INTERSECTIONALITY AND YOUR IGC COMMITMENTS

Champions are well-placed standard setters to address different and intersecting forms of discrimination. In order to take bold step in 2021 it is important to consider women and girls in all their diversity and take an intersectional approach.

What is intersectionality?

Intersectionality is a tool for analysis, advocacy, and policy development that addresses intersecting inequalities. It helps us understand how different sets of identities impact access to rights and opportunities. An intersectional approach to gender equality acknowledges the fact that women and men have different experiences based on aspects of their identity, including race, social class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, age and more.

Why take an intersectional approach to your commitments?

It is increasingly recognized that multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination undermine participation and lead to the denial of rights and perpetuation of oppression. Women and girls from minority and marginalized groups are more likely to face violations across the spectrum of human rights. The effectiveness of policies based solely on the experience of "all women" as one homogenous group is limited. Policies that fail to address the large diversity of people's experiences do not work for individuals who face challenges specific to marginalized aspects of their identities.

Addressing these significant intra-gender gaps is critical to ensure that no woman or marginalized gender identity is left behind in our efforts to create gender-equal organizations. According to a 2019 study by McKinsey on Women in the workplace, the workplace experiences of women of colour, lesbian and bisexual women and women with disabilities tend to be worse across the board than women without these identity traits. For example, the gender pay gap for women of colour is wider than for white women, and only 4% of C-Suite positions in the US are held by women of colour (as compared to 18% for white women). What's more, research in the UK showed that the numbers of LGBTQAI+ people who experienced sexual harassment and assault at work varied significantly depending on ethnicity, with young women more likely to experience sexual harassment. Women from ethnic and racial minorities face discrimination in recruitment, and women with disabilities and women of colour receive less support from their managers once they are hired.

Questions to ask yourself to apply an intersectional lens to your commitments

- How is a issue in our internal management or in our programmatic work affecting different groups of women and girls differently?

- Are girls and younger women differently and disproportionately affected due to their age and gender, as compared to older women?

- How might other factors of a person's identity and/or context (i.e., ability, ethnicity, income) shape their experience?

- Why do differences between different groups exist?

- What are the root causes/drivers of those differences?

- What steps might we need to take to better understand why these differences exist, and what differences we might have overlooked or missed?

- How can policy measures be tailored to ensure the rights of all groups of women and girls equally?

What would this look like in practice?

Here are some examples of how commitments could be modified to take an intersectionality approach. In addition to gender, we encourage the integration of both age and diversity when possible:

The icons indicate whether a commitment takes into account age, gender and/or diversity.

Age   Gender   Diversity

Selection & Recruitment

"Ensure gender parity in the selection and recruitment of new staff, as well as recruitment of at least 20% of women from marginalized groups."

Work-Life Balance

"Develop a policy for work-time flexibility and encourage working from home when necessary for all workers, with special attention given to workers with care responsibilities, religious workers, workers with disabilities, older workers, and others."

Organizational Culture

"Roll out a mandatory course for staff and managers on sexism and harassment in the workplace, highlighting, in particular, the harassment faced by young women, women of colour, LBTQAI+ women, and women with disabilities.

Programmatic & Field Work

"Continually advocate for strong language on gender equality, taking into account age and diversity, and highlighting the specific and different needs of girls, all policy and standard-setting negotiations."

"Ensure that whenever consultations are held with civil society organizations, at least one CSO led by girls/adolescents or women with disabilities or women from a marginalized group is consulted."

Useful tools and resources

Examples of mandates/efforts to consider gender and diversity or intersectionality within the UN system:

- UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability (updated 2018)

- 2020 Human Rights Council Resolution on Discrimination against Women and Girls, focusing on Intersectionality (A/HRC/RES/44/17)

- UN System-Wide Strategy on Gender Parity (2017)

Guidance on intersectionality and an age, gender and diversity approach:

- WEF Diversity, Equity and Inclusion 4.0 Toolkit

- Age, Gender and Diversity Tip Sheet

- Plan International #LanguageMatters

- Generation Equality Curated Discussion on Intersectionality

For support on how to craft a commitment with an intersectional approach, please contact us at admin@genderchampions.com