



## CATCH UP WITH JO

### Issue 3

**Q: Please elaborate further on the mentoring/coaching of women at different levels as well as unconscious bias in hiring teams, family-friendly working practices for men and women, the lengthening of paternity leave, and the consideration of a spouse's career.**

#### Countering Bias at IOM

Countering bias within our workplace would be one of my top priorities as GSAC Chair. This will be one of the most effective ways in which to bring about lasting positive change in our recruitment and selection practices at IOM.

#### Learning from Shiseido

To promote gender equality in the Organisation, we can learn a great deal from efforts made at Shiseido, a Japanese cosmetics company, in recent years.

In Japan, where there is a need for economic growth, there is a societal push for women to participate more in the workforce. "Women are Japan's most underutilised resource", said Japan's Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, in 2013. Closing the gap between men and women in the workplace would add an estimated 8 million workers to the workforce of Japan.

Shiseido is a prime example of a corporation that both actively promotes **gender equality** as part of its management strategies and has a greater number of women in **senior leadership positions**. This is primarily due to the programmes and policies that the company has put in place to attract women into jobs and leadership positions.

In this regard, Shiseido hosts a regular forum to cultivate an organisational culture in which diverse employees, including women, demonstrate their skills and take active roles. In addition, when developing and rolling-out a **Gender Equality Action Plan**, they held a "**Career Support Forum**" with the themes of "reforms to create a more efficient way of working" and "proactive career establishment of female employees". That is exactly the kind of initiative that I would advocate to replicate in close collaboration with colleagues in the Gender Coordination Unit.

## Countering Bias in Hiring Decisions

In terms of hiring decisions, we need to counter unconscious bias in hiring teams in a number of ways. One effective method would be to use **predetermined evaluation criteria** during hiring. This does not just relate to whether the targeted knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) required for the job have been identified, but also how they will be weighted in terms of importance. It is also important for us to use predetermined evaluation criteria during succession planning for leadership positions.

In this regard, providing sufficient information about the KSAs that are needed for specific jobs—as well as guidance about how to develop those KSAs—will be critical in grooming appropriate women and staff from underrepresented nationalities for leadership roles. This will help to ensure that they do not feel dependent on who they know for career success within the Organisation. We also need to be more open about the jobs and job-related skills that are needed, so that people feel confident to self-nominate and put their best foot forward in applying for challenging positions in senior management.

All of this requires that we make real and significant efforts to **identify diverse pools**—both for hiring and promotion. We must critically examine whether job descriptions and/or job structures (i.e. expectations about how people do their jobs) may be unnecessarily “typed” (e.g. male-typed, culturally-typed). In order to do so, managers must be motivated because they understand and believe in the benefits of diversity initiatives within IOM.

We must constantly ask ourselves the following question: Do our diversity initiatives feel like a “tack-on” addendum to HR practices—something we have to do—or are **principles of fairness and inclusion** integrated into the fundamental design and implementation of human resource practices? That is at the heart of the matter and the work that the GSAC Chair must do together with the Regional Representatives and LSACs in order to ensure that our staffing practices are truly fair and transparent.

## Learning from Google

As I had mentioned briefly in the second issue of my

Catch Up with Jo series, Google is currently making a conscious corporate effort to counteract unconscious bias within its workplace. There are many benefits associated with doing so. According to their website, “making the unconscious conscious will help you **make more objective decisions, facilitate inclusive interactions, and create opportunities**”. I could not agree more.

In terms of making more objective decisions, mitigating unconscious bias (or unbiasing in Google parlance) would help employees to **attract, retain, develop, and maintain a talented workforce**. Attracting talent requires carrying out recruitment and selection practices that are not based on preferential treatment being accorded to candidates based on their specific backgrounds concerning race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, religion, or age. It rather entails searching honestly for the best candidate for the specific job position based on **standardised, objective selection criteria and indicators**. The job requirements should be matched with the skills, knowledge, and other qualifications of the candidates, with the best fit selected.

Unbiasing can also facilitate inclusive interactions involving staff of many different backgrounds. In practical terms, this often relates to a greater sharing of ideas, as each culture has norms and practices that could be brought to bear in different work environments. Since Google is a global company with billions of people using its ever-expanding range of products and services, inclusive interactions in the workplace would enable Googlers to reach many different demographics in respect to their consumers.

Ultimately, by making more objective decisions and facilitating inclusive interactions among the Google workforce, I believe that the company will continue to be successful in creating novel and innovative opportunities for growth and development in the years to come. This will help to ensure that Google remains a pioneering leader in its field.

## Following Google’s Lead

I find myself being more and more inspired by the consistent efforts of Google over the past few years. As they continue to grow and expand their portfolio, they also continue to work ever-more diligently in order

to contribute to greater diversity and inclusion within the company. This is the sort of example that we must seek to learn from within our own organisation.

