



HOLDING THE MIRROR UP TO OURSELVES:

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PRACTICES AND TRENDS IN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION

A group of people are sitting around a long wooden table in a meeting room. They are looking at laptops and talking to each other. The room has large windows and a whiteboard in the background.

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1. INTRODUCTION

MAKING THE CASE FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Civil society is often at the forefront of tackling inequality and exclusion around the world. Yet these external activities are not always reflected in the internal operations of civil society organisations (CSOs). While there is broad recognition of the significant value that recognising and enabling diversity and inclusion can bring to organisations, the truth is that when we hold a mirror up to ourselves, we still see that there is a lot to be done to achieve real and tangible change in civil society in terms of diversity and inclusion.

Few people in the social sector recognise that racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination operate on a broader level – often inconspicuously – within organisations and systems, and that these underline every major social issue in almost all societies.

As civil society, we must recognise that we participate in systems that continue to exclude and undervalue a significant number of people, and we must confront their root causes and structural manifestations. The case for deepening our commitment to diversity and inclusion is evident when considering gaps in the social sector, disparities in societal outcomes and the untapped potential of diverse teams. Although we have made progress, we need to continue challenging exclusion, including by amplifying the perspectives of the most marginalised civil society voices.

Often, this means we should first look inwards, at our own organisational cultures, to interrogate and re-evaluate whether our leadership practices, policies and behaviours meaningfully integrate diversity and inclusion practices in our workplaces; and whether our organisational cultures reflect the communities we serve and advocate with and for.

This report seeks to add to the growing civil society literature on this issue and aims to provide an opportunity for reflection about efforts to champion and advance diversity and inclusion action within the ranks of CSOs.

Acknowledgements of the importance of diversity and inclusion often remain at the theoretical level for CSOs, and they often struggle to translate these theoretical underpinnings into practice. Our research aims to bridge that gap by showcasing diversity and inclusion efforts that can be attainable through specific practices and that are already happening within CSOs, as the narratives and experiences of participants reflect.

Our objectives are simple and clear: first, to identify practices, trends and innovations in promoting and ensuring diversity and inclusion within CSOs, from the starting point of considering organisational cultures; and second, to identify practical suggestions and examples on how to implement diversity and inclusion practices beyond theory.

APPROACH

We conducted semi-structured interviews with key respondents – executive directors, inclusion specialists and policy officers – from a selected sample of CSOs that work with CIVICUS in various capacities and programmes.

“Passionately fighting for human rights on the outside does not necessarily mean that these same organisations practise inclusion and equity on the inside. The jarring fact is that when we look inside CSOs, ranging from trade unions, to national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), we often see the same exclusions and inequities play out, in the way CSOs are structured, the way decisions are made and resources are allocated, and the ways in which silences around abuses of power are maintained and harassment against women is condoned.”

— Rao & Kundu 2016:135

“In a sector focused on improving social outcomes across a wide range of issues, we need only look within our own organisations to understand why we have not yet achieved the depth of change we seek.”

— Equity in the Center Project

We believe that research on diversity and inclusion needs to think from and with a diversity of organisations. Participating CSOs were therefore chosen to ensure a high degree of difference in terms of areas of focus, size and geographic representation. We undertook a total of 11 interviews with 15 respondents (see Table 1 for details).

The findings presented in this report cannot necessarily be generalised. Rather, they are meant to encourage reflection and actions towards diversity and inclusion efforts, offer new ideas and serve as an inspiration to continue our work towards creating a truly and meaningfully diverse and inclusive civil society. This report will also contribute to CIVICUS’s current pilot project that focuses on increasing organisational health in relation to diversity and inclusion within CSOs.

In carrying out this task, we faced an important limitation. We acknowledge that a significant part of the research, in terms of literature and resources, comes from the global north, and particularly the USA, which is the source of most published work in the diversity and inclusion field. In an attempt to counterbalance this disparity, most of the practices identified in this research deliberately draw from the experiences, knowledge and lessons learned of CSOs operating in the global south.

Table 1. List of participating organisations

ORGANISATION	REGION/COUNTRY	ORGANISATION’S FOCUS
Business and Human Rights	Africa (Tanzania)	Business and human rights
Centre for Disability in Development	Asia (Bangladesh)	Disability in development
Fundación entre Mujeres	Latin America (Nicaragua)	Feminism and peasant women’s empowerment
FRIDA Fund	Oceania (Fiji)	Feminism and youth
Lemann Foundation	Latin America (Brazil)	Education / philanthropy
Odhikar	Asia (Bangladesh)	Human rights
Plan International	Europe (Ireland/UK)	Children’s rights and equality for girls
Project 189	Middle East and North Africa (Kuwait)	Migrant workers / domestic workers
Social Good Brasil	Latin America (Brazil)	Data for social change
UHAI-EASHRI	Africa (East Africa)	Participatory grant-making for sex workers and sexual minority groups
Voice	Europe (Netherlands)	Grant-making / inclusion

2. UNPACKING KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

2.1 Civil society

This report is concerned with the role of CSOs in promoting diversity and inclusion. The focus is on how CSOs internally are working towards real and tangible efforts to make progress on diversity and inclusion.

CIVICUS's broad working definition for civil society defines it as "the arena, outside of the family, the state and the market, which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to advance shared interests" ([The CIVICUS 2013 Enabling Environment Index](#)).

Civil society is a sphere comprised of a broad and ever-evolving range of people, actions and bodies, among them activists, non-governmental organisations, civil society coalitions and networks, protest and social movements, voluntary bodies, community-based organisations, campaigns and campaigning organisations, charities, faith-based groups, trade unions, philanthropic foundations and social enterprises. This is not an exhaustive list.

2.2 Diversity and inclusion

Diversity and inclusion mean different things to different people. The meanings attached to these two concepts change across individuals and organisations. As such, they are often contested definitions. Michalle Mor Barak, academic and specialist in diversity management, suggests that "even though diversity and inclusion are sometimes used interchangeably, or made a single term: D&I, they are separate and distinct constructs" (2015:85). Often, organisations stop at actions on diversity, without realising that putting diverse bodies and minds together does not automatically translate into diverse and inclusive outcomes. Diversity is insufficient without inclusion (See for example [Four Global Lessons From Locally Driven DEI Efforts](#) and [Diversity without Inclusion is Insufficient](#)).

Although having the representation of diverse voices at all levels of an organisation is vital for creating inclusive organisations, such representation must be followed by a commitment to inclusion and the goal of sharing power and equity, by making sure that organisations are welcoming and safe for everyone. This means that, if the potential of diversity is to be tapped and amplified, it is necessary to have deliberate practices and competencies that support inclusion (Gallegos 2014:190). Therefore, we believe that it is relevant to establish a distinction between diversity and inclusion.

Currently, [CIVICUS](#) uses the following definitions:

Diversity

Diversity is about welcoming all of the dimensions that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another, often referred to as 'the mix'. These dimensions can include, but are not limited to, a person's nationality, citizenship status, geographical location, linguistic background, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, indigeneity, faith, religion, age, disability status, health status, HIV status, family/relationship status, caregiving status, educational background, employment status, social class and cultural identity. We acknowledge that these markers of difference also translate into power differences that exist between people ([CIVICUS Diversity Statement](#)).

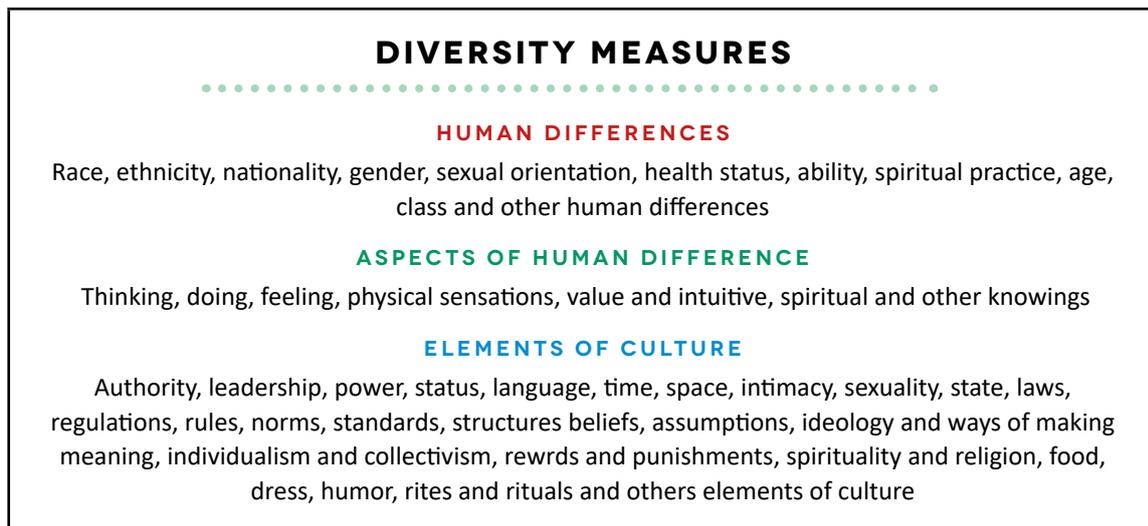
Our broad definition of diversity encompasses both surface-level characteristics (demographics such as gender, age, race and ability/disability) and deep-level attributes (such as educational level, work experience and personality). However, diversity entails more than just stating differences among individuals and different groups of people. Essentially, it is also about understanding how these differences are embedded within specific social and cultural contexts where hierarchies of power and systems of inequalities – including systemic discrimination, racial and colonial oppression and patriarchy, to name a few – operate, and which affect people’s life outcomes, privileging some groups and disadvantaging others.

