



# THE IPA OBSERVER

INVESTMENT PROMOTION AND FACILITATION MONITOR



## MAINSTREAMING GENDER EQUALITY IN INVESTMENT PROMOTION

### H I G H L I G H T S

- ❖ Investment promotion agencies (IPAs) in developed and developing countries are increasingly integrating gender equality and women's empowerment in their work, in line with national commitments.
- ❖ IPAs are working on two main fronts: (a) facilitating greater impact of foreign companies' operations on gender equality in the host country; and (b) empowering women and promoting gender equality within the agency.
- ❖ In addition to governments and IPAs, a growing number of multinational enterprises (MNEs) have defined and report on gender equality objectives in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This has generated both a demand and an opportunity for IPAs to support them in this area.
- ❖ IPAs are promoting gender-inclusive linkages between MNEs and the local economy. They are doing so by identifying opportunities where investment projects can have a positive impact on gender equality and facilitating women's access to capacity-building and supplier development programmes.
- ❖ To better understand the source of the gender gap across economic sectors, IPAs are advocating for more gender-inclusive monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to feed into evidence-based policies to strengthen the investment climate.
- ❖ The COVID-19 crisis presents a threat to recent gains on gender equality. As IPAs are being forced to reset their strategies because of the pandemic, they can use this opportunity to mainstream gender equality across their activities.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Several drivers are behind the nascent and increasing trend in IPAs to incorporate gender equality and women's empowerment in their work. These include increased evidence that progress on gender equality and women's empowerment is important to many, if not all, of the national economic objectives that IPAs seek to contribute to, including job creation, reducing the informal economy and achieving sustainable development more broadly. It also affects key determinants for foreign direct investment (FDI), such as the local availability of skilled labour, suppliers and a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem, among others. From the foreign investors' side, there is a rising demand by MNEs and their affiliates for investment facilitation services that support them in meeting their diversity and inclusion targets, and in having a sustainable development impact on their operations, including on gender equality and women's empowerment. In addition, MNEs are increasingly expected to report on gender equality. In fact, 70 per cent of the world's largest MNEs already report on progress in this area.<sup>1</sup> Finally, many IPAs receive financing from or work together with development partners who increasingly have gender issues high on the agenda.

This trend is in line with a greater demand by governments and their IPAs to align investment promotion strategies with the SDGs, including SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment. More than 150 countries have adopted national strategies on sustainable development or revised existing development plans to reflect the SDGs. However, UNCTAD analysis shows that few of

these strategies contain concrete road maps for the promotion of investment in the SDGs.<sup>2</sup> Against this background, there is demand by IPAs for guidance on how to align their investment promotion efforts to national SDG objectives. This demand has increased during the pandemic, in line with renewed national priorities and in the face of new threats to the advancement of the SDG agenda, including on gender equality.

**Many IPAs are undergoing a strategic reset in response to the coronavirus crisis.** This presents an opportunity to better integrate gender and women's empowerment in their work going forward. UNCTAD has been monitoring the evolving response of IPAs to the pandemic. Many are re-evaluating their strategies and core functions in line with a changing global investment landscape and renewed national priorities.<sup>3</sup> Governments and their IPAs can take advantage of this process to better integrate the SDGs, including SDG 5.

**This paper aims to begin to bridge an existing information gap, share global practices on what IPAs are doing, and provide initial guidelines on how agencies can address gender and women's empowerment strategically.** It is part of a broader agenda and work by UNCTAD on investment and gender,<sup>4</sup> and aims to provide guidance to IPAs about how their work can have an impact on gender equality and women's empowerment. It draws from an UNCTAD-led survey of 52 IPAs across all regions conducted between June and September of 2020, including 47 national and 5 subnational agencies.<sup>5</sup> Many agencies surveyed (45 per cent)

<sup>1</sup> UNCTAD (2020). [World Investment Report 2020: International Production Beyond the Pandemic](#). Sales No. E.20.II.D.23.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> UNCTAD (July 2020). IPA Observer 9. [Post-COVID-19: Investment Promotion Agencies and the New Normal](#); and UNCTAD (April 2020) IPA Observer 8. [Investment Promotion Agencies Striving to Overcome the COVID-19 Challenge](#).

