Four steps towards gender balance

During 2019, National Societies from across our 190 strong membership will work together to adopt measures which improve gender balance in their workforce. Below is a four-step guide to important considerations during evaluation and action on gender balance.

**Step 1: Understanding why gender balance matters**

*Gender balance leads to a stronger and unified humanitarian action.* A very first step is to ensure that management and governance of our organizations understand the implications of gender inequality, and the benefits, values and positive impacts of achieving equality.

Ensuring leadership commitment and ownership of the process and objectives can be obtained in various ways, through discussion, trainings, experience in working with the necessities of Gender and Diversity in Humanitarian Action, peer learnings, or through democratic processes to name a few.

It will be important for an organization to assess and determine the best way forward for themselves, depending on prior engagement, context, competencies and skills within the management pool. If the management and governance of a National Society already feel confident in this, that is great.

It would be strongly recommended though, to engage Gender experts and HR specialists in this process and to set aside resources or initiate efforts to obtain them for this purpose.

**Step 2: Understand the im/balance among managers and leadership in your organization.** As mentioned above, a dive into workforce data is key for greater awareness of how the experiences of employee groups differ from others. Identifying gaps help you pinpoint areas in need of action. By focusing on five metrics - representation, hires, turnover, promotions and time in position – you can use your data to close identified gaps.

In addition, policies on areas such as parental leave, equal salary, flexible work arrangements, code of conduct, ethics can indirectly support improved gender balance among staff. Equally important is how these policies are implemented and how they are perceived to be implemented.

The IFRC G&D Organizational Assessment toolkit provides National Societies with practical guidance to assess status quo in terms of gender and diversity balance, and to plan steps to address gaps.

It helps National Societies assess their performance on gender and diversity in the following areas:

- political will and commitment
- organisational culture
- resources and capacity
- programme delivery and implementation
- accountability

Assessing performance in each of these areas highlights those areas in which the National Society is performing well and those in which it needs to improve and can be a good commitment to measure towards the end of the year. The link to the toolkit is here: [https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/document/gender-and-diversity-organisational-assessment-toolkit-introduction/](https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/document/gender-and-diversity-organisational-assessment-toolkit-introduction/)
Step 3: Plan your way towards an inclusive organization

Develop a concrete plan of action with clear targets, timeframe and roles and responsibilities, based on the above and on the level of commitment and resourcing possible. This plan should also include how you will monitor and report on progress and what measures to take if challenges or barriers are met on your way. Set a target for when you will reach gender parity in all levels of your NS; from volunteers to senior management and governance. For those National Societies who already have targets and action plans in place, we are looking forward to learning more about how this work is progressing, and what your best practices are.

Step 4: Join the Movement in committing to balance

Disseminate your commitment and plan to reach your goals with all staff and volunteers in your NS. Then, share your target and commitment with the Movement by engaging with the mechanism we have established, so that we can cheer each other on and learn from one another. Your Secretary General can designate a focal person to share your targets through a form that is available at request, and will be shared with NS in relation to the 2019 International Women’s Day. The form is to be requested by and submitted to parity.target@ifrc.org. When we have collected commitments, we will share these on our website.

Then, it is all about working hard to achieve our goals and become the inclusive, unified, equal-opportunities movement we need to be.

Who can support?

It is strongly encouraged that National Societies with the capacity and resources to support others in this, do so. The IFRC is prepared to coordinate and support efforts to ensure that as many National Societies as possible, in all the regions, are enabled to perform these steps outlined above and welcome initiatives to support or seek support, between sister National Societies.

We also encourage engagement in the RCRC Global Gender & Diversity Network, it is open for all National Societies and exists to facilitate and coordinate sharing of experiences, challenges and opportunities.

For more information, please contact IFRC Gender & Diversity Coordinator or the HR Department IFRC in Geneva.

GLOW Red – The Global Network of Women Senior leaders in Red Cross Red Crescent Movement

Women senior leaders can become members of GLOW Red, an open network working for women leaders supporting women leaders and making sure that the resolution from 2017 becomes reality. Please contact petra.nyberg@redcross.se to become member and learn more. All RCRC staff can subscribe to the GLOW Red newsletter, send an email to erika.o’halloran@redcross.ca