Diversity measures and processes

Diversity is often described in terms of human differences, including of race, gender, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, ethnicity, nationality, age, spiritual practice and class, among other social differences. Diversity is also expressed in terms of human experience: of ideas, behaviours, physical sensations, feelings, values and intuitive, spiritual and other knowledge. These aspects of human experience are forms of intelligence and knowledge that are used to acquire and process information, make meaning and define reality. Cultural differences are a third way of representing diversity. Elements of culture can include, for example, authority, leadership, power, status, language, time, space, intimacy, laws, regulations, rules, norms, standards, structures, values, beliefs, assumptions, ideology, spirituality and ways of making meaning, rewards and punishments. Diversity measures and processes

Diversity is often described in terms of human differences, including of race, gender, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, ethnicity, nationality, age, spiritual practice and class, among other social differences. Diversity is also expressed in terms of human experience: of ideas, behaviours, physical sensations, feelings, values and intuitive, spiritual and other knowledge. These aspects of human experience are forms of intelligence and knowledge that are used to acquire and process information, make meaning and define reality. Cultural differences are a third way of representing diversity. Elements of culture can include, for example, authority, leadership, power, status, language, time, space, intimacy, laws, regulations, rules, norms, standards, structures, values, beliefs, assumptions, ideology, spirituality and ways of making meaning, rewards and punishments.

Figure 1. Diversity measures



Source: [Brazzel 2007](#)

Inclusion, as a process of including people with many differences, is generally used with reference to describing organisations. Pluralism and multiculturalism are often ascribed as characteristics of organisations, communities, and nations. Another important concept is that of cultural competence, which describes the ability of individuals to undertake effective, cross-cultural communication with other individuals.

Figure 2. Diversity processes

DIVERSITY PROCESSES

INCLUSION

Including people with many differences in the work of organisations

PLURALISM

Incorporating diverse groups of people in organisation, communities and nations

ELEMENTS CULTURE

Incorporating the multiple interests, contributions, and values of diverse groups of people in the cultures of pluralistic organisations, communities, and nations

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Individual ability for effective, interpersonal communication with people across cultural differences based in race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnicity, religion, age, class, and other human difference

Source: [Brazzel 2007](#)

Inclusion

Inclusion is the proactive and mindful step we take to make sure diversity happens, creating an environment where all different kinds of people can thrive and succeed.

Inclusion refers to the positive ways of working with diversity at the workplace. As such, inclusion is seen as an action, but more specifically as a practice. While diversity can be mandated and legislated, such as through affirmative action and quotas, inclusion can only emerge from voluntary and intended actions.

As accurately summarised by Marinke van Riet, Program Manager at [Voice](#), “Diversity is the reality, inclusion is a choice.”

“I believe that when we talk about inclusion, it actually means the shifting of an organisation’s mindset. It includes a change in the organisational mindset and culture. And this includes issues regarding staff’s participation in the meetings, how offices are physically organized, and the whole life within our workplace.”

— Flavia Charles, Business and Human Rights Tanzania (BHRT)

To be included in an organisation is to be able to be oneself rather than having to assimilate to an organisation’s dominant culture. What this means is that:

“Inclusion involves both being fully ourselves and allowing others to be fully themselves in the context of engaging in common pursuits. It means collaborating in a way in which all parties can be fully engaged and subsumed, and yet, paradoxically, at the same time, believe that they have not compromised, hidden, or given up any part of themselves. Thus, for individuals, experiencing inclusion in a group or organisation involves being fully part of the whole while retaining a sense of authenticity and uniqueness” (Ferdman 2010:37).

It is important to note that both diversity and inclusion are evolving concepts, and thus their definitions may change over time and context.

2.3 INTERSECTIONALITY

“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives”
Audre Lorde (2007:138).

US legal scholar Kimberly Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality in 1989. [For three decades now](#), this concept has travelled across borders to become one of the most powerful tools “to think about and through the points at which power relations meet” (Ahmed 2012:14).

In On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life, feminist and diversity scholar Sara Ahmed (2012:14) underlines that “the language of intersectionality is now associated with diversity.” We believe that we cannot speak of diversity and inclusion in CSOs without including intersectionality in the discussion, but we should be careful to engage with this concept critically.

There is a need for caution in using the term of intersectionality when seeking to advance social justice and create equal and inclusive societies. In recent years, the concept has gone through a process of depoliticisation and deradicalisation that does not live up to its original roots at the heart of the struggles of feminists and people of colour in the USA. As often happens with many concepts that become buzzwords, the accurate and political meaning of intersectionality is sometimes lost.

Crenshaw therefore invites us to be cautious in using the term, as some forms of thinking and practising intersectionality in workplaces are not conducive to creating the diverse and inclusive spaces we aim for. The notion of ‘colourblind intersectionality’, for example, is a way of talking about diversity and building coalitions without really thinking through or addressing core issues, such as structural discrimination or oppression.

Similarly, the concept of ‘make-up intersectionality’ is an apolitical way of viewing intersectionality by only measuring diversity through head-count and numbers, without tackling underlying issues of discrimination or power (Crenshaw 2019).

In practical terms, engaging with intersectionality can turn out to be a very complex task. Paul Amadi, Chief Supporter Officer of the British Red Cross, highlights that, conceptually and practically, one of the crucial challenges in the international development sector for achieving diversity and inclusion is getting the notion of intersectionality correct (Bondcast 2019).

Still, although it might not be easy to think in an intersectional manner, we must keep striving to challenge ourselves to think and embrace the various forms in which diversity and inclusion is enhanced by intersectionality (Wakefield and Safier 2019). In their book Diversity and Identity in the Workplace: Connections and Perspectives, Florence Villesèche et al. illustrate the relevance of intersectionality and how its use as a lens can lead to a holistic understanding of diversity and power within organisations:

“If diversity is seen as a more intersectional issue not only between different phenotypical or ‘deeper’ attributes but also as intersecting in specific contexts and structures, we open up a finer-grained understanding of how individuals cope with available discourses and existing power structures and can go in the direction of less stereotyped and globally homogenised ways of addressing diversity in organisations” (F. Villesèche et al. 2018b:88).

Similarly, in Re-radicalizing intersectionality on organisation studies, Helena Liu discusses that “intersectionality has offered a more nuanced lens to explore the effects of power relations in work and organisations more specifically” (2018:83).

In practical terms, thinking and doing intersectionality means, as critical race scholar Mari Matsuda articulates, asking the other question:

“The way I try to understand the interconnection of all forms of subordination is through a method I call ‘ask the other question.’ When I see something that looks racist, I ask, ‘Where is the patriarchy in this?’ When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, ‘Where is the heterosexism in this?’ When I see something that looks homophobic, I ask, ‘Where are the class interests in this?’ Working in coalition forces us to look for both the obvious and the non-obvious relationships of domination, and, as we have done this, we have come to see that no form of subordination ever stands alone.”

In approaches to diversity and inclusion, asking the other question is an essential process that allows us to assess whether we are reproducing harmful systems of oppression, even when we think we are making a change. By thinking through an intersectional lens, organisations can start to untangle and alter the differential effects of daily activities, and to recognise and connect internal institutional processes and systems of inequality and power with external societal processes and structures. Critical engagement with intersectionality within our diversity and inclusion work can offer a more thorough and nuanced analysis of discrimination and injustice, potentially leading to better-founded improvements in organisation and policy (Risberg & Pilhofer 2018:139).

2.3 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

To commit meaningfully to diversity and inclusion, organisations need to make greater changes in their organisational cultures. This means going beyond implementing a diverse hiring policy and into questioning, challenging and resisting power and unequal structures within organisations.

In the context of this research, we define organisational culture as “the patterns of shared mindsets and behaviours that guide how to operate within a particular organisational setting. Culture, in effect, encompasses not only what people are thinking and doing – but it also influences why” (Conner Advisory 2018).

In her article What’s for Breakfast, Helene Wolf, former Deputy Executive Director of the International Civil Society Centre and Co-founder of the Fair Share of Women Leaders movement, highlights the importance of organisational culture for transformational change. She notes that “it requires a very different culture within our organisations to bring new systems to life and achieve the long-term change we aim for.”

A useful concept for understanding these complex dynamics is that of ‘deep structure’. Gender at Work developed this concept to refer to “the collection of values, history, culture and practices that form the ‘normal’ unquestioned ways of working in organisations” (Rao et al. 2015:82). Understanding the deep structure helps us become aware of how power is situated within organisations, and the ways that displays of power reproduces hierarchies and inequalities that hinder the possibility of creating and diverse and inclusive environments.

A concept that is closely linked to deep structure is that of ‘dominant culture’, which refers to the language, religion, values, rituals and social customs on which a society is based. A dominant culture is the most visible and accepted culture within a particular society or organisation. In an organisation, the dominant culture “is heavily influenced by the leadership and management standards and preferences of those at the top of the hierarchy” (Pro-inspire 2018:24).

There are some organisations that tend to be monocultural and homogenous, and only “value the dominant perspective of one group culture or style” (Merrill-Sands et al. 2000:53). This results in the inclusion of those who fit in with the organisational culture, while others are conscripted to assimilate, furthering their exclusion. In contrast, an organisation that encourages employees to bring their unique contributions “values and integrates the perspectives of diverse identities, cultures, styles and groups into the organisation’s work and systems” (Ibid.).

3. DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PRACTICES AND TRENDS IN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

3.1 DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

Literature and research on diversity and inclusion show that an organisation trying to develop and implement diversity and inclusion efforts must consider a variety of practices. Beyond merely bringing diverse people together, persistent initiatives, specific behaviours and intentional practices are needed for tapping and invigorating the potential of diversity to lead to diverse outcomes and inclusive organisational cultures. In our interviews and review of the literature, we identified 10 leading diversity and inclusion practices (see Figure 3 below for a summary of these).

In this section we present examples of the implementation of these practices and trends. We hope these illustrations provide helpful insights and serve to inspire other CSOs as they attempt to initiate, strengthen or improve their own diversity and inclusion efforts and initiatives. It is however important to note that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to engage in diversity and inclusion work. Every organisation should identify what actions to take to build more diverse and inclusive organisational cultures according to their own contexts, priorities and resources. Organisations planning to engage and work on diversity and inclusion systematically and actively must promote specific behaviours, policies and practices that address the lived realities of their members, and how they experience inclusion and exclusion.