<sup>4</sup> In 2019, UNCTAD included sessions on partnerships and business linkages with a gender lens in regional IPA training workshops. UNCTAD's work on investment and gender further includes: A special chapter dedicated to investment in the SDGs, including gender in its World Investment Report 2020: International Production Beyond the Pandemic; A gender and investment track in the upcoming UNCTAD's *World Investment*

*Forum*; An expert group meeting and report on *The International Transmission of Gender Policies and Practices: The Role of Multinational Enterprises* (UNCTAD, forthcoming 2020); and a special issue of UNCTAD's *Transnational Corporations Journal on Multinational Enterprises and Gender* (forthcoming, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> The UNCTAD-led survey covered 52 IPAs, 27 per cent from Africa, 32 per cent from the Americas, 21 per cent from the Asia-Pacific region and 20 per cent from Europe. In addition, the survey was complemented by UNCTAD research and extended phone interviews with eight agencies. UNCTAD's database of 178 national IPAs was also reviewed to obtain the percentage of female-led agencies as of August 2020.

are promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in at least one area of their work. Among most of the agencies surveyed, that indicated that they were not integrating gender and

women's empowerment in their work; the main reason cited was a lack of awareness on how to do so, and 88 per cent expressed interest in receiving capacity-building on the subject.

## 2. HOW ARE IPAs INTEGRATING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE INVESTMENT PROMOTION WORKFLOW?

**IPAs are promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in their communication and media campaigns at the national level.** Numerous examples from UNCTAD's survey showed that media campaigns to mark specific occasions, such as International Women's Day, are one of the entry points for IPAs to organize initiatives targeted specifically at women, and to showcase female beneficiaries of their services. While they begin as communication initiatives, they can also serve as platforms for further dialogue, awareness-raising and work by the IPA on gender. For example, following the success of a mentoring event for women organized by India's IPA, *Invest India*, on the occasion of International Women's Day 2019, the agency decided to launch a nationwide flagship start-up programme to support women entrepreneurs called "Together We Rise" (see section 4). To mark Mother's Day in Côte d'Ivoire in 2020, the IPA, *CEPICI*, organized a round table to discuss the particular challenges that women entrepreneurs are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has led to plan the opening of a dedicated window to service women entrepreneurs (see annex).

**Some IPAs are also ensuring that their image brand is in line with the country's gender equality commitments and built into the value proposition marketed to foreign investors.** The IPA in the Dominican Republic, *CEI-RD*, has partnered with the Ministry of Women in a project that seeks to align the country's brand with its commitment to SDG 5 and national programmes promoting equality of opportunities. It does this in part by ensuring the representation of women exporters and entrepreneurs. *Invest Lithuania* and Bahrain's *Economic Development Board* are marketing their performance in terms of female participation in high

value-added target sectors for investment. *Stockholm Business Region* which deals with developing the city's brand as a tourism and business destination under its two subsidiaries *Move to Stockholm* and *Invest Stockholm*, developed principles that are in line with the city's programme for a "gender-equal Stockholm" and national policies on gender equality. Its website features 100 leading employers that adhere to the principles and contribute to its image as "a woman's place".

**When prioritizing investment leads, 50 per cent of agencies surveyed consider the potential impact on women.** Some agencies do this by adopting a case-by-case approach in which an investment lead will be viewed favourably if it has a positive impact on women, particularly women's employment. More formal approaches by agencies include defining impact on women as a criterion to evaluate investment leads or reporting on gender-related targets that influence the prioritization process. An example is Costa Rica's *CINDE* which has the objective to achieve 50 per cent of employment generated by companies attracted by the IPA to go to women. Other agencies, such as South Africa's *Invest SA*, have begun to integrate gender-related indicators into their client relations management systems to be able to include them when evaluating investments leads. The subnational French IPA, *Invest in Lyon*, is developing a screening platform for investment projects which has specific criteria related to impact on women as well as other environmental, social and governance (ESG) requirements which need to be met in order to qualify to benefit from the IPA's services (see annex).

As part of their investment facilitation work, 38 per cent of IPAs surveyed are promoting gender-inclusive linkages between foreign investors and the local economy. The measures taken include ensuring that the information they provide to investors is gender-balanced... They can facilitate the entry and establishment of foreign investors by providing them with information about the domestic business climate, including about the local talent pool and availability of local suppliers. Whether the information they provide is gender-balanced can in turn influence the impact that investment projects have on gender equality and women's empowerment. As a result, some agencies are ensuring that they keep sex disaggregated databases of suppliers and have committed to presenting gender-balanced lists to investors.

