Promoting Gender Inclusion in Standardization

Shared Experiences at COPANT Workshop

The COPANT Workshop on the Exchange of Best Practices and Experiences, focused on gender inclusion in standards and standardization processes, brought together representatives from various countries and standardization bodies. The virtual event, held on August 24, 2023, saw the participation of 28 representatives from 17 countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Honduras, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

The welcome, moderation, and conclusions were led by Kory Eguino, Executive Secretary of COPANT, who emphasized the importance of promoting gender equity in the field of standardization. Throughout the workshop, experiences and significant progress related to gender inclusion in standards were shared by various organizations, enriching the dialogue and fostering collaboration on this important topic.

Rachel Miller: ISO's Commitment to Gender Inclusion

Rachel Miller Prada, Director of ISO's Gender Action Plan at the ISO Central Secretariat and a member of the capacity-building team, highlighted the significance of this topic within ISO's current strategy until 2030, under the objective of "All Voices Heard," aligning with the signing of the UNECE Gender Responsive Standards Declaration in 2019.

Miller mentioned that in 2021, ISO established the Sustainability Unit, which focuses on diversity and inclusion, under which the Gender Action Plan is developed. During the 2019-2023 period, they focused on identifying gaps and needs in terms of gender representation. Information was collected on the presence of women in technical committees, leadership roles, and other relevant aspects to understand the current situation and establish a baseline.

The findings indicated that approximately one-third of participants in standardization were women, based on anecdotal evidence. The current Gender Action Plan (2021-2025)
continues to focus on these areas. ISO is working on ongoing collection and analysis of gender and age data for technical experts and has launched initiatives like the ISO Gender Focal Point Network.

Established in 2021, the ISO Gender Focal Point Network brings together 72 individual members from ISO member organizations. This network facilitates the exchange and learning about gender-related activities and initiatives. ISO has also developed Gender Responsive Standards (GRS) guidelines to help technical committees incorporate gender considerations, including an e-learning module available on the ISO Learning Platform.

ISO's actions align with United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 for gender equality. Member organizations are encouraged to share their gender action plans and standards that contribute to SDG 5.

Rachel Miller concluded by highlighting that gender inclusion and diversity are fundamental to ISO's strategy. The organization is committed to developing gender-sensitive standards and promoting a diverse and inclusive environment in standardization processes.

**Megan Hayes: Diversity in IEC Technical Committees**

Megan Hayes provided her perspective as the Chair of the IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission) Advisory Committee on Diversity and Vice President of Standards and Technical Services at NEMA (National Electrical Manufacturers Association).

During her presentation, she emphasized the benefits supported by workplace diversity and inclusion research, including increased revenue growth, enhanced innovation capability, improved talent acquisition, and higher employee retention.

She highlighted the positive implications of diversity in standards development, leading to broader utilization, increased preparedness for innovation, and better volunteer retention. Megan highlighted several key points discussed by the IEC Advisory Committee on Diversity:

1. **Top-Down Approach:** She emphasized that a solely top-down approach to diversity is insufficient and underscored the importance of diversifying technical committees and working groups.
2. **Avoiding Tokenism**: The Advisory Committee on Diversity did not endorse quotas, as they believe that diversity initiatives should not be considered complete once a minimum is achieved. Ongoing efforts are crucial.

3. **Ongoing Effort**: Diversity efforts require continuous discussions beyond training and workshops.

4. **Diverse Governance vs. Diverse Organization**: A diverse governance does not necessarily imply a diverse organization as a whole.

Hayes emphasized that diversity is an ongoing process and highlighted data about the IEC Advisory Committee on Diversity's approach to gender diversity statistics, guideline development, and stakeholder inclusion. She also mentioned efforts to create diversity statements and provide guidance for different committees.

In conclusion, Megan encouraged attendees to share their unique diversity programs and ideas for gender-sensitive standards.

**Lance Thompson: Advances in UNECE Gender-Responsive Standards**

Lance Thompson, Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Working Group 6, discussed his role as a gender focal point for UNECE's trade subprogram, tasked with gender-related actions in the United Nations Information and Communication Technology Education (UNICE) program. He outlined the creation of the Gender-Responsive Standards Specialist Team, emphasizing its permanent structure and leadership selection. The purpose of this team is to raise awareness of gender-responsive standards among UNECE member states.

The presentation highlighted achievements since Thompson's last intervention, including the publication of guidelines on developing gender-responsive standards. These guidelines provide insights into understanding gender differences, gathering evidence, and taking explicit actions to ensure gender sensitivity. Thompson stressed the importance of assuming the existence of gender differences, thereby shifting the burden of proof to demonstrate otherwise.