Figure 3. Top 10 diversity and inclusion practices identified in the research



Source: The author, based on interviews and literature review



1 LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

“Leaders, as the shapers of the organisation’s culture, need to be the voice of a unified meta-narrative that supports a vision of an inclusive culture” (Gallego 2014:180).

Leadership commitment was identified as one of the vital elements in creating and driving cultural change towards more diverse and inclusive organisations. Diversity and inclusion practice begins with the mindsets and behaviours of leadership. When leaders support diversity and inclusion efforts, it is easier for other people in the organisation to follow. If this is not the case, diversity and inclusion initiatives are likely to fall short.

Diversity expert Placida Gallegos suggests that thinking and practising leadership must be an ongoing developmental journey for organisations as current socio-political and cultural conditions demand that leadership expands, evolves and transforms itself.

What are the main approaches?

In recent years, new types of leadership have become a focus of attention in civil society. With the increasing push for gender equality and more inclusive agendas across the field, concepts such as feminist and transformational leadership, horizontal leadership and inclusive leadership have emerged as new popular and progressive approaches to foster diversity and inclusion within CSOs.

“If we really want to see change, we need to ensure we do not recreate the same oppressive structures and internalize patriarchy in our own organisations, groups, and collectives. Sometimes this starts with a process of unlearning and questioning the very notion of leadership.”

— O’Malley & Johnson 2018:538

In recent years, feminist and transformational leadership have emerged as approaches that can contribute to making organisations more diverse and inclusive. These approaches invite us to think and do leadership through a feminist lens and to place it in the context of social justice and feminism. At the same time, feminist and transformational leadership seeks to address internal power dynamics within organisations and challenge the various ways in which power – visible, hidden and invisible – operates and reinforces the exclusion of women and other groups within organisations.

For example, if an organisation hires excluded groups such as women in leadership positions yet judges them by patriarchal standards, they will probably have a difficult time flourishing in that organisation. Feminist and transformative leadership is about thinking of how to forge an entire leadership structure and an organisational culture that are more open, transparent and accountable.

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Inclusive leadership considers the following questions: whose voices or perspectives might we be missing? What are the limitations to the current way we are seeing particular issues? (Gallegos 2014:181). It is about leadership identifying the opportunities and challenges that diversity and inclusion presents to an organisation, maximising the opportunities and committing to finding solutions to the challenges.

Some organisations are trying to move away from traditional hierarchical structures towards horizontal leadership frameworks, where those in leadership positions are open to learning more about employees’ experiences about the key matters and core issues facing an organisation. Those at the top do not always have the answers and solutions to the problems facing an organisation. It is important that solutions are co-created by bringing people in to develop interventions that cater to the needs and realities of all employees.

Examples from CSOs

Betty Barkha, who is a board member of FRIDA, explains how this young feminist fund uses a co-leadership model, where leadership is shared by various people rather than being the responsibility of one person. The co-leadership model is highly beneficial for young leaders as it “ensures there are built-in support mechanisms and mentoring. Young leaders are less isolated when they can share responsibility and risk and feel less alone. In addition, younger members will often be incubated within groups, exposed to leadership through democratic or consensus models, and shared processes” (O’Malley & Johnson 2018:541).



2 DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY

Diversity and inclusion efforts are most effective and sustainable when they are tied explicitly to the strategic objectives of an organisation. Research participants underlined the importance of linking diversity and inclusion to an organisation’s overall strategic plan to make sure that diversity and inclusion are viewed as core aspects of CSOs. The institutionalisation of diversity and inclusion initiatives and efforts can be achieved when organisations actively promote and integrate diversity and inclusion goals and objectives into their policies, operations and processes, including

staff workplans. Key questions here are: is diversity and inclusion embedded in the DNA of organisations by being reflected in their missions, visions and values? Is diversity and inclusion woven into the fabric of an organisation, into all the different dimensions of its work, structures and processes?

What are the main approaches?

- Integrating diversity and inclusion as a focal element of an organisation's strategic efforts to engender a culture change that supports and values differences.
- Clearly stating an organisation's vision of diversity and inclusion.
- Having senior leadership as ambassadors or champions with defined responsibilities for implementing a diversity and inclusion strategy to ensure it is being encouraged across an entire organisation.
- Designating a specific role in an organisation, such as a diversity and inclusion officer, responsible for achieving diversity and inclusion as reflected in an organisation's strategic plan.
- Creating a task force or internal group to lead diversity and inclusion internal advocacy, initiatives and conversations.
- Allocating human and financial resources towards diversity and inclusion work.
- Taking into consideration the power dynamics and the culture of an organisation.

Examples from CSOs

Different elements can be part of an organisation's diversity and inclusion strategy. Some aspects participants in the research cited as significant to include in this strategy are having an overall diversity and inclusion-related policy, ensuring the representation of diverse groups, developing and implementing an action plan and embedding values that promote diversity and inclusion within their organisations.

Official diversity and inclusion-related policy

An illustration of an overall strategy is Plan International's Global Policy on Gender Equality and Inclusion, which all Plan International offices have adopted and applied since 2017. This policy, together with the Gender Inclusion Review (see below), emphasises Plan International's need to go beyond interventions and to turn gender equality and inclusion into cross-organisational commitment reflected in organisational structures, processes, policies and practices. It also aims to provide "a clear vision, direction, common language and consistent message to operationalize and communicate our commitment to the promotion of gender equality, girls' rights, and inclusion" (Plan International 2017) for all Plan International staff and at all levels.

Representation of diverse groups

The representation and visibility of diverse groups in CSOs are vital in promoting and achieving diversity and inclusion efforts. Often, achieving demographic representation is seen as an easy fix and the end goal of diversity and inclusion practice within institutions. Nonetheless, the work cannot stop there. It must go beyond demographic representation, or diversity checkboxes, as the solutions to systemic and structural issues such as gender inequality and racism must be systematic. They need to address not only the symptoms but also tackle the root causes of exclusion to guarantee equal participation of and opportunities and outcomes for diverse groups.

UHAI-EASHRI is Africa's first indigenous activist fund for sex workers and sexual and gender minorities. It provides resources and support to these groups in their fight to achieve equality, dignity and justice in East Africa. Since UHAI-EASHRI's inception, the principles of diversity and inclusion have existed at the core of the organisation. This is reflected in its staff composition, as a significant part of the fund's staff belongs to the LGBTQI+

community. Mukami Marete, Deputy Executive Director, explained that UHAI-EASHRI is an activist fund made up by the very people who for long have been and continue to be marginalised. Diversity and inclusion principles are not only reflected in the work UHAI-EASHRI does with sex workers and sexual and gender minorities, but are also evident in the organisation's recruitment and anti-discrimination policies, in the ways it integrates and welcomes staff and how it prioritises the communities it serves.

In a similar fashion *Fundación Entre Mujeres (FEM)*, a feminist organisation promoting the empowerment of peasant women in Northern Nicaragua, brings together women from different backgrounds in terms of their sexual orientation and age. Diana Martínez and Juana Villareyna, co-directors of FEM, explain that young and older women participate in training and education programmes promoted by the organisation, and then go onto being formally hired and becoming part of the staff.

For *Social Good Brasil (SGB)*, ensuring the representation, visibility and participation of diverse groups of people is a core element of their programming. Ana Addobbati, Executive Director of SGB, explains that this push for diversity and inclusion is driven by wanting to become an example and to show that it is possible to have a discussion of any issue with different voices and people of different backgrounds in Brazil.

There is this massive force if we consider the SGB annual Festival and our Fellowship programme that reflects our engagement for diversity. When it comes to the Festival, we make the effort to have representatively for gender, race, different groups. Regardless if we are talking about technology or social impact, we try to put together these different voices and try to be an example to this larger audience and show that it is possible to have a discussion in any kind of thematic different voices and different backgrounds. It's an effort that requires a lot of research and a lot of thought to make this happen.

We also use the Festival as a window to tackle some sore points on Brazil. We take intersectionality very seriously. This is pivotal for the festival programme. We pay attention to some crucial sore points and key campaigns that are crucial for diversity, especially when aiming to talk about human rights. We look to make the Festival accessible for anyone no matter their background. We aim to make the community closer and more aware. The idea is for people to leave the bubble they are living in and through the Festival create spaces where everyone is comfortable.

When it comes to the Fellowship, we set the goals for the team to be based in diversity. We have a roadmap and this landscape of how many action groups we have, from which states in Brazil do they come from, from which social and economic background, and so on, and we have these very diverse-oriented goals.

Ana Addobbati, SGB

Action plan

The narratives of research participants emphasise that an organisation does not become fully diverse and inclusive overnight. And that it is key to develop an action plan that can trace short-term and long-term actions, and that clearly establishes defined goals for making diversity and inclusion a cross-cutting aspect in organisations and operationalising the efforts needed to achieve that.

The Lemann Foundation recently conducted a diagnosis of its diversity and inclusion work and approached it from a more strategic level. Explaining this initiative, Neimy Escobar from the Lemann Foundation shares that:

“The diagnosis looked at diversity and inclusion not just in terms of numbers or representation, but also focused on asking important questions like, how do you make people succeed professionally and personally at the internal level of the Foundation? How do you retain talented staff? How do you create inclusive spaces? So, we are not even talking about diversity anymore, we are talking about inclusion, and understanding that this is a long process and that at some point we will get to equity, but we are not there yet.”

Following this diagnosis, the Foundation is currently in the process of advancing a three year plan for institutional development that has as one of its pillars a focus on diversity and inclusion in terms of recruitment and selection of top talent, supporting the successful development of staff and providing mentorship opportunities. The strategy will make diversity and inclusion efforts more systematic and international across the Foundation.

Values that promote and embrace diversity and inclusion

The work and objectives of most of the CSOs participating in this research are guided and informed by a human rights approach and values that strongly align with their diversity and inclusion efforts.

The work of AWID, FEM, FRIDA and UHAI-EASHRI, for instance, is informed by feminist values. These are organisations that are feminist in their DNA. For example, sexuality and love are among the values that UHAI-EASHRI embodies. Two of FRIDA's core values are inclusivity and diversity.

Diversity and inclusion must be recognised explicitly as a critical area in an organisation and addressed systematically and intentionally through all areas of an organisation. This can be achieved by developing a strategic vision and plan with clear objectives and focus, and allocating resources, human and financial, to support it.

An open communication plan to share the vision and plan widely across all sectors of an organisation is needed to make sure people are aware of the strategy and are more likely to buy in and have alignment to a commitment to working and advancing diversity and inclusion. Finally, it is essential to underline that any diversity and inclusion strategy for change should be grounded on a thorough analysis of diversity and inclusion issues in an organisation that includes multiple perspectives across an organisation.

“UHAI identifies as a feminist fund so we are feminist in our DNA. In practice this means that feminist values embody how we recruit, what type of policies we have internally, what type of HR policies, operational policies and the deliberate efforts we make to create a culture that is feminist.”

— Mukami Marete, UHAI-EASHRI

“One of our values is seeing disability as a cross-cutting development issue. It means that disability can come across all sections in the society, regardless of gender, religion, gender identity, geographical location, age, or educational background.”

— Rakhi Barua, Centre for Disability in Development (CDD)

“In this peasant, feminist, agroecological model that FEM has been developing, the interaction with nature, our relationship with water, with the earth, with other living beings, recognizing this interdependence, is also part of our vision of diversity and inclusion.”

— Diana Martinez, FEMO

3 ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS



Good intentions and policies are often not enough to create sustained change within organisations. There ought to be accountability mechanisms tailored to organisations' structures and cultures that support the process of embodying an organisational culture that engenders inclusive and welcoming spaces.

According to the research participants and the literature, accountability is a crucial aspect for guaranteeing the success of diversity and inclusion efforts by providing ways to ensure that people in leadership positions are made responsible for diversity and inclusion in their organisations and evaluated on their progress toward achieving their organisation's diversity and inclusion goals. At the same time, accountability for diversity and inclusion initiatives and efforts is the work and responsibility of everyone and not just of managers and leaders.

What are the main approaches?

- Holding leaders accountable for achieving diversity and inclusion goals and inclusive and welcoming workplaces.
- Assessing where an organisation stands in terms of diversity and inclusion – perhaps through a diversity and inclusion audit or stocktaking exercise.
- Monitoring and evaluating the alignment of diversity and inclusion efforts with an organisation's strategy, culture and objectives; this includes the practice of adding targets for continuous improvement based on established baselines and making these public so that stakeholders can hold an organisation accountable to those.
- Providing evidence to inform decisions and future interventions and assure accountability to the people we work with and for.

- Ensuring spaces with high levels of transparency in order to approach and address difficult questions about diversity and inclusion.
- Undergoing a continuous process of self-examination and reporting on how diverse and inclusive an organisation is being, including documenting the diversity and inclusion journey and opportunities and challenges.

Examples from CSOs

CDD offers feedback mechanisms and holds regular staff consultations and daily morning meetings through which people from the organisation can make suggestions for improvements at the internal and external levels. According to Rakhi Barua, these spaces bring together CDD staff, stakeholders and the communities the organisation serves to reflect on how to move forward by identifying gaps and loops.

As a way of embodying its feminist values, UHAI-EASHRI conducts 360 appraisals with all staff, from the top leadership to entry-level positions. These processes allow team members to listen to and learn from each other. The appraisals provide a space to hold UHAI-EASHRI's leadership accountable while also allowing leaders to acknowledge that they can make mistakes, something that co-director Stella Wairimu Bosire underlines as "a very powerful feminist principle."

Betty Barkha, a board member of AWID and CIVICUS, and advisor at the FRIDA Fund says that from an institutional perspective, these organisations take stock on an annual basis when their boards come together and hold them accountable. In terms of commitment to diversity and inclusion, this process is very important because it allows AWID and CIVICUS to engage in this work meaningfully, and move forward not by engaging with people on a superficial level or through tokenistic representation, but by making real efforts to manifest diversity and inclusion work with these organisations' members and seeing how efforts from AWID and CIVICUS's secretariats trickle down to their member organisations. These examples reiterate the importance of assigning accountability across all levels and types of employees, including senior management.



4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION: DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION METRICS AND DATA

As well as ensuring accountability for diversity and inclusion efforts there is a closely linked need to measure the impact of such efforts over time and monitor and evaluate progress and results. One of the main challenges for advancing diversity and inclusion work is the lack of data¹ and insufficient reporting on matters of staff diversity, which makes it harder to have accountability over these issues. Most organisations only collect data within the gender binary only (female/male), excluding non-binary staff members. Metrics and data collection practices regarding to diversity and inclusion must be inclusive. Attempts to measure success by tracking the quantity and magnitude of diversity and inclusion initiatives need to be accompanied by measurement of the impact of such measures on work and people.

Examples from CSOs

The interviews emphasised how quantitative and qualitative measures help organisations translate their diversity and inclusion endeavours into everyday practice. These are used to identify areas for intervention and improvement and for tracking progress and reviewing whether diversity and inclusion efforts lead to more diverse and inclusive organisations.

In this section, we provide three examples of a monitoring mechanism to measure diversity and inclusion efforts: Plan International's Gender and Inclusion Review (GIR), the Disability Inclusion Score Card developed by Light for the World, an international disability and development organisation, and the Gender at Work analytical framework.

Plan International’s Gender and Inclusion Review2

Figure 4. GIR in a nutshell

GIR IN A NUTSHELL

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The GIR is an annual monitoring process that serves as a benchmark and monitoring process for Plan International’s Global Policy on Gender Equality and Inclusion. It provides all offices with spaces and mechanisms to reflect on how gender trnasformativ the organisation’s work is.

The GIR uses an online survey tool on SurveyMonkey (Avaible in Englihs, Spanish, French, and Portuguese) for evidencing and tracking processes and achievements and identifying areas of improvement in gender equality and inclusion work within Plan International. It focuses on three interrelated areas: Office Staff: Programming and Influencing and Marketing and Communications.

It consists of an annual 1/2 day up to 1-day meeting with 7-10 satff at each Plan International office (at least 1 person from the Senior Management, 4-7 other participants representing different departments, and 2 co-related facilitators, who are usually the Gender and inclusion Adviser/focal point and Humand Resources Manager.

The GIR is adapted and modified periodically to increase its practicality for Plan International’s staff. It focuses on three main areas: (1) offices and staff, (2) programming and influencing and (3) marketing and communications.

In terms of approaching diversity and inclusion from the standpoint of organisational culture and in the context of this research, we focus on the first area, offices and staff. Below are survey questions the GIR addresses in this area, which could be helpful for organisations trying to monitor diversity and inclusion work within their institutions.

GIR questions related to offices and staff:

To what extent have gender equality and inclusion been integrated into the following?

	Always	Very Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Job descriptions					
Recruitment process					
Talent management and sucesion planning					
Induction processes					
Remuneration					
Pay review					
Performance management					
Incentives or rewards					
Other					

Does your office have and use the following HR policies or initiatives?

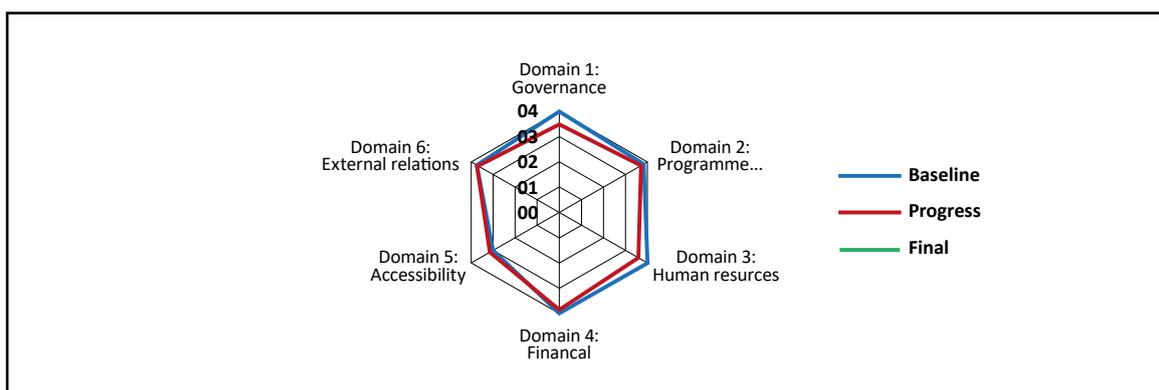
	Not in place	In place, low staff awareness or use	In place, moderate staff awareness and use	In place, high staff awareness and use
Family friendly policies				
Infant travel policies				
Flexi-time policy				
Parental leave that extends beyond the national legislation				
Sexual harrassment, bullying and discrimination				
Onsite infant or childcare facilities				
Breastfeeding / pumping facilities				
Universal washroom				
Others				

Disability Inclusion Score Card

The Disability Inclusion Score Card (DISC) was developed by Light for the World, 30 Dutch, Ethiopian and Indian CSOs, representatives from the disability movement and Vrije University Amsterdam. DISC is a monitoring tool to measure inclusion at the organisational level by using a set of specific criteria.

DISC helps organisations diagnose how inclusive they are in terms of disability and gender and identifies strengths and opportunities for change in terms of making organisations more inclusive. The Score Card covers six areas of organisations: governance, programme management practices, human resources, financial resources, accessibility and external relations, as seen in Figure 5. By using DISC regularly as a guided organisational assessment, an organisation can be support through a change process to become more inclusive, with change measured over time.

Figure 5. Disability Inclusion Score Card



Source: The Spindle

Example of questions featured on the DISC

DOMAIN	QUESTION
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the strategic and operational documents disability inclusive? Are the vision and mission supportive of work on inclusion, and does the organisation have a written policy on inclusion?
Programme Management Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is monitoring data collected on disability?
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the human resource policy disability inclusive? Are persons with disabilities working in the organisation?
Financial Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What budget is allocated for inclusion (e.g. reasonable accommodation, training and awareness raising, capacity strengthening on inclusion)?
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the office accessible? Are events / community meetings accessible? Is the website and information accessible? In how far staff members are trained to use, arrange for and produce materials and communications in alternative formats as possible?
External Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does your organisation collaborate with disabled people's organisations, disability service providers and national and international networks on disability and inclusion? Are rights of persons with disabilities part of your advocacy?

Source: [The Spindle](#)

Paulin Brujin, Inclusion Advisor at Light for the World, underlines that DISC is not a tool to create or raise awareness. Its use is more effective when an organisation has already amassed an understanding of disability and gender, as staff and leadership in organisations will be more motivated to take action if they understand the relevance of becoming more inclusive.

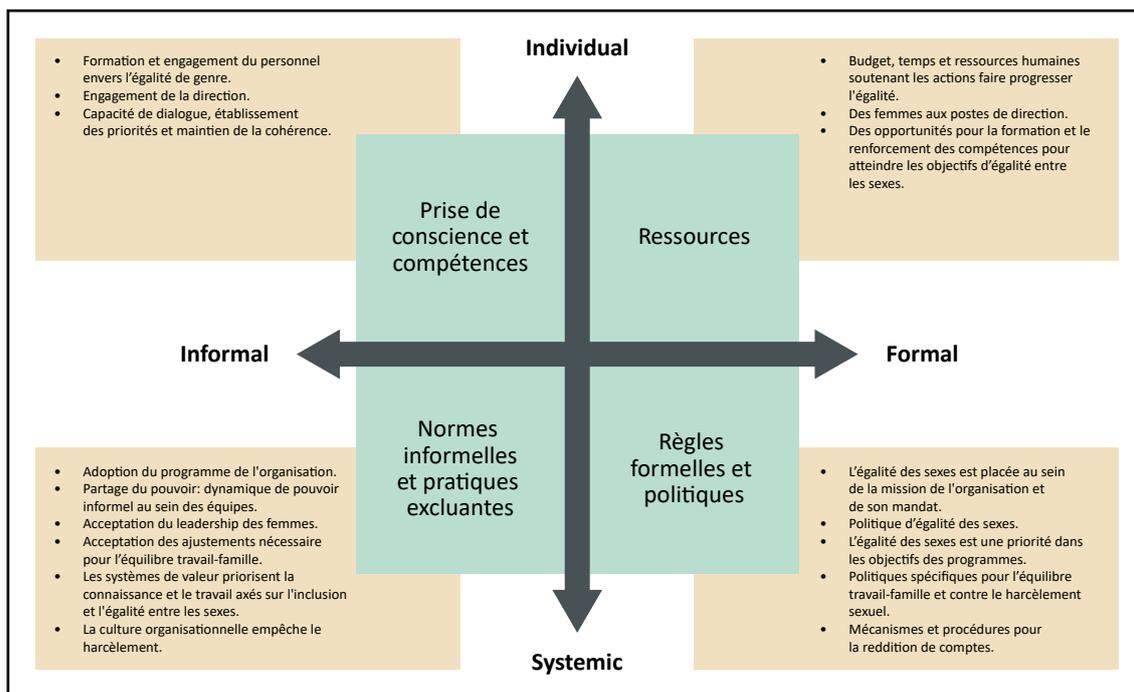
Gender at Work Analytical Framework

The Gender at Work Analytical Framework is a participatory and flexible monitoring and evaluation resource that allows organisations to measure and map out changes in four different areas: 1) consciousness and capabilities, 2) resources, 3) informal norms and exclusionary practices and 4) formal rules and policies. This holistic framework measures and visualises change in terms of organisational effectiveness and gender outcomes while also examining connections.

Those engaging in diversity and inclusion work can significantly benefit from applying this framework, as it allows them to frame diversity and inclusion in terms of organisational change. It identifies the informal practices, and people's attitudes and behaviours that make up the culture of an organisation. It also provides a framework to analyse the effects of those beliefs and organisational cultures and how they impact on different people. It can help enable reflection and the design of initiatives to change everyday practices that sustain organisational cultures and the deep structure of an organisation.

The framework can be adapted to different contexts to include the analysis of other forms of exclusion and categories beyond gender, such as minorities, ethnicities, socio-economic status and LGBTQI+ status.

Figure 6. Gender at Work Analytical Framework



Source: Rao & Kundu 2016:138



5 DISABILITY KNOWLEDGE AND INCLUSION

Access to decent work for people with disabilities is vital both as an inherent right and in terms of the social and economic benefits it brings. Research participants highlighted that to be truly diverse and inclusive, organisations must embed practices of disability inclusion and knowledge by creating an open, welcoming and supporting environment that helps people with disabilities and highlights their agency.

What are the main approaches?

- Providing disability equality training to all staff.
- Promote an organisational culture that focuses on fairness, accessibility, trust and diversity.

Examples from CSOs

Participants spoke of disability inclusion in terms of 1) recruitment and retention of people with disabilities, 2) improving accessibility and 3) acknowledging diversity within disability.

1) Recruitment and retention of people with disabilities

Although affirmative action policies and quotas can be controversial in specific contexts, Rakhi Barua explains why CDD implements these initiatives to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities within its ranks:

“Ten per cent of our staff are people with disabilities. We have some affirmative action programmes. Since October 2018, four to five recruitment processes were happening at CDD, and these were only for persons with disabilities. What happens sometimes is that when you have recruitment open to both people with disabilities and able people without disabilities, the person with disabilities cannot compete equally. That is why we have these specific affirmative actions, so these positions are for persons with disabilities. In some cases, we are also flexible with required education qualification to give opportunities to persons with disabilities to apply to a specific job at CDD.”

Aidan Levy shared the experience of Plan Canada, where about five per cent of the staff are people with disabilities working at different levels in the organisation. Plan Canada has been successful with this initiative partly because it has the resources to implement it, but most importantly because it has a clear vision of inclusiveness and has been driven by intentionality.

Some organisations have started including a statement to the effect that they encourage the application of people with disabilities in job postings or calls for conferences and other events. During CIVICUS's International Civil Society Week in April 2019, Yetnebersh Nigussie, a disability activist and lawyer from Ethiopia, provided advice to the CIVICUS diversity and inclusion team on this matter.

Nigussie states that taking a more holistic approach towards the inclusion of people with disabilities would involve adding a note in recruitment statements about how accessible offices and workspaces are, and whether an organisation will make the arrangements necessary in terms of transportation, technology assistance, flexibility of deadlines, spaces to de-stress and psychological support, among other accommodations. People with disabilities can then know what to expect from an organisation and what to advocate for even before applying for a position. Such an approach represents an excellent first step towards making institutions more disability-friendly.

2) Improving accessibility

Making accessibility a priority was also mentioned as an essential element for disability inclusion in organisations. Ensuring the accessibility of physical spaces means, for example, that working areas are designed in ways that allow people with disabilities to access and use amenities. It is also about making sure that an organisation's events and community meetings are accessible to people with disabilities.

As Tomas Chang from Voice explains, accessibility is also about communications and technology:

“Something important for us is to assess Voice with people from the groups we work with. For instance, a challenge we have now with our website is to make it accessible for people with disabilities. But it has been a process. We have had to educate ourselves about how to make a website that is accessible, and we have realised that there are a lot of tools, there are many people who are willing to provide support and advice, to make an assessment, so we understand what we are not doing well.”

3) Acknowledging diversity within disability

Often, there is a lack of awareness about the diverse types of disabilities that people live with, including visible and invisible ones. To create inclusive organisations, it is important to recognise these differences. Rakhi from CDD illustrates the diversity of staff with disabilities at her organisation:

“We do have people with a great variety of disabilities. We have two colleagues who are wheelchair users. We have four colleagues with visual impairment. We have two colleagues with complete speech and hearing impairment. We have low vision, and we have other physically challenged colleagues. Meaning that we are not only focusing on only one category of disability, like physical disability, but there are speech-hear impaired persons, wheelchair users, and people with low vision working at CDD.”

These are some examples of efforts and commitments CSOs are making in order to promote disability inclusion. Other tips are raising awareness and being open and willing to change; benchmarking disability, which can be done through conducting an accessibility assessment or organisational scan with DISC; and embedding disability inclusion in all systems, programmes and policies. Adding to that, other initiatives towards change could be inviting disability advocates to speak with the board, using self-assessment tools such as DISC and working towards hiring and retaining staff members with disabilities. Furthermore, while this section has referred specifically to disability, it can have broader applicability for other forms of exclusion and other identities.



6 NURTURING TRUST

Although civil society has become increasingly diverse, it has often failed to nurture trust and foster a sense of belonging. One of the ways civil society can counter this is by creating spaces for reflection, followed by actions and firm public commitments to diversity and inclusion.

To nurture trust within their ranks, CSOs “need space for honest dialogue to surface the power plays, hidden privileges and hierarchies” (Sandler & Rao 2012:557). Participants emphasised that it is very important that CSOs foster a sense of belonging and suggested that the healthiest organisational cultures are the ones where people can have open, brave and honest conversations.

Participants identified the need to bring people on board as crucial for advancing diversity and inclusion efforts in an organisation. One of the ways in which CSOs are bringing people on board is by creating diversity and inclusion working groups, task forces, or advisory groups to facilitate change within an organisation. Organisations can benefit when they support the development of internal change agents and the building of alliances and coalitions among diverse internal constituencies and networks to support organisational change.

This is the case for CIVICUS, where various staff members have come together in the Diversity and Inclusion Group, which internally coordinates diversity and inclusion initiatives across different CIVICUS work areas. On a periodic basis, this group discusses issues brought up by staff members. It is consulted on new policy documents and works to ensure that diversity and inclusion is considered across the organisation’s many projects. Diversity and inclusion working groups can help to guide and champion change within organisations.

Examples from CSOs:

Flaviana Charles, director of BHRT, speaks of nurturing trust in terms of allowing employees to feel a sense of belonging in an organisation, even when there are marked differences between people. She states:

“Every individual is different, isn’t it? So, we need to push for a positive value of diversity within our staff but also in the workplace. We go to the field missions and we work with different people as well: different genders, religions, sexual orientations, and then we understand that we are different, but we get to embrace those differences and let people feel a sense of belonging.”

Another way CSOs can nurture trust is through internal activities and events that have the purpose of community building. Neimy Escobar gives an example of an activity where people are invited to share something about themselves, and in that way, employees get to know each other and are able to build a community. She shares:

“Once a month we have an activity called ‘Who am I?’ Someone gets up and tell their story. It’s like happy hour and people are listening. Some of the sessions last four to five hours. With this we try to make a community of people, instead of just being a group of people who deliver products. That is, internally, how we promote a community and build a team.”

Research participants also underlined how important it is to bring people into the process of developing and implementing policies related to diversity and inclusion in an organisation and allow them to contribute to the process. Aidan Levy from Plan International shares that this has been the case for his organisation when implementing Plan International’s Gender Equality and Inclusion Policy. He explains that:

“Bringing different parts of the organisation on board on this [gender equality and inclusion] journey has been really important. Also making sure that they feel that they have the opportunity to contribute.”

As the examples above indicate, organisations should prioritise an open environment and the creation of safe spaces that allow for the expression of passion, empathy and forgiveness throughout processes of organisational change and learning.



7 INTERVENTIONS FOR CHANGE: POLICIES, ACTIONS AND PROCESSES

It is essential to have policies and functioning systems in place to help make the cultures of organisations more diverse and inclusive. When organisational change happens, there is a need to establish and enforce policies and actions against discrimination, sexism, inequalities and power hierarchies.

What are the main approaches?

Research participants identified some key quality issues that are relevant to include in diversity and inclusion policies and actions, although this list is not exhaustive:

- Creating enabling environment at workplace to ensure effective participation and inclusion –including efforts to recruit and retain staff in an inclusive manner
- Equal pay
- Zero tolerance for sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination
- Training and development (capacity strengthening)
- Promotion and growth
- Work-life balance, including flexible working and dependency policies
- Disciplinary and grievances policies
- Adapting working practices
- Self-care, community care and mental health

27

Examples from CSOs

Creating enabling environment at workplace to ensure effective participation and inclusion

As mentioned in the previous section, CDD has established affirmative actions to recruit people with disabilities. Similarly, Plan International offices in Asia have an internship programme for young Indigenous people.

Self-care and community care

FRIDA's Happiness Manifestx, created by and for the feminist fund's staff members is a set of agreements that puts happiness at the centre of FRIDA. All staff members have committed to putting these agreements into practice. The Manifestx is a political commitment from FRIDA staff members to centre care in everything they do. It is also an invitation to challenge, unlearn and decolonise capitalist and heteropatriarchal working cultures and practices by re-imagining the scope of self-care and collective well-being, shifting attention to staff members' mental health and reminding them to stay happy and joyful in the workplace.

Drawing on the process of creating the Happiness Manifestx, Betty Barkha explains that:

“The Happiness Manifestx was a two-to-three-year process that brought together not only staff but also grantee partners. Everyone was involved in the process of discussing what works and asking: what do we need? What can we do? How do we do this? So, it was a very long process; it took a long time, but it is guaranteed that it was an inclusive process for young feminists in FRIDA.”

“If we are giving benefits, how do we ensure that all the benefits are equitable and accessible to everyone in the same way. For example, I am a cis gender woman. That means I do not need to take hormones. But a transgender colleague of mine who needs hormones then will be in disadvantage by the kind of medical cover that we provide.

Since our insurance will not provide the hormones she needs, what is it that we need to put in place to ensure that all of us can access the kind of medical services we need without needing to get in our pockets or one of us being in disadvantaged against the other. Therefore, we need to think about a medical fund outside of the regular insurance fund available. In a similar way if I have a same-sex partner, how can my same-sex partner get health coverage?

We then push ourselves to think more political, in terms of how we define a family. Is it a mother, a father and the children? Or a family is also me and the woman who took me in when my parents kick me out for being queer? So whatever benefits exist within extended and non-traditional families need be recognised.

We ask ourselves ‘What does this mean practically?’ And then when we type the policies and proclamations we need to have to consider all these experiences, and we delete and then we figure out, and then we say ‘Ok, these are the sentences that make sense’.

When we are starting to write our manuals, of course we look at human resource manuals. Is there something we want, does it work for us, will it affect our staff? That is how we started off and we have continued with that culture through the years. Every six months, we are looking and reviewing our manuals, which are living documents. We are looking to see if the provisions we have are still working, and if it’s not working, then what needs to be done, who is it being excluded, who are we living out in certain proclamations? And therefore how do we continue being as inclusive, as we want our organisation to look like.”

— Mukami Marete, UHAI-EASHRI

As these examples emphasise, it is crucial to approach diversity and inclusion policies and actions through an intersectional lens and to ask ourselves whether these responses address multiple and intersecting layers of inequality. A good approach would be asking the following key questions before and during the implementation stages of these interventions: who, what, when, where, for whom and with whom?

Diversity and inclusion interventions for change should be reflective of the lived experiences and needs of staff. UHAI-EASHRI’s approach to health insurance and dependent policy, as described above, is an example of the application of an intersectional lens to diversity and inclusion-related policies, actions and systems in an organisation. Additionally, CSO boards and leaders must support the implementation of these policies by properly allocating resources and taking up the policies as a political and strategic commitment within their organisations.

Such initiatives need to be accompanied by mechanisms that make their compliance and enforcement a reality. Organisations must prioritise making policies accessible and ready to be used by employees. These interventions must ensure that organisational issues and personnel grievances are resolved effectively, with active, appropriate participation from all levels.



8 PROMOTING A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The provision of spaces and opportunities for reflection and learning was underlined as another significant diversity and inclusion practice. Capacity strengthening and learning and development units are an essential part of many CSOs’ programming, and specifically promote the development and growth of an organisation’s staff.

What are the main approaches?

- Providing freedom to pilot and experiment.
- Encouraging an environment of learning from experience where flawless implementation is not expected.
- Promoting education and training opportunities, including mentoring, coaching and networks.
- Creating learning spaces that are respectful, inclusive and transformatory.

Examples from CSOs

As Deputy Executive Director of UHAI-EASHRI, Dr Stella seeks to promote the individual growth and development of team members by providing staff with educational, training, fellowship and mentorship opportunities. She believes these opportunities are relevant for UHAI-EASHRI's staff as they boost their productivity while at the same time strengthening their knowledge, skills and experience to better serve their communities. Similarly, for Ekaterina Porras, founder and director of Project 189, providing staff with the opportunity to grow is a critical element of CSOs. She shares that:

“I think that as a civil organisation we, of course, have a community that we serve, but I think our responsibility is as well, in a leadership position, to make the people that you work with grow. If they do not grow, for sure your organisation will not grow, and thus your community will not grow.”

Plan International's senior management allocates budget annually for staff capacity development and action learning resources on gender equality and inclusion across different functions. Peer-to-peer learning opportunities and programmes, such as mentoring and coaching, are initiatives that support the development of staff, and often provide a pathway for people of excluded groups to develop networks within an organisation.

Voice's linking and learning

In addition to the innovative grant facility that Voice offers, another integral aspect of the organisation is its 'linking and learning component', which brings different stakeholders together to share, connect and look at common learning questions. As the heart and soul of Voice, linking and learning “is the process enabling the sharing of experiences and lessons from (innovative) initiatives. It allows successful projects and approaches to scale-out and scale-up. It is learning from mistakes (and in some cases, failure) and being open to solutions that take us out of our comfort zone” (Voice 2019).

Mentorship in the Lemann Foundation

In her article 'How Reverse Mentoring Can Lead to More Equitable Workplaces', Sharlene Gandhi sets out how institutionalised mentorship opportunities can foster inclusion and belonging in organisations, as they allow “that individuals feel welcome upon arrival and supported through a relationship that transcends the parameters of traditional professionalism.” As part of its strategic framework, the Lemann Foundation will be launching a mentorship programme to promote the exchange of experiences between senior and junior staff and help to encourage community building within the organisation.

Diversity and inclusion training and education programmes

One of the ways to make diversity and inclusion a crosscutting element in CSOs is to implement training activities to educate staff and foster awareness of diversity and inclusion across all levels. Literature on diversity and inclusion underlines the benefits of training and education programmes for addressing unconscious bias and discrimination at the workplace, changing individual behaviours and creating a critical mass of employees to advocate and support change (CGIAR 2000). These initiatives are an opportunity for people and groups to recognise and address the prejudices that impact on their behaviours, attitudes and organisational outcomes at work.

Training activities and interventions for change should form a key aspect of any policy portfolio, but they must be handled sensitively in order to not reproduce stereotypes.

“Despite working in an environment where most of UHAI’s community members are criminalised, we also recognised that there is individual growth for every person who sits within the institution. So, we prioritise that, and we look at every individual’s needs and see how as an institution we can support their growth.”

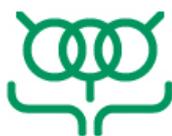
— Stella Wairimu Bosire, UHAI-EASHRI

“Voice’s ‘linking and learning component’ shows that what people have in common is greater, what unities us is greater than what divides us. And this is especially true for people who are living in the margins of society and for first time engagements of the LGBTQI+ community. And that has been an amazing journey, where possible, because it is not possible in every country.”

— Marinke van Riet, Voice

“My own experience with the mentorship programme is one of the reasons why I have been so successful, and I have stayed in this team so well professionally is actually because I had the opportunity to work with our director, who is a woman, and for me that was really important. So, our directors are now mentors for people at the organisation, and that will make a difference for the mentees to have these role models, not role models but mentors inside the organisation.”

— Neimy Escobar, Lemann Foundation



9 CONTEXT MATTERS

Research participants’ accounts strongly indicate that the global and local socio-political and cultural contexts in which CSOs are embedded shape their diversity and inclusion focus.

Contexts can enable or hamper diversity and inclusion efforts. For example, the external political climate in a country may support or hinder diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Organisations need to ground their vision of diversity and inclusion in their specific contexts. For diversity management scholars Mor Barak and Daya (2014:392), adopting a broader vision of inclusion means being “included not only the organisation itself but also its surrounding community and its national and international context.” This more comprehensive vision of inclusion is evident in participating organisations in this research, whose motivations to work on diversity and inclusion are significantly driven by political and socio-economic events within their contexts.

In the ‘Benchmarking Report Diversity, Equity and Inclusion’, Wakefield and Safier speak of these dynamics, highlighting that:

“[Some people] given the rise in many contexts of fascism, white supremacy, patriarchy and heteronormativity, are increasingly more attuned to the need for inclusion of other excluded groups. They understand that there is an ethical imperative to working to advance inclusion and equity in all that foundations do, not only as project aims, which enhances the credibility and authority of such groups to advocate more broadly for human rights, gender, ethnic, racial and other forms of equity” (2019:6).

Neimy Escobar explains that one of the drives for the Lemann Foundation’s current focus on diversity and inclusion is the current context in Brazil:

“In Brazil, the question of racial and gender equality has been more prevalent over the past few years giving the socio-political context with President Jair Bolsonaro, so I think we have been held to a higher standard as a result of that. We think that we cannot do our work if we cannot live up to our values, we need to walk the talk, and show people in Brazil what our values are. Not only believing in our values but showing people what our values are.”

FEM’s model of diversity and inclusion is also shaped by the context in which the organisation is embedded. Driven by its feminist and agro-ecological focus, it has forged an organisational culture that affirms life and criticises the current neoliberal, extractivist and heteropatriarchal economic system that devalues and marginalises peasant women. Juana Villarreyra speaks about this process:

“In FEM, young peasant women occupy 80 per cent of the organisation’s positions. These are young women who have been educated and trained within FEM. Young women are included, they are participating, they have their own resources which FEM has allocated for them, and they have jobs here at the organisation. They have dignified salaries. We are trying to apply values of labour justice and to prioritise and ensure our self-care, placing ourselves at the centre of our own lives, not as subservient individuals of a predatory economic system, but instead as women who love life.”

These are some of the approaches by CSOs to doing diversity and inclusion work in ways that are relevant for their own contexts. In contrast, for Odhikar and Project 189, their socio-political context has deterred some of their diversity and inclusion efforts. Adilur Rahman Khan, founder and secretary of Odhikar, a human rights organisation in Bangladesh, said that his organisation has found big challenges in retaining women human right defenders (WHRDs) in the organisation, given that they face intimidation and are at a high risk of experiencing sexual violence due to the nature of their work.

As noted in CIVICUS’s publication ‘[In Defence of Humanity: Women Human Rights Defenders and the struggle against silencing](#)’, “WHRDs face the same risks as all HRDs, but their gender results in gender-specific threats and violence that often result in stigmatisation and ostracism by community leaders, faith-based groups, families and communities” (2019:4).

In terms of inclusivity, Ekaterina Porras Sivolobova expresses the wish that Project 189 could include and employ migrant workers in its staff. This would add significant value to the work and the impact of the organisation in trying to advance the rights of migrant workers in the Middle East. However, due to the Kafala system – the migrant “sponsorship system” present in the Gulf – does not allow this inclusion, making it difficult for Project 189 to be as diverse and inclusive as they hoped. This is consistent with the findings of the CIVICUS report [Freedoms on the Move: The Civic Space of Migrants Workers and Refugees](#), which underlines that “most destination countries continue to deny migrant workers and refugees the right to the freedom of association and the right to organise, alongside other fundamental labour rights” (2019:11).

“We have women human right defenders and activists who are associated with us as volunteers, but many of them left the organisation. Phone calls from the intelligence agencies and pressure from the local local-level thugs belonging to the ruling party and its allies forced them to leave our network and the organisation. We had about 1000 HRDs and about 300 of them were women, but now we have 300 volunteers/HRDs working with us and approximately 50 of them are women. In the human rights field, you need to have active WHRDs who will take the lead. Unfortunately, because of the country’s situation in terms of the extreme level repression that we have women are being discouraged from becoming active human rights defenders. Our interest and mission is to provide space for empowered women, not empowering women, as the women in Bangladesh are already empowered as a result of the struggle that they encounter on a daily basis. We need to fight for their political voice. We do not like ‘gender-mainstreaming’ or ‘gender training’ for women because they themselves can train us. They have gone through struggles that are extremely arduous in nature.”

— Adil Rahman Khan, Odhikar

“We work with a community that is very isolated. Because of the Kafala system both migrant and domestic workers are very hard to reach. And is not only about including migrant workers in our team, with laws in place that do not allow us to organize, it is an additional challenge. And to add a third layer, we as an organization face the challenge of how to build trust when we cannot have members of the community that we work for working with us side by side.

— Ekaterina Porras, Project 189



10 PRACTISE WHAT WE PREACH

Sometimes there seems to be a disjuncture between what civil society says and how it acts, and this is no different when we talk about diversity and inclusion work. We know that to bridge this gap, promote diversity and inclusion and pursue social justice, CSOs must reflect and align their mandates and principles with their practice.

Thinking out of the box

For a CSO to practise what it preaches and strive towards a vision of inclusion, there may be a need for innovative

thinking. For Voice, for example, practising what it preaches means being creative about finding ways to think and practise diversity and inclusion work; according to Tomas Chang is about “making a deliberate choice.” He shares the following example to illustrate how Voice practises what it preaches when it comes to its commitment of advancing diversity and inclusion:

“Even here in the Netherlands, when we have guests and partners from abroad, we try to look into this, for example, when we have dinner with them and team dinners, we go to a dining venue that focuses their whole business model on employing people with some form of intellectual impairment. You see a lot of people uncomfortable because it doesn’t work as a top-quality restaurant: the food is equally delicious, but they serve at different moments. You have to be more attentive to the waiter, and not the other way around. So, thinking and working on diversity and inclusion means even considering those little practices. I think at the end it is very enriching, and I think it is part of practising what we preach. It is about being inclusive at however way we can.”

For UHAI-EASHRI, thinking out of the box and establishing new ways of ensuring the inclusion of staff members have led to very positive results, which have trickled down to the communities UHAI-EASHRI works and advocates for and with:

“The organisations and communities we serve have a higher job retention of people who identify as sex workers. In every sense, diversity and inclusion becomes our culture both internally and externally.”

Establishing some non-negotiables

One movement that is gaining momentum within civil society is the refusal to participate in all-male panels. This is an example of establishing a non-negotiable position on diversity and inclusion grounds. Joanna Maycock suggests that one crucial step for action that CSOs can take to change leadership and organisational culture is to take the pledge to refuse to be part of all-male panels. Those in positions of influence in civil society should work to “ensure that women participate in international spaces. Give up your space for a woman and boycott all panels where no woman is speaking. Make sure that whenever you organise a conference or assembly that half of the speakers on all panels are women and reflect a real diversity of perspectives and voices” (Maycock 2016:161).

Embodying its principle of ‘nothing about us without us’, Voice is one organisation that takes a stance against all-male panels. For all events, Voice tries to have diverse groups present so they can speak and share their experiences. Similarly, CIVICUS, as stated in its diversity statement, does not take part in all-male panels.

Another non-negotiable that participants mentioned is having zero tolerance for bullying, discriminatory behaviour and sexual harassment, as well as zero tolerance for corruption. Examples of these are the policies and commitments of Plan International and Voice.

In reality, to practise what we preach can be very difficult. Tomas Chang from Voice articulates this challenge, but also suggests that the important thing is to make the intentional choice to push for diversity and inclusion:

“The more aware, and conscious you are, the more gaps and holes you see, and you don’t want to fall into them. So, it becomes more complicated. That’s why many people say ‘No, I’m not going to work on diversity and inclusion. I want something easy.’

“The main trainer of a DFAT (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs) supported project at CDD can get personal assistance support whenever he requests, including support inside toilet. He doesn’t need to maintain a personal assistance with payment. Rather, sensitized CDD colleagues’ offer this support voluntarily. During lunch time, CDD’s dining staff supports colleagues with visual impairment along with all other colleagues with disabilities as per their specific needs. During the training program, a person with disability can bring his/her caregivers. CDD provides maximum cost concession to the caregiver. CDD’s receptionist cum telephone operator, a female colleague with visual impairment, was supported for 3-years by CDD with a full-time caregiver to look after her new-born baby daughter during office hours. All costs were borne by the organization. These are all examples of actions offered at CDD with a bit compassion and empathy to minimize the challenges and barriers of persons with disabilities. It provides a sense of belonging to these persons within their workplace.”

— Rakhi Barua, CDD

But of course, it is a decision, and we try to be loyal to our choice and to practice what we preach. That is the key.”

Empathy as a driving force of diversity and inclusion work

Empathy is essential for advancing D&I in the workplace and can help developing the practices needed for building inclusive organisational cultures. Showing empathy for others in the face of diversity and inclusion means that instead of seeing people’s identities and experiences as a problem, we embrace these differences and are able to connect with others in a deeper level and try to be understanding of their perspectives and lived realities. Rakhi Barua underlines that CDD’s work on Diversity and Inclusion is fuelled by compassion and empathy. CDD believes that while advocating for an inclusive society, we must walk the talk to create own examples of good practices to preach to others.

4. THE WAY FORWARD

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION THINKING AND ACTION IN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

As the examples evidenced in this report suggest, our experiences and struggles can inspire us and guide our efforts towards becoming truly diverse and inclusive organisations. We know that there are no easy fixes, no blueprints and no perfect models for advancing and championing diversity and inclusion in our organisations. Yet there are some practices that can help frame and guide our diversity and inclusion journeys.

An excellent first step is to commit to having open, honest and challenging discussions about diversity and inclusion; this means both listening and developing actions to push for systemic change in our organisations. Such conversations can help us develop interventions that are context-specific and humane, and that reflect the experiences and needs of people.

We should also remember that working on diversity and inclusion is a journey, with no real end point. It requires that we constantly question and challenge our usual methods of working and ways of thinking.

To advance and truly champion organisational justice, equity and inclusion in our organisations, we must approach diversity and inclusion work dynamically and systemically instead of focusing on quick-fix solutions. At the same time, we must recognise, celebrate and connect small victories in order to aggregate small changes into a larger change process with more impact. This also requires that we shift from a reactive to a proactive approach, do not see power imbalances and power abuses as technical problems and address the root causes and structural issues that keep on reproducing power imbalances and hierarchies.

To identify more emancipatory ways of practising diversity and inclusion, further research that involves both critical reading and pragmatic orientation is needed. Meaningful inclusion means moving beyond special initiatives and checkbox solutions to integrating diversity and inclusion work fully in all facets of an organisation's operations and programmes. We must practise dynamic accountability with the purpose of helping and supporting each other along the journey. Only by doing these things can we build a sustainable path for driving positive organisational cultural change that can lead to more diverse and inclusive organisations.

“Diversity and social justice work involves being imperfect and vulnerable, a willingness to make mistakes and learn from them, and forgiving oneself and others for being imperfect. It means working from both head and heart and being clear about what one stands for; identifying one's own purpose, vision, values. It means taking responsibility for ourselves and our personal and professional development, holding ourselves responsible for intentions and accountable for intended and unintended impacts, and distinguishing between intentions and effects of one-time, isolated events and the cumulative effects of successive and on-going events.”

— Brazzel (2007:19)

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LIST OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION RESOURCES

RESOURCES ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- § [State of Civil Society Report 2016 \(CIVICUS\)](#)
- § [Inclusion and equity: holding the mirror up to ourselves](#)
- § [Benchmarking Report Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#)
- § [Digital Dalits, Colourful Carroças: Civil Society Action for Inclusion](#)
- § [Creating an inclusive environment for diversity in the workplace](#)
- § [To improve diversity in charities we must do more than tick boxes](#)
- § [Belonging: A conversation about equity, diversity and inclusion](#)
- § [Top 10 Diversity and Inclusion Practices \(CIVICUS\)](#)

RESOURCES ON INTERSECTIONALITY

- § [Center for Intersectional Justice](#)
- § [Intersectionality Matters Podcast](#)
- § [Intersectionality as buzzword: A sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful](#)
- § [Leading at the Intersections: An Introduction to the Intersectional Approach](#)
- § [The intersectionality wars](#)

RESOURCES ON SELF-CARE AND COMMUNITY CARE

- § [FRIDA's Happiness Manifestx](#)

RESOURCES ON DISABILITY INCLUSION

- § [Resource Book: Disability Inclusion](#) by Light for the World
- § [Towards Inclusion: A guide for organisations and practitioners](#) (Gender and Disability Inclusion) by Light for the World
- § [Disability Inclusion Score Card](#) by Light for the World
- § [MIUSA simple rapid assessment](#) for international development organisations
- § [Bridging the gap: Inclusive communication guidelines](#) by FIAPP, Bridging the Gap and the EU
- § [Adding the "D" to Diversity: Enabling Foundations, Nonprofits and Partners to Include People with Disabilities](#) by RespectAbility

RESOURCES ON FEMINIST AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP

- § [Feminist leadership for social transformation](#)
- § [Achieving Transformative Feminist Leadership: A Toolkit for Organisations and Movements](#)
- § [Transformative and Feminist Leadership for Women's Rights](#)
- § [Drawing on our diversity: Humanitarian leadership](#)
- § [A young feminist new order: an exploration of why young feminists organise the way they do](#)
- § [Building better workplaces: A practical guide on moving beyond basic legal compliance efforts to make workplaces more gender-inclusive](#)

RESOURCES ON RACISM AND RACE EQUITY

- § [The social justice sector has an internal racism problem](#)
- § [Dismantling White Supremacy in Nonprofits: a starting point](#)
- § [Equity and Fakequity: What does it take to actually bring about equity in the nonprofit sector and communities?](#)
- § [Breaking Through Barriers to Racial Equity](#) (Stanford Social Innovation Review)
- § [AWAKE to WOKE to WORK: Building a Race Equity Culture](#)

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ANNEXES

INTRODUCING PARTICIPATING CSOS

Business and Human Rights Tanzania: Business and Human Rights Tanzania (BHRT) is an organisation that promotes the uptake of the United Nations' guiding principles regarding business and human rights. BHRT has a research focus, gathering information on labour law, environment, gender, accountability issues and consumer protection. The organisation also advocates for policy change in terms of improving business practices in accordance with a human rights approach. BHRT works with the Tanzanian government and companies and supports community members and workers in different job sectors.

Centre for Disability in Development: The Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) is a Bangladeshi CSO set up in 1996 to create a more inclusive society for persons with disabilities. The vision of CDD is 'Equal opportunities and full participation for persons with disabilities in all spheres of life.' CDD's mission is to include disability issues in mainstream development. CDD works in partnership with a network of over 350 organisations both nationally and internationally.

FEM (Fundación entre Mujeres): Fundación entre Mujeres (FEM) was founded in 1995, formed by a group of feminist leaders of rural communities of Las Segovias, in Northern Nicaragua, who are committed to the strategic gender and class interests of peasant women. FEM promotes the ideological, economic, political and organisational empowerment of peasant women through formal and non-traditional education and training programmes, sexual and reproductive rights, the fight against violence, access to land and productive diversification under a sustainable way of life approach for adults and young people. Through such programmes, women from rural communities can participate and be real actors in transforming their own realities, making decisions in the development policies carried out by FEM.

FRIDA Fund: The FRIDA Young Feminist Fund is a young feminist-led initiative that funds and strengthens the participation and leadership of young feminist activists globally. FRIDA supports young feminist activists globally with grants and other forms of support to strengthen their organisations in areas such as fundraising, leadership and advocacy, bringing new resources and opportunities to young women and transgender young people globally.

Lemann Foundation: The Lemann Foundation is a non-profit family organisation, created in 2002 by Brazilian entrepreneur Jorge Paulo Lemann. The goal of the foundation is to improve the quality of public education in Brazil, with a focus on ensuring that all students learn and speeding up social change in Brazil. It also concentrates on discovering and cultivating all potential talents to build an active network of game-changers that can move Brazil forward. To achieve this goal, the Lemann Foundation develops initiatives that affect millions of Brazilian public-school students and help institutions of excellence striving for a more prosperous and developed country.

Odhikar: Odhikar is a prominent and persecuted human rights organisation in Bangladesh that was founded in 1994 to raise awareness on human rights and monitoring human rights violations in that country. Its main goals are, on the one hand, to raise awareness of human rights and its numerous abuses and, on the other, to create a healthy democratic system by monitoring elections. The organisation has developed a strong network of activists and human rights defenders not only in Bangladesh but also around the region.

Plan International: Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. It strives for a just world, working with children, young people, supporters and partners, and works in 71 countries across the globe, in Africa, the Americas and Asia.

Project 189: Project 189 is a non-profit, grassroots organisation that promotes, protects and improves the rights of migrant workers in the Middle East. They advocate for policy implementation in the Middle East to protect marginalised low-paid workers from abusive employment practices and penalise exploitation by employers. They also create awareness campaigns to promote migrant workers' legal rights to the general population and deliver training to migrant workers on their legal rights. Project 189 also provides legal advice, repatriation support and translation services in addition to providing transportation to offices to support cases and/or complaints. To date they have offered support to approximately 200 migrant workers and have helped free victims of trafficking and exploitation.

Social Good Brasil: Social Good Brasil (SGB) is a CSO that inspires, connects and supports individuals and organisations to use technologies, new media and innovative behaviour to help solve society's problems. A partner of the United Nations Foundation, SGB encourages the use of future technologies, data and skills for the common good, generating positive social and environmental impact.

UHAI-EASHRI: UHAI, meaning 'life' or 'alive' in Swahili, is Africa's first indigenous activist fund. It was founded in 2008 to provide resources to support civil society activism around issues of sexuality, health and human rights in East Africa, with a particular focus on the rights of sex workers and sexual minorities. UHAI-EASHRI is based in Nairobi, Kenya and provides grants and capacity support to LGBTQI+ and sex worker organisations in seven Eastern African countries – Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda – as well as pan-African organisations working across the continent.

Voice: Voice is an innovative grant facility of €35 million (approx. US\$38.8 million) that supports projects that promote inclusion and diversity in Cambodia, Indonesia, Kenya, Laos, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Philippines, Tanzania and Uganda. It aims to amplify and connect thus far unheard voices in efforts to leave no one behind. Voice's five target groups are Indigenous groups and ethnic minorities, age-discriminated vulnerable groups, LGBTQI+ people, people living with disabilities and women facing exploitation, abuse, or violence. Voice is an initiative of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is executed by a consortium of Oxfam Novib and Hivos.

ENDNOTES

- 1 We believe that it is important to think about how this data will be used, and to consider any security risks related to collecting data on people's personal information, details and experiences. Safeguarding people's wellbeing and safety must always be a priority.
- 2 The objectives of the GIR are: 1) To enable constructive discussion on the progress, challenges and opportunities related to embedding our commitment to gender equality and inclusion; 2) To provide the organisation with global data and a clear picture on our progress towards implementing the Global Policy on Gender Equality and Inclusion; 3) To enable year-on-year data and comparative data from the past processes and 4) To support a range of reporting and communications activities on gender equality, girls' rights and inclusion, including for external audiences.

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