... and identifying and proposing opportunities where investment projects can have a positive impact on women. When sex-disaggregated data is available at the local level, including on unemployment, and availability of labour, this can enable IPAs to provide data-backed proposals during the entry and establishment phases that can influence the inclusiveness of investor operations. For example, Paraguay's Export and Investment Promotion Agency, *REDIEX*, played a critical role in the decision of foreign investors in the automotive manufacturing sector to adopt inclusive recruitment practices. The IPA facilitated access to unemployed women in the Alto-Parana region, particularly single mothers with difficulties to reintegrate in the job market, through access to sector vocational training from the Ministry of Labour.

In addition, they are facilitating equal access for men and women to capacity building, certifications, and supplier development programmes that enable them to engage in linkages with MNEs... This includes ensuring a minimum or balanced participation of women through inclusive outreach mechanisms and by setting targets and reporting. Several IPAs (19 per cent) surveyed collect sex-disaggregated data on the participation of their training programmes. As part of its diversity and inclusion strategy, Australia's *Austrade* reports on the percentage of women and other minority groups that apply and benefit from its services. In addition, to drive a higher representation of women

in its initiatives, it regularly reviews policies, application processes, evaluation criteria for its capacity-building programmes and nomination categories for its awards (see annex).

... and providing tailored support to address the specific challenges faced by their female stakeholders, including women-led businesses, entrepreneurs, and exporters. Numerous agencies, including *ANPI* in Comoros, *CEPICI* in Côte d'Ivoire, *Invest India* and the *Rwanda Development Board* have developed tailored capacity-building programmes for aspiring women entrepreneurs and women-led businesses (see section 4 and annex). Some agencies which are also responsible for promoting trade, such as in Brazil and the Dominican Republic, have programmes specifically targeted at women exporters.

Some IPAs are proposing aftercare services that promote gender equality in the workplace of MNEs. *Invest in Chile* offers aftercare services to foreign companies to improve the sustainability of their operations, particularly with regards to their ESG impact. As part of these services, the IPA is supporting companies to implement, evaluate and report on gender equality policies at the human resources level (see annex). The outward investment agency *Innovation Norway* has developed guidelines for established Norwegian companies in Brazil to increase their gender and racial diversity (see section 4).

A third of agencies (33 per cent) surveyed are including recommendations to address the gender gap as part of their policy advocacy work to strengthen the local investment climate. They are doing this by investing in data... They are promoting research and investing in sex-disaggregated data to better analyse the sources of the gender gap across sectors and regions and providing evidence-based policy proposals to address it, often in collaboration with national and international partners. Jamaica's IPA, *JAMPRO*, is leading a development-bank financed project in partnership with the Ministry of Youth that includes a gender assessment of the global services sector, a priority target sector for investment. The objective is to obtain baseline data to understand whether a gender gap exists, what drives it and how it is affecting the productivity of

the sector, provide tailored recommendations to address it and monitor progress.

... as well as in knowledge management and incorporating lessons learned. As part of the National Skills Development and Employment Promotion Strategy developed by the Rwandan IPA, the *Rwanda Development Board* incorporates lessons learned from both successful and unsuccessful programmes that aimed to upskill the workforce, particularly women and youth, and link them to job opportunities with foreign enterprises (see annex).

Some agencies report to or are part of high-level working groups promoting gender equality and women's empowerment at the national level. For example, agencies such as those in Costa Rica and Côte d'Ivoire are formally part of national committees working on gender equality and have a specific role to provide data and strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to better understand the gender gap in the economy. Bahrain's *Economic Development Board*'s gender focal point is also a member of its Equal Opportunity Committee, which reports to the Supreme Council of Women (see annex).

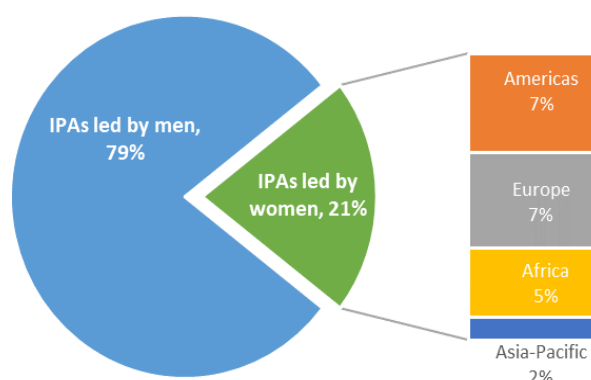
### 3. HOW ARE IPAs PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN-HOUSE?

