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Gender-Responsive Leadership Framework

More information

Go to our website at www.fba.se/grl to access more information and practical materials on gender-responsive leadership.

If you have questions, don't hesitate to get in touch: grl@fba.se

In 2020, the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) - the Swedish government agency for peace, security and development - in close collaboration with Leslie Groves Williams (PhD), Senior Gender and Leadership Expert began a multiyear initiative on gender-responsive leadership. The aim is to support leaders and managers in international and regional peace and security organizations to take effective action for gender equality.

As part of this initiative, gender equality and leadership experts jointly developed a framework for gender-responsive leadership. The framework has then been piloted through Gender-Responsive Leadership Learning Programmes at headquarters and field-level with the UN, OSCE and EU. Based on the finalized framework, FBA is currently producing a gender-responsive leadership handbook, facilitator guide, participant workbook and an informative and inspiring video series.

Who is a gender-responsive leader?

A gender-responsive leader uses their leadership position and skills to actively work towards gender equality and women's rights, both in the workplace and in their organization's external activities.

They do this by ensuring that day-to-day tasks are done in a way that promotes equality between diverse women and men, girls and boys, and through putting in place targeted actions for gender equality where required.

What does a gender-responsive leader do?

They use their existing leadership and management skills to take action to achieve their institutional goals on gender equality. The five core skills gender-responsive leaders use to achieve gender equality and women's rights are:

1. Leading by example.
2. Setting priorities and targets.
3. Communicating clearly and convincingly.
4. Managing staff, resources and activities.
5. Holding themselves and others to account.

A gender-responsive leader continues to improve these skills and employs them to take concrete action to reduce inequality between diverse women and men, girls and boys. They stop discrimination when it arises, both in the workplace - be it digital, face-to-face or hybrid - and in their external activities.

What are the goals of gender-responsive leadership

Gender-responsive leaders work in alignment with their organization's mandate to pursue two goals:

1. Gender equality in the workplace.
2. Gender equality in all external activities.

Why do we need gender-responsive leadership?

Despite many good initiatives and substantial progress, the work towards gender equality, including the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, remains inconsistent and underfunded. One of the key reasons for this is the lack of leadership.

Leaders and managers have the responsibility and the authority to initiate and sustain systematic organizational change on gender equality. They therefore have a pivotal role in ensuring that their organization is delivering on its mandate on gender equality, rather than inadvertently perpetuating inequality.

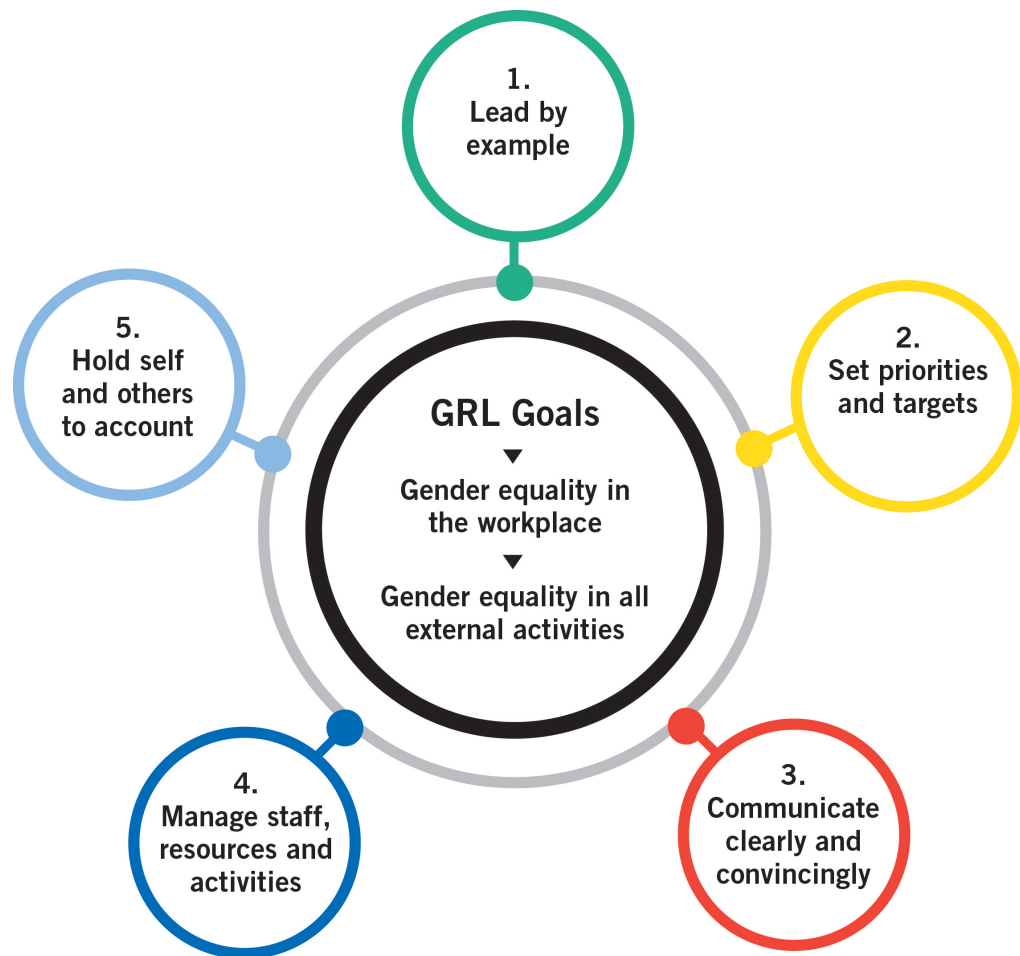
How does gender-responsive leadership relate to other inequalities?

Gender-responsive leadership focