each department and office in reaching the gender targets outlined in the Senior Manager Compacts.

Good Practice 22. Departmental Study on Promoting a Positive Work Environment

- Some departmental focal points have conducted a department-wide study on staff perceptions of the work environment and have developed an action plan based on the findings: DPKO/DFS and CTED (see Annex 3).

5.3 Departmental focal points for women shall promote the implementation of work/life balance policies, such as those set out in Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2003/4 of 24 January 2003, entitled "Flexible working arrangements", in their respective departments/offices/missions. Executive, administrative and other relevant responsible offices shall systematically share with them relevant information on the implementation of such policies.

Good Practice 23. Discussion on Flexible Working Arrangements in Townhall meetings

- Some departmental focal points have discussed Flexible Working Arrangements in townhall meetings: DPKO/DFS and DESA.

Good Practice 24. Executive, Administrative and Other Relevant Offices' Provision of Information to Focal Points

- Executive, administrative and other relevant offices to systematically provide departmental focal points with relevant information on the implementation of work/life balance policies in department/office/mission.

Good Practice 25. Survey on Flexible Working Arrangements

- The performance of Flexible Working Arrangements is measured by a survey conducted by the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women.

Good Practice 26. Departmental Flexible Working Arrangements

- As the result of a staff survey, one departmental focal point, worked with the Administration Division, the Staff Counsel and the Executive Secretary to institute Flexible Working Arrangements i.e. longer hours for 4 days with early departure on Fridays initially during summer and then extended to year round: ECLAC.

5.4 Departmental focal points for women shall assist the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women in the development of policies and programmes for the achievement of gender equality in the Secretariat by contributing ideas, comments and experiences on issues affecting the status of women.

Section 6. Selection of departmental focal points for women

6.1 Departmental focal points for women should have a strong commitment to the goal of gender equality in the Secretariat and shall demonstrate the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity.

6.2 Departmental focal points for women cannot be involved in any matter in which there reasonably could be a conflict of interest. Therefore, staff representatives, staff of the Executive Office and staff in the immediate office of the head of department/office/mission shall not be eligible for selection as departmental focal points for women. Departmental focal points for women who are also voting members of the relevant central review bodies shall recuse themselves from meetings of the central review bodies that are considering cases that have been reviewed by the focal points at earlier stages in the process.

6.3 Each department/office/mission shall select at least one departmental focal point for women. Each departmental focal point for women shall have an alternate. Candidates from the Professional and higher categories and from the General Service and related categories may serve as departmental focal points. The departmental focal points shall serve for renewable terms of two years.

6.4 The head of the department/office/mission shall invite expressions of interest from staff who are willing to serve as departmental focal points for women.

6.5 Departmental focal points for women shall be selected by the head of the department/office/mission following staff-management consultations at the departmental/office/mission level, in accordance with the provisions of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/274 of 28 September 1994, entitled "Procedures and terms of reference of the staff-management consultation machinery at the departmental or office level", or by a secret-ballot election held at the request of either the head of the department/office/mission or the staff representatives of that department/office/ mission. The election shall be organized under the supervision of representatives of both the staff and the management of the department/office/mission concerned.

Section 7. Authority and respect for confidentiality

7.1 Departmental focal points for women shall have access to all information necessary for the discharge of their functions, as required. They shall have access to statistics on gender balance in their departments/offices/missions, as well as access to staff of the Executive Office or local personnel office, as well as to senior management of the department/office/mission, as required, to carry out their duties. The principle of confidentiality must be respected by all in the process of the focal points discharging their functions.

Section 8. Final provisions

8.1 The present bulletin shall enter into force on 1 August 2008.

8.2 Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1999/19 of 20 December 1999, entitled "Departmental focal points for women in the Secretariat", is hereby abolished.

Annex 1 A Note on Advancing Gender Equality via the Staff Selection Process: Summary

Guidance for Programme Case Officers (PCO) 1 October 2007 (modified December 2007)

DPKO and DFS are committed to advancing gender balance within the departments, and to ensuring that each staff member is able to incorporate gender perspectives in their areas of work:

Civilian personnel recruitment, retention and promotion procedures shall be planned to advance gender balance among DPKO headquarters and mission staff, including at senior management levels; shall adopt active steps to improve hiring procedures, including selection and interview processes; ensure the inclusion of language which underlines commitment to gender equality principles in all vacancy announcements; ensure the inclusion of qualified female candidates on all shortlists particularly for senior level appointments; and ensure dedicated resources to support outreach activities to identify women candidates for senior level positions.¹

Programme Case Officers (PCOs) can ensure that the civilian staff selection process advances these objectives. This note focuses on those steps within the purview of PCOs.

Other colleagues have complementary responsibilities, such as targeted outreach to attract more qualified female applicants, review of retention and promotion procedures, provision of training and guidance to serving staff members, and evaluation of staff competence and commitment to gender equality in the annual performance appraisals.

Checklist for PCO/HRCO/EO

- √ Gender equality competency language included in EC/VA.
- √ Qualified female candidates sought from among all applicants and short-listed for interview.
- √ Questions included in interview to elicit evidence of competency in gender equality.
- √ Evaluations in Galaxy of interviewed candidates reflect suitability in area of gender equality.
- √ Rostering and selection is undertaken in accordance with UN regulations and DPKO/DFS policy on geographic distribution and gender balance.

¹ 2006 DPKO Policy Directive on “Gender Equality in UN Peacekeeping Operations”

Annex 2 A New Approach of DPKO/DFS to Maternity Leave

DPKO/DFS policy on extension of pregnant staff

For pregnant staff on temporary or fixed-term contracts, who have at least one year of service in DPKO/DFS prior to the start of their maternity leave, and whose job performance has fully met expectations shall, prior to taking their maternity leave, and to the extent possible, have their contract extended for at least three months post-maternity leave to enable them to compete for vacancies upon their return. Under the secretariat wide policy ST/AI/2005/2 fixed-term appointments that expire less than six weeks before the anticipated date of delivery are extended to cover the full duration of maternity leave.

Annex 3 Promoting a Positive Work Environment in DPKO/DFS: Executive Summary

20 January 2009

From June-December 2008 the DPKO Focal Point for Women undertook a study on “Promoting a Positive Workplace in DPKO/DFS”, with the support of the Under-Secretaries-General for DPKO and DFS, the Executive Office, a Steering Committee of DPKO/DFS colleagues, and funds provided by the Gender Adviser’s Office in PBPS/DPET. The study sought to identify what matters to staff in the work environment, how adequately their actual workplace measures up to their ideal, and whether men and women differ in their assessment of what is needed in the workplace. The intention was to identify those factors that will contribute to a “positive work environment”, which stimulates staff members to achieve their fullest potential, provides opportunities for professional growth, engenders commitment to the organization, and allows staff to integrate their work and personal lives in a satisfactory and meaningful way. Such an environment tends to attract and retain qualified women and ensure their promotion to decision-making positions. All personnel benefit from such an environment because there is a high correlation between gender balance at senior management levels and productive work places.

Drawing on data gained from a web-based survey in which all headquarters staff were invited to participate, and which enjoyed a 43% response rate, supplemented by focus group discussions and interviews, the study explored the perceptions of personnel regarding their ideal and actual workplace, with particular reference to recruitment and promotion, work-life balance and the management culture.

With regard to the ideal and actual workplace, male and female staff attached similarly high levels of importance to fair and transparent recruitment, promotion and performance appraisal processes, positive relationships with management and with colleagues, opportunities for professional development, and issues related to work-life balance.

Male and female staff are equally disappointed over the extent to which the actual workplace measures up to their ideal in the following areas:

- fair recruitment processes
- fair promotion processes
- fair performance appraisal processes
- respectful treatment by managers
- managerial accountability to address abuse of authority
- the availability of career planning or guidance,
- the availability of job-related training that may lead to a promotion or mobility.

Female staff indicated a greater degree of disappointment than males with their actual environments in a number of areas that should be addressed:

- fair performance appraisal processes
- ability to take advantage of flexible work arrangements
- reasonable working hours
- manageable levels of stress from deadlines
- respectful treatment by managers
- high level of autonomy in getting your work done
- possibility of working on issues that are important to you
- recognition of your work by senior managers
- working collaboratively with colleagues as a team
- supportive relationships with colleagues
- language and behavior that is respectful of women and men
- managerial accountability to address sexual harassment
- managerial accountability to address abuse of authority
- gender balance in working level
- gender balance in senior levels.

Career development, training, promotion: Virtually all personnel at DPKO/DFS (over 90%) find fair, transparent and competency-based recruitment and promotion processes to be very important to a satisfactory working environment. Yet there is widespread concern, reflected in responses to open-ended questions, and in focus group and interview discussions, that the promotion processes are unsatisfactory, driven often by “who you know” rather than “what you know”. As a result of what many managers report to be cumbersome and unduly time-consuming staff selection procedures, they resort frequently to short-term contract modalities, which have the advantage of providing a flow of generally well-qualified people to fill vacancies. However, this modality is extremely stressful for some of the staff concerned. While it presents rapid opportunities to gain experience, this recruitment modality offers no job security and requires staff to engage in extensive networking in the constant search for the next contract.

Similar concerns were expressed over the performance appraisal system (e-PAS), which is felt to be inconsistently applied and therefore to have limited credibility. Many respondents expressed interest in a stronger career development framework.

Work-life balance: Most respondents felt that tension over work-life balance is a negative aspect of their work environment. Survey respondents were largely aware of the various policies intended to support greater work-life balance. Women tended to know more about the work-life policies than men, and the policies are used more often by longer serving staff, staff with young children and staff on regularized contracts. Mid-level women expressed the greatest level of disappointment over the inability to take advantage of work-life balance policies.

Staff hesitate to make use of work-life policies due to the active or implicit discouragement from managers regarding their use, peer pressure, the culture of “face-time” or the perception that taking advantage of such policies may be career threatening. Where managers are sympathetic and allow staff to avail of these policies, they often do so quietly. Good work planning would improve the length of the work day and a supportive management style might encourage more staff to take advantage of work-life policies. Staff would appreciate a full discussion of how to use the policies to enhance

workplace satisfaction and productivity, and a clear lead on this issue from senior management.

Key role of management: Many respondents noted with appreciation the positive role that managers can play in providing guidance, mentoring, support, protection and space to grow. However, widespread concern was reported that the organization is failing to ensure the systematic development of a management cadre with the necessary knowledge, skills and personal attributes to carry out their responsibilities in such a way that staff feel engaged and valued. There was widespread support for the planned improvements in management training.

The study found a general concern that the development of management capacity in DPKO/DFS should include the specific skills and competencies needed in the highly challenging and dynamic peacekeeping environment, with a particular emphasis on delegation (and avoidance of micro-management), work-planning, even-handed distribution of high-visibility tasks, communication and “people management”. There was concern that both upward and downward communication is in need of improvement in the two departments, that managers and supervisors should be required to draw on the full range of experience and expertise of their staff, and should understand the role that managers can play in exacerbating or minimizing the sense of stress that derives from contract uncertainty and the feeling of not being valued by managers.

Gender balance: Gender balance, both among peers and at the decision-making level, was deemed very or somewhat important in an ideal workplace by 85% of respondents. Several reasons were cited, including the additional range of experiences that women bring to the workplace, the sense that a gender balanced organization is an inherently positive factor, and a commitment to gender balance as a matter of equal rights. Gender balance is important to many women, although in the actual workplace very few women experience their managers promoting it, whereas mid-level men feel that gender balance is less important and yet report the impression that their managers are promoting it.

Both men and women express concerns regarding the implementation of the gender balance policy in DPKO/DFS, particularly in the context of recruitment and promotion processes that are deemed unfair and lacking in transparency. Men, especially those at mid-levels, expressed concern that the policy is excluding them from advancement within the Departments. Women expressed concern that their promotions are tainted with the stigma of having been promoted largely due to the gender balance requirement. In short, many women do not feel served by the policy, and some men feel their careers are unfairly threatened by it.