As part of their mission to achieve diversity and inclusion in the workplace, IPAs are proactively advocating gender equality across teams and in leadership positions. In August 2020, 21 per cent of 178 national IPAs had a woman as a head of the agency (figure 1). Targets related to achieving gender equality in IPAs are sometimes part of diversity and inclusion strategies at the national, subnational or city level. *Austrade* has its own

services for women returning from maternity leave. Germany's IPA, *Germany Trade and Invest*, ensures equal pay between men and women through standardized salary schemes (see annex).

Some IPAs are addressing gender through internal non-discrimination policies. Egypt's IPA, *GAFI*, created an internal Equal Opportunities Committee, which ensures equal treatment for men and

Figure 1. Out of 178 national IPAs, 37 (21 per cent) are led by women (August 2020)



Source: UNCTAD.

gender inclusion strategy. Japan's *JETRO* has a Female Career Promotion Action Plan, which is based on a national law to promote female participation in the workplace. It includes career development measures for women, such as early opportunities to work abroad and consultation

women, including in recruitment and promotion. Likewise, Kenya's *KenInvest*, explicitly states its commitment to gender equity as part of its values of equity and fairness and states that it "subscribes to equity and gender balance in both recruitment and career development".



They are offering a range of training options on gender equality and women's empowerment topics to their staff... These cover topics including the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace, recognizing gender bias in recruitment and promotion, and targeted programmes for women in leadership, confidence-building and career development.

... and investing to attract and develop female talent. Colombia's IPA, *ProColombia*, has enacted a series of measures, including a "happiness committee" promoting work-life balance for all staff and gender equality initiatives, which contribute to attracting top female talent. Women represent more than half of the staff, and fill two thirds of leadership positions in the agency. The IPA ensures that women and men have equal access to its internship programmes in collaboration with local universities, as well as to its own internal "University of ProColombia", which offers language and post-

graduate education and career development programmes to its staff (see annex).

A third of agencies surveyed have designated gender focal points to promote and monitor progress. Their responsibilities include promoting measures and programmes to support gender-equal representation at all levels within the IPA, promote a safe working environment for all staff, monitor and report on progress made and receive feedback from IPA staff on gender equality-related issues and concerns. While the majority deal with human resources, some, including *Austrade's* gender focal point, report on both internal gender equality targets as well as external targets on levels of female participation in IPA activities. Others, such as the gender focal point in *CINDE*, is responsible for developing the agency's gender equality strategy which contributes to targets at the IPA level, at the level of the investing enterprises whom it serves, and at the national level (see section 4).

## 4. CASE STUDIES

### CINDE - Costa Rica

"One of the main pillars of *CINDE's* gender strategy is strengthening data and reporting mechanisms on gender equality."

As part of *CINDE's* objective to contribute to Costa Rica's national SDG agenda, it has developed a strategy to ensure that its work is aligned with SDG 5, which includes the following areas of work:

**Strengthening the local talent pool by investing in inclusive capacity-building:** One of Costa Rica's key determinants for FDI attraction is its pool of local high talent, for which MNEs compete. Accordingly, one of *CINDE's* targets is to continuously build that talent pool, including outside of the capital's metropolitan area, in line with the country's plans to develop the provincial regions economically. One of the ways that *CINDE* works towards its target is through capacity-building and re-skilling initiatives to target groups that are disproportionately affected by unemployment in the country, including women in rural areas from low socio-economic

backgrounds, single mothers and indigenous women.

**Facilitating greater impact of MNE programmes and recruitment practices:** *CINDE* conducted a mapping exercise of existing initiatives in the country which support women, including those led by MNEs. The exercise showed that many of these initiatives did not measure impact, were not comparable, and were at times duplicating efforts. As a response, *CINDE* began to support MNEs, as well as the non-governmental organizations that they partnered with, in facilitating a more inclusive reach of their programmes as well as in developing impact indicators. In partnership with the National Costa Rican Institute for Women, the IPA also sensitizes companies about inclusive human resources practices. It supports MNEs in the use of

inclusive channels of communication for recruitment and gender-sensitive language, and delivers trainings to decision-makers on “unconscious bias”, including gender bias.