There are many unconscious biases that take place in the recruitment and selection processes at IOM. Many colleagues choose those whom they like or get along with over more qualified internal candidates or unfamiliar qualified external candidates. Some colleagues recruit and promote colleagues of their own nationality, ethnic group, or background. Colleagues sometimes evaluate those they know and like as being more competent than others with whom they do not mesh as well. The same goes for those of the same background. Thus, it is imperative that we follow the lead of Google in working toward the **unbiasing of staffing practices within IOM**.

### Family-Friendly Working Practices

We also need to tackle the issue of family-friendly working practices for men and women. There are four specific types of family-friendly practices that have been demonstrated to have some effect on the proportion of women in management, depending mainly on the prevalence of various gender stereotypes within organisations. These practices include **leave arrangements, flexible work scheduling, virtual office facilities, and direct provision of services** (e.g. childcare and eldercare assistance as well as breastfeeding facilities).

Gender stereotyping of management positions often creates bias against female employees in selection, placement, promotion, and training decisions. Instituting and implementing a range of family-friendly practices has proven quite useful in countering such bias over the past decade in particular. Family-friendly practices are a “formal or informal set of terms and conditions which are designed to enable an employee to combine family responsibilities with employment”.

### Leave Arrangements

In terms of leave arrangements, in addition to maternity and paternity leave, we should have **more flexible and generous policies** concerning bereavement or compassionate leave, leave to take care of a sick or disabled child, career breaks/sabbaticals, and short-term special family leave. Our recent joining of the UN has led to a doubling of paternity leave last year from one to two months, but this is still not sufficient

for fathers to be able to provide the necessary support following the birth of a child. Those who are caring for sick or disabled children should also be provided with enough time to be able to carry out their roles as caregivers in an effective manner.

### Flexible Work Scheduling

In December 2017, three new human resource policies on **office attendance, flexible working arrangements, and part-time employment** were published by IOM's Human Resource Management Department. According to an IOM Staff Advisory:

[IN/256: Office Attendance, Annex I](#), and [Annex II](#) set out options for **office attendance, procedures, and recording mechanisms** in order to promote **consistency** across the Organisation while catering flexibly to different needs at different duty stations.

[IN/257: Flexible Working Arrangements, Annex I](#), and [Annex II](#) lay out the available options and conditions for flexible working arrangements, including **flexible working hours, telecommuting, and compressed working schedule**.

[IN/258: Part-time Employment](#) and [Annex I](#) explain how **part-time work** can be **requested and recorded**, and which **entitlements and benefits** are impacted if a staff member works on a part-time basis.

Therefore, the necessary policies are now available as guiding frameworks for flexible work scheduling within the Organisation. This represents an excellent opportunity for IOM staff around the world to achieve a **greater work-life balance**. However, many staff are not yet aware of these policies, so one priority for me as GSAC Chair would be to organise **regional town hall meetings and webinars** to **raise awareness** of the contents of these policies—and how they may apply to staff under different circumstances.

This would serve to **empower staff** to weigh their options, make a compelling argument in favour of their preferred arrangements, and seek approval from their supervisors, in consultation with Chiefs of Mission and Regional Directors, as required. This would support the Director-General's conviction that “these policies will go a long way toward promoting **staff welfare** and meeting my objective of building and strengthening a **diverse and inclusive work environment** where staff members can perform to the best of their abilities”.

## Virtual Office Facilities & Direct Provision of Services

Virtual office facilities could supplement such arrangements by including working from home, telecommuting, telework, and video conferencing, some of which are also included in the new human resource policies. Moreover, direct provision of essential services to help ensure the successful attainment of **work-life balance** could include childcare, eldercare, employee assistance programmes, breastfeeding facilities, and access to a telephone for family reasons. In addition to all these services provided directly to our staff, we should also be taking into consideration a spouse's career, especially with respect to trying to find international postings for staff where their spouses can also identify gainful employment within a reasonable timeframe.

## Benefits of Implementing Family-Friendly Working Practices

Through the successful progressive implementation of family-friendly practices, IOM will be better equipped to **recruit and retain talented employees, reduce employee stress and burnout, and improve our corporate image** as well as enjoy increased **productivity and innovation** in addition to **decreased absenteeism and turnover** among our employees.

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Have you checked out my website?  
Visit [www.votejoforgsac.com](http://www.votejoforgsac.com)

You will find my:

- Video and Written Staff Testimonials about why I'm the right person for GSAC Chair
- Campaign Poster in 27 languages
- Priorities as GSAC Chair in English, French, and Spanish
- Motivation Letter in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese
- Video Messages on my priorities as GSAC Chair
- Short Biography
- Catch Up with Jo series - where I answer questions from IOM staff
- Acknowledgements - where I thank everyone who has supported me in my campaign