



Gender-Aware Guidelines for Policy-making and Regulatory Agencies¹

These gender-aware guidelines for policy-making and regulatory agencies are intended to assist decision makers in the conduct of their work to ensure that both women and men are considered in the process –as part of the processes themselves as well as in considering the impact of decisions. However, it has been clear from years of experience that so-called gender-neutral policies or rules are not enough. The evidence lies in the facts: women are vastly under-represented in government, business, political and social institutions; men still hold most of the management and control positions in telecommunication companies and regulatory or policy making bodies; regulatory decisions are often made without impact analysis; and service licenses are attributed to companies without equal opportunity policies and are controlled mostly by men.

The following are a set of guidelines, with a brief discussion of each point. They can be used to ensure that gender-sensitive analysis becomes an integral part of licensing and regulatory activities. Successful implementation of these guidelines requires the development and promotion of such policies within the institutions seeking transformation into a gender-aware environment, e.g., acceptance of these guidelines, in total or in partial form, as part of the institution's rules of conduct. The process of implementing these guidelines should also be conducted with full participation of all parties, and, if possible, with participation of gender experts to ensure better understanding of the issues and avoid unproductive resistance to the process.

GENERAL

- **Facilitate and promote the establishment of a Gender Unit within the Regulatory Agency, Ministry, and/or as an inter-agency effort**

Regulatory and policy making agencies should establish units or inter-agency units to promote gender awareness and perspectives and further facilitate the process of mainstreaming gender in the institutions' processes and work.

- **Review and revise regulations, circulars, issuances and procedures to remove any gender bias**

Regulatory and policy making bodies should review and revise regulations to remove any gender bias that disadvantage women.

- **Promote gender-sensitive analysis as part of a policy review process**

¹ Prepared by Sonia Jorge for the ITU-BDT Task Force on Gender Issues, July 2001.

Gender-sensitive analysis is required to ensure that a policy review process is based on facts and analysis rather than assumptions. It is a means of increasing the quality and effectiveness of a new policy as well as supporting gender equality. A gender-sensitive analysis should provide information and analysis about services provided and about users who will be targeted or affected by a particular regulation.

- **Develop and establish systems to gather sex-disaggregated statistics**

Regulatory and policy making bodies should work in conjunction with National Statistics Bureaus or other statistics agencies, such as the census bureau, to develop sex disaggregated statistics and gender-sensitive indicators.²

- **Dialogue with other national entities**

To assist in harmonizing national efforts, regulatory and policy-making agencies should promote contacts with other ministries and bodies that govern national policy on access and education issues.

HUMAN RESOURCES

- **Ensure equal hiring opportunities for all women and men, regardless of race, ethnicity, class and age**

Women and men should be afforded equal opportunity to *all* positions available in any institution. Institutions should ensure that all positions are advertised in public channels and in venues available to a diversified group of candidates i.e., women and men of different racial, ethnic, class and age groups.

In addition, where appropriate, establish “affirmative action” policies or quotas, based on the real levels of qualified people for each position, to ensure equal opportunity and avoid any tendencies to increase labor segmentation and/or occupational segregation in the work place.

- **Ensure that a certain percentage of all supervisory and management positions are occupied by women**

Institutions should establish a policy to raise the number of women in all supervisory and management positions at all levels of work, from clerical to top management.

- **Develop campaigns to attract female professionals, particularly for technical and decision making positions**

Institutions should develop hiring campaigns to attract female professionals to work in technical, regulatory and policy making positions. Such campaigns can be developed in coordination with other governmental bodies as part of an overall campaign to increase the number of women at all levels and areas of work in the telecommunications sector.

² South Africa is a good example as this country’s census includes some sex-disaggregated statistics.

- **Develop and ensure the existence of appropriate support systems for professional women and men**

Institutions should provide support systems for professional women and men, access to training opportunities, flexible work schedules, sexual harassment and day care. Such systems not only facilitate women's participation but also increase workers' productivity and dedication.

- **Ensure that there are no wage disparities among women and men and establish a policy to eliminate any such gaps**

Human resources divisions should ensure fair and non-discriminatory salary practices, where disparities occur, these should be corrected.

TRAINING

- **Ensure equal access to training opportunities**

Regulatory and policy making institutions must ensure equal access to all training opportunities domestically and internationally. Women should not be discriminated against because of other responsibilities e.g., motherhood.

- **Support technical and management programs that train female professionals and create internship programs with such institutions**

Partnerships with educational programs (such as business, law or engineering) may increase the potential for future business ventures headed by women in the telecommunications sector.

LICENSING ACTIVITIES

Licensing activities are associated with the process of awarding authorization for service provision in the telecommunications sector. This is usually the responsibility of the regulator, which, in addition to setting licensing criteria and rules, is responsible for awarding the licenses themselves. As such, regulators are also responsible to ensure that the licensing process does not in any way discriminate against and/or favor any particular group. The following guidelines provide a basic checklist of issues that should be followed by regulators or those responsible for the licensing process. These guidelines assume that the implementing agency also follows the general gender-aware guidelines for regulatory purposes.

- **Licenses should be awarded to companies that maintain a certain proportion of women-owners or women in top management positions**

Licensing criteria should give preference to companies with a higher percentage of women's ownership and/or women in management positions. Institutions should establish a policy to promote a minimum percentage of women ownership and/or women in management positions for those companies interested in entering the communications market.

- **Develop and market licensing procedures where potential women owners can have access to the information**

Ensure that licensing procedures and advertisements are placed in public sources and in particular those that women have access to, such as newspapers, universities, local and regional commerce associations, women's organizations, the internet and specific web pages of interest to business women.

- **Develop license award criteria based on social responsibility of the business as well as universal access objectives of the proposed venture**

Institutions should develop licensing criteria that consider the companies' social responsibility record as well as their plans to contribute to universal access to communications, such as willingness and plans to contribute to development projects, telecentre-type projects, funding of educational programs to promote disadvantaged youth to attend technical degrees, etc.

CONCLUSION

These guidelines can be used in two ways: a) as a checklist of issues to consider when making decisions; and b) a consultative document to provide ideas on how to mainstream gender in regulatory and licensing agencies. These guidelines serve as a complement to existing human resources and licensing policies. They are not intended to be an exhaustive list of rules and should not be used as such.