**Improving data on the gender gap to allow a more tailored policy response:** One of the main pillars of *CINDE*’s gender strategy is strengthening data and reporting mechanisms on gender equality. Its objective is to contribute to a better understanding of the different causes of the gender gap across

sectors and regions to allow for evidence-based policy measures to redress it. Among other initiatives, the IPA partnered and financed the pilot phase of a project with a local business school to develop baseline data on gender across target investment sectors. *CINDE* is also part of a ministerial-level National Technical Committee to address the gender gap in Costa Rica and which is in charge of implementing the country’s recently launched Gender Parity Initiative.

## Innovation Norway

“The agency has developed guidelines as a response to demand by companies for support in mainstreaming gender equality and diversity policies in their operations.”

*Innovation Norway* is Norway’s outward investment promotion agency. Through strategic partnerships, its overseas office in Brazil is implementing programmes to facilitate the impact of Norwegian MNEs investing abroad on gender equality.

**Promoting the transmission of gender equality policies and practices in the host country:** *Innovation Norway*’s office in Brazil has implemented a series of activities to promote dialogue and build the case for gender equality across the private and public sectors. It is part of the “Nordic Dialogues” programme, a joint initiative of the embassies of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden in Brazil that aims to stimulate debate about gender equality in the country. In 2017, a “Gender Press Trip” was organized by the agency that included a renowned Brazilian journalist, with the objective to report on and learn about policies and practices promoting gender equality in Norway. Events in 2018 have involved Norwegian MNEs established in Brazil speaking on the topic of gender and diversity in companies.

**Facilitating equitable corporate policies:** *Innovation Norway* has signed a memorandum of understanding with UN Women. After having supported a Norwegian MNE to become a signatory of the Women’s Empowerment Principles by UN Women, the agency has developed guidelines as a response to demand by companies for support in mainstreaming gender equality and diversity policies in their operations. The guidelines will form the basis of consulting and facilitation services for which the agency will charge. They were launched in September 2020 and draw from a research report on how Norwegian companies established in Brazil work with corporate diversity. The report was a result of a partnership between *Innovation Norway* with a broad range of stakeholders including the non-governmental organization Instituto Promundo, the European Union, United Nations Global Compact and UN Women Brazil, as well as the Norwegian diplomatic network in Brazil.

## Invest India

“The IPA is committed to having women fairly represented at all levels and across all country teams and sectors in which it seeks to attract investment.”

*Invest India* is in the process of developing a framework for gender mainstreaming across its work, which it plans to roll out through subnational IPAs across the country. Its aim is to build on the different initiatives that it currently leads, including:

**Promoting gender equity and a safe workplace for all genders within the IPA:** *Invest India* is the only government institution in the country with an equal representation of men and women on its staff. The IPA is committed to having women fairly represented at all levels and across all country teams and sectors in which it seeks to attract investment, including in responsibility roles in “non-traditionally female” sectors, such as infrastructure, banking and industry, among others. It is a deliberate way that the IPA challenges gender stereotypes both at home and abroad. In addition, the agency has instituted mandatory training on prevention of sexual harassment for its employees and has appointed a gender focal point, whose mission includes promoting an open and ongoing

dialogue to encourage feedback from staff on what constitutes a safe working atmosphere.

**Strengthening the local entrepreneurial ecosystem by supporting women-led start-ups:** Start-Up India is a nationwide initiative coordinated by *Invest India* and launched by the country’s Prime Minister. It aims at connecting stakeholders within the business environment and providing support in reducing regulatory hurdles for entrepreneurs. While India is renowned as a start-up nation, less than 6 per cent of start-ups are led by women. The need to have a dedicated programme that addressed the specific challenges faced by women entrepreneurs led to the creation of a capacity development programme entitled WING: We Rise Together, which aims to support 7,000 female-led start-ups. The programme is executed nationwide with five local partners and focuses on supporting women entrepreneurs to better negotiate with investors, develop their “go-to” market strategy and protect their ideas.

## Invest South Africa

“The IPA provides services to support MNEs that seek to align their operations with Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment principles, including women’s empowerment.”

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