

# 2009 OPWG Social Equity Committee Plan

*“Outlining Avenues that Foster the Recruitment and Retention of a Professional, Equitably Employed, Workforce of Observers”*

## **I. Background and Objectives:**

In the context of the International Fisheries Observer and Monitoring Conference (IFOMC) series, The work of the Social Equity Committee of the Observer professionalism Working Group (OPWG) aims to: identify the factors which may bring about discriminatory practices and social barriers in the observer workplace (based upon sex, age, ethnicity, or class) and recognize and promote the initiatives which foster equitable employment practices in the profession.

The Social Equity Committee’s main purpose is to enhance gender and racial equality within the Fisheries Observer profession, and to integrate these concerns in the areas of *Wages and Benefits, Support and Opportunities, and Employment Standards*. This Committee also aims to refine the working definition of “Social Equity.” This stage of information gathering is centered about conducting “Focused Interviews” designed to dig deep from within important Social Equity topical areas, with the 2009 OPWG driving theme of *Outlining Avenues that Foster the Recruitment and Retention of a Professional, Equitably Employed, Workforce of Observers*.

With the intention of constructing a more solid foundation in regards to the *OPWG Social Equity* area of study, this Committee hopes to gather more detailed yet broaden-scoped information during 2009. This Plan is primarily meant to act as a template for facilitating Committee interviews leading up to and to continue during the 6<sup>th</sup> IFOMC. Nevertheless certain adjustments to this plan may arise depending on the context of interviews conducted and as Committee work progresses.

## **II. Interview Target Topics:**

The following are OPWG Social Equity Committee target topics for Focused Interviews to be conducted before and during the 6<sup>th</sup> International Fisheries Observer and Monitoring Conference (IFOMC):

1. To find ways and means to overcome external barriers to equal employment of fisheries observers (females and males, minority and dominant ethnic groups) and internal barriers (lack of self-confidence).
2. To determine where social equity concerns relate specifically to *Wages and Benefits* (e.g. equal pay for work of equal value; paternity/maternity benefits), *Support and Opportunities* (e.g. conflict resolution training around harassment issues or developing guidelines for refusing a vessel if sexual harassment is a perceived problem; cross-cultural training), and *Employment Standards* (e.g. databases to disaggregate data on fisheries observers by sex, ethnicity, age, ability, class; bill of rights for Observers, and Codes of Conduct to ensure a diverse workforce and respectful workplace---i.e. a rights and responsibilities approach).

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### **III. Interview Questions:**

Interview questions listed here are meant to act as a template, though questions during actual interviews may vary.

#### **1. Gender-related questions:**

- a. What reasons do fishermen, captains and industry give for not wanting female observers on a fishing vessel?
  - i. What suggestions do you have to overcome the traditional beliefs in some societies that women should not be involved in fishing or work in fisheries monitoring programs?
- b. Have you felt that as an observer you were not given the same opportunities as your fellow observers of the opposite sex? Explain.
  - i. What mechanisms could be put in place to guarantee fairness?
- c. What social obstacles can you identify that influence your ability to perform your job (from getting deployed, to collecting data, to getting off the boat)?
  - i. What do you recommend to overcome these obstacles?
- d. Did your observer training program include a module on sexual harassment training and/or conflict resolution?
  - i. If so, how effective was it and in what ways could it be improved?
    1. Does it help female observers deal with wives of fishermen or with gender harassment in the workplace?
  - ii. How frequently does this type of behavior (sexual harassment) occur in your own country as compared with other countries that you are familiar with?
- e. What is the most culturally challenging (in regards to gender) vessel placement you have ever experienced (particulars)?
  - i. Explain in detail what cultural challenges were faced and in which Fisheries Region.
  - ii. How could things be improved?
- f. Has privacy ever been a major issue to you in your vessel placement? Explain.
- g. How do contractors/employers determine their pay structure and do they abide by their country's employment laws with respect to the gender of the observers?
  - i. Especially in regards to so-called "volunteer" observers?
  - ii. What avenues are available to redress pay inequities?
- h. What measures could fisheries observer managers or fishing vessel owners undertake in order to overcome the lack of facilities and/or privacy for observers (male or female) on many fishing vessels?

