

Ana Sánchez Cobaleda

The IAEA'S Technical Cooperation Program: Women as Drivers of Change?

Background of the issue

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) works towards two main goals, namely the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Guaranteeing international security while promoting the fullest possible exchange of nuclear dual-use goods represents the Gordian knot at the center of the non-proliferation regime. This project focuses on one of the instruments used by the IAEA to assure that a balance between these two objectives is reachable and that it is maintained: the Technical Cooperation (TC) Program. For the last few years the Agency has been aiming to broaden its scope by including gender considerations to its TC Program.

Research question and interest

How is this progressive shift towards equality in the nuclear field taking place? Is this gender perspective improving or affecting in any way the implementation of the TC Program? In our field of interest, what technical cooperation strives for is assuring that new States and regions fulfil their legal obligations regarding the control of dual-use goods and align their internal measures with the best practices in the field in order to strengthen international peace and security. These measures might foster the internal legal frameworks, develop certain State capabilities or raise awareness of the potential risks that the lack of control may imply. What this project comes to answer is whether implementing IAEA TC Programmes from a gender perspective is affecting the way in which the aforementioned activities are resulting. Considering a highly skilled and technically trained female workforce is necessary for the continued success of any industry and the IAEA is striving to keep up with other fields.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis presented *ab initio* is that including a gender perspective in the Technical Cooperation Programme of the IAEA has indeed an impact on the effects of the programme and that such consequences are actually positive in terms of higher development levels and a wider success perception.

Research systematics

What this study intends to analyze is:

- 1- How the IAEA is implementing gender policies within its Technical Cooperation programme (legal basis, specific policies);
- 2- Whether progress is being made in this area in the past decade;
- 3- Whether the fact that greater participation of women in the implementation of technical cooperation projects is encouraged affects in any way the success of the Technical Cooperation Programme or has other possible consequences;
- 4- What the final considerations regarding main conclusions and future trends are.

Expected results

Our hypothesis, which is directly related to the third of the just mentioned issues, is expected to be in fact confirmed. Thus, the gender perspective has a positive impact on the success of the Technical Cooperation Programme since it is favoring:

- A more inclusive and comprehensive civil and industrial kind of nuclear development, which –in turn– promotes the participation of women in the national nuclear sector and which, therefore, succeeds in fostering the positioning of women in positions of leadership and decision-making power;
- The construction, albeit slowly and gradually, of a new paradigm that, in order to take root, must remain constant over time.

Methodology

The methodology adopted in undertaking this research project is firmly based on that of legal method conducted in conjunction with an inductive, inter-sectoral approach.⁽¹⁾ To this end, primary sources are studied first. In this sense, the IAEA Statute as well as the Gender Equality Policy stand out particularly. Secondly, the study is illustrated with the main or most relevant projects and initiatives for our object of interest, which are carried out by the IAEA, specifically by its Technical Cooperation department. Together with institutional information, specialized publications and independent bibliography are also taken into account. Lastly, this research study is completed with some of the main achievements identified in the field of the gender perspective within the Technical Cooperation Department and the IAEA in general. Thus, official documents and publications are also thoroughly consulted.

One of the main difficulties faced by this research project is the lack of numerous bibliographic sources focused specifically on our object of study, although there lies also part of the interest for this topic. Likewise, due to the still incipient nature of the initiative, no analysis of empirical results will be developed, as the still short path of the TC Programme from a gender perspective implies that it is not yet possible to carry out a quantitative analysis of the results. For this reason, the study is mainly limited to primary bibliographic sources, as well as to the IAEA's own official documentation, and the focus is on a qualitative analysis of the current situation. Final considerations will also be made on the future trends of the IAEA's TC programme and its gender perspective.

Key words & Citation

Technical cooperation / Nuclear peaceful uses / International Atomic Energy Agency / Women in nuclear / Gender perspective

(1) Olivier Corten, *Méthodologie Du Droit International Public* (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2009).