Key achievements include:

1. **Declaration Signatories**: Thompson highlighted the growing number of countries signing the Gender-Responsive Standards Declaration, including recent additions like Kazakhstan, Australia, Serbia, and Montenegro.

2. **Benefits Publication**: A newly published brochure was mentioned, aimed at introducing the concept of gender-responsive standards to those unfamiliar with
the topic. This publication advocates for governments and technical committees to adopt gender-responsive standards, emphasizing their benefits.

3. **Gender and Salutation Code White Paper**: Thompson detailed the completion of a gender and salutation code white paper project, which includes guidelines for creating these lists and their importance in promoting gender inclusion.

4. **Gender Action Plan Survey**: The survey's focus is on understanding how gender action plans are developed and the challenges organizations face in their implementation. The insights collected aim to contribute to best practices based on diverse responses.

5. **Gender Online Courses**: An existing online course on gender-responsive standards was highlighted, along with upcoming plans to develop additional courses tailored to different audiences and levels of understanding.

6. **Circular Economy and Sustainability Webinar**: Thompson extended an invitation to the upcoming webinar scheduled for September 27, exploring the intersection of standards, circular economy, and gender perspectives.

7. **Available Resources**: Thompson directed participants to the UNECE website, offering valuable resources including workshop materials, training manuals, video testimonials, and reports.

In conclusion, Lance Thompson's participation in the COPANT Workshop highlighted UNECE's commitment to advancing gender inclusion and equity in standard development. The presentation underscored crucial developments, initiatives, and available resources for the community, ultimately contributing to the promotion of more gender-responsive standards worldwide.

**Carla Gordon: Progress in Gender Equity at INEN Ecuador**

Carla Gordon, representing the Ecuadorian Standardization Institute (INEN) of Ecuador, highlighted the progress and strategies implemented as part of INEN's gender equity action plan.

The presentation also showcased a collaborative project with Rwanda to share knowledge about gender equity and its presence in national standardization bodies.

**Ecuador's Gender Equity Action Plan**: Gordon emphasized that Ecuador's gender equity action plan was approved in 2021 and is being implemented during 2021 and 2022. The focus has been on collecting statistics related to women's participation in technical committees and gender representation in leadership positions within INEN.
Publication and Website: Ecuador published information about its gender equity work on the INEN website, serving as a platform to disseminate their efforts. A publication was made about Ecuador's first gender equality standard (NTE INEN 53-800), highlighting its implications for organizations.

Mirror Committee Formation: Ecuador established a national mirror committee for ISO/PC 337, focused on "Promotion and Implementation of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment." The contributions and progress of the committee were shared during meetings, which included various stakeholders from government institutions, civil society, and more.

Collaborative Project with Rwanda: Carla described a collaborative program with Rwanda, supported by ISO. The program aimed to develop gender action plans for ISO members. Ecuador was paired with Rwanda as a mentor, allowing both countries to share experiences and strategies related to gender equity.

Gordon detailed the activities of the collaborative program, including virtual and in-person workshops, sharing insights, tools, and assessments related to gender. Despite disparities in gender equality rankings between the two countries, the program facilitated knowledge exchange and mutual learning between Rwanda and Ecuador.

Future Activities: She mentioned ongoing and future activities aligned with the gender equity plan, including workshops on gender perspectives for INEN staff and stakeholders. These workshops aim to enhance understanding and application of inclusive gender approaches in standardization processes.

Carla Gordon's presentation highlighted Ecuador's dedication to promoting gender equity in standards and showcased their collaborative efforts with Rwanda. The country's commitment to gender inclusion and proactive participation in sharing experiences contribute to global efforts towards more inclusive standardization development.

Karina Luro: Combating Violence Against Women at ABNT Brazil

Karina Luro, representative of ABNT (Brazilian Association of Technical Standards) of Brazil, shared the organization's initiatives to combat violence against women.

ABNT's Initiative to Combat Violence Against Women: Karina Luro began her presentation by emphasizing the alarming increase in violence against women in Brazil during the year 2022. More than 80 million women experienced some form of violence
during this period. To address this issue, ABNT partnered with an institute dedicated to combating violence against women, providing support for economic independence and empowerment.

**Creation of Standards and Certification Programs:** ABNT aims to develop standards and certification programs to protect and combat violence against women. They presented a national standard, ABNT PR 1019, focused on best practices to combat violence against women within organizations. This standard, to be published in the coming months, sets requirements for organizations to implement practices that combat violence against women.

ABNT and the institute jointly designed a certification program titled "Good Practices for Organizations in the Fight Against Violence Against Women." This program covers definitions of various forms of violence against women and includes indicators for organizations to adopt procedures and measures when such cases occur.