#### **2. Ethnicity-related questions:**

- a. What challenges face local communities for being recruited as observers to harmoniously work with foreign skippers and crews in observer programs?
  - i. How can these challenges be overcome?

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- b. As an observer, have you ever felt you were treated differently because you were not of the same ethnic group as the fishing crew?
  - i. Have you had any difficulties on boats (or platforms) due to perceived cultural differences? Please explain and offer some suggestions on how to improve the situation.
- c. What do you think may be the reason(s) that ethnic minorities in many countries are not becoming certified fisheries observers?
  - i. What do you recommend to overcome these employment barriers?
- d. What race-related issues have had the most impact on the performance of observer work?
  - i. What steps could be made to eradicate racial discrimination and thereby enhance observer performance?
- e. What measures could managers undertake to recruit greater numbers of ethnic minorities in their fisheries observer programs in order to overcome perceived educational barriers?

#### **IV. Scope of Interviewees:**

The main focus group for OPWG Social Equity Committee interviews are active and prior Fisheries Observers, especially those of sociological or numerical minorities (women, indigenous peoples, marginalized ethnic groups). The Observer stratum may be segregated by length of experience or multi-program experience criteria. Other Stakeholders such as: management-agency personnel, observer provider/contractor personnel, Observer data end-users, Observer Union personnel, fishers, industry personnel, NGO's may also be sought and included in this process.

#### **V. Interview Techniques:**

1. This plan is available by way of the IFOMC website [www.ifomc.com](http://www.ifomc.com) so that it may be referenced and considered prior to interviews.
2. The primary techniques used for conducting interviews will be via: in person, on-line correspondence, telephone, or post. Interviews may be digitally recorded.
3. Interviews may be conducted over multiple correspondences.

#### **VI. 6<sup>th</sup> IFOMC Observer Professionalism Workshop Proceedings:**

1. The OPWG-coordinated Observer Professionalism Workshop at the 6<sup>th</sup> IFOMC is scheduled to commence in the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the conference – from 08:30am to 12:00 (noon/lunchtime) on Thursday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>.
2. This Workshop is being run currently with the plenary session and will be in a separate room than the main conference room- signs will be posted.
3. 08:30am to 09:00am: will consist of a brief orientation of the Workshop and an audience-participant discussion.
4. 09:30am to 12:00: The OPWG Workshop room will be arranged with separate stations for each of the four areas of study of the OPWG- Wages and Benefits, Support and Opportunities, Employment Standards, and Social Equity. This time is designated for OPWG Workshop participants to walk about to the station(s) of their choice, providing their feedback (via interviews) to the workings of those specific OPWG committees.

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5. If someone does not get a chance to participate or complete an interview at the Workshop and would like to participate, arrangements can be made to complete interviews either during the remainder of the conference or soon thereafter..
6. Plans are available on the IFOMC website and will be available at the 6<sup>th</sup> IFOMC.

## **VII. OPWG Focused Interview Outputs:**

1. An overview of all OPWG work leading up to and at the 6<sup>th</sup> IFOMC will be published in the 6<sup>th</sup> IFOMC Proceedings document.
2. Complete findings from the OPWG's "Focused Interview" stage of information gathering will be available within a year following the 6<sup>th</sup> IFOMC. This will be a separate output from the 6<sup>th</sup> IFOMC Proceedings document.
3. The OPWG will also follow-up with all interview participants following the conference, ensuring that they have received these findings.

## **VIII. References:**

### **1. International Standards:**

- a. ILO Conventions 100 and 101 (abolition of work or occupation-related discrimination): The Equal Remuneration Convention (1951) C.100 and The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (1958) C.101
- b. Work in Fishing Convention (2007)
- c. FAO Guidelines for developing an at-sea fishery observer programme, FAO Fisheries Technical Paper. No. 414 (2002) and specifically Appendix 5: A Generic Code of Conduct for Fishery Observers (see <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/005/y4390e/y4390e00.pdf>).

## **IX. OPWG Wages and Benefits Committee Members:**

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