**Certification Levels and Implementation:** The certification program includes four levels: Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Basic. The first entity to achieve this certification in Brazil was the National Council of the Public Ministry. ABNT's collaboration with the government for this initiative underscores its commitment to driving change within organizations and institutions.

**Other ABNT Initiatives:** ABNT has taken additional initiatives to address violence against women, both internally and externally. This includes virtual employee conferences and a social media campaign aimed at raising awareness and understanding about the issue. Additionally, ABNT is working on an ISO standard proposal on violence against women, aiming to contribute to global efforts to prevent and address this type of violence.

**Fostering Change and International Collaboration:** Luro emphasized the importance of international standards in combating violence against women. Despite significant advancements in women's rights, discriminatory practices persist, requiring collective action from organizations. ABNT's proposal to develop an ISO standard demonstrates its commitment to making a positive impact on this critical issue.

Karina Luro's presentation highlighted ABNT's dedication to combating violence against women through partnerships, certification programs, and the proposal of an ISO standard. ABNT's comprehensive approach demonstrates its commitment to gender equity and its role in promoting a safer environment for women.
INACAL Peru: Promoting Gender Inclusion in Standardization

Lily Elliot, representing the National Institute for Quality (INACAL) of Peru, shared the organization's initiatives and pioneering advances in relation to gender inclusion in standards.

**INACAL's Commitment and Actions:** Elliot outlined the crucial priorities INACAL has addressed to foster gender inclusion in the realm of standardization. These include collecting data on gender representation in technical committees, developing standards inspired by international experiences, and actively promoting a gender perspective throughout the standardization process.

**Promoting Gender Equity in Technical Committees:** Elliot's presentation showcased data related to gender representation in technical committees, highlighting the continued male dominance in leadership roles such as presidencies and secretariats. However, she pointed out that within INACAL's standardization environment, female staff outnumber males, indicating a more equitable balance internally.

**Creation of the National Gender Equality Committee:** Determined to address this challenge, INACAL established the National Gender Equality Committee, bringing together various stakeholders including government, academia, and non-governmental organizations. As a result of this collaborative effort, Peru's first national technical standard on gender equality management systems was developed. Its purpose is to address gender disparities and improve working conditions within organizations.

**Guideline Development and Training:** INACAL is translating its commitment into concrete actions to integrate the gender perspective into the standardization process. They have introduced guidelines and training targeting their national committees, supported by resources provided by ISO. They have also adopted ISO IWA 34 and are working on its translation to Spanish for greater accessibility.

**Toward an Inclusive Future:** Lily Elliot's presentation highlighted INACAL's commendable commitment to gender equity and inclusion in standardization. By establishing a national committee, creating a technical standard, and actively advocating for gender equality, INACAL is effecting positive change in its standardization environment, providing an inspiring model on an international level.

IBNORCA Bolivia Leads Gender Inclusion in Technical Standards

María René Gallardo, representative of IBNORCA (Bolivian Institute of Standardization and Quality) from Bolivia, highlighted that their organization's action plan is grounded in three crucial strategic lines: driving the development of technical standards with a gender
perspective, strengthening human talent management from a gender and diversity perspective, and promoting capacity building and the exchange of best practices in collaboration with partners and allies. In this endeavor, IBNORCA has collaborated with international experts and received support from the Embassy of Sweden to guide their efforts.

The comprehensive approach aims to incorporate gender-sensitive standards into technical norms, increase the representation of women and vulnerable groups in technical standardization committees, and assess gender differences and impacts in Bolivian standards. Additionally, internal policies and recruitment processes are being reviewed and updated to ensure effective equality of opportunities.

IBNORCA is enhancing collaboration with various organizations, including the Inter-American Development Bank and the Chamber of Senators, to drive gender inclusion across all spheres. The dissemination of translated guides and documents on diversity and inclusion is underway, and awareness-raising actions are being undertaken at both national and international levels.

This ambitious action plan is currently in the implementation phase and has achieved significant progress. María René Gallardo shared the achievements and challenges that IBNORCA is experiencing on its determined path towards full gender inclusion in technical standards, inspiring other organizations to follow this valuable example.

**Reflecting Diversity and Equity in Standardization**

The COPANT Workshop underscored the importance of promoting gender inclusion and diversity in standardization. Representatives from different countries shared strategies, initiatives, and achievements in promoting gender-sensitive norms and equity in standardization processes. International collaboration and active organizational commitment are crucial in achieving a more inclusive and representative standardization.

You can access the recording of the Workshop [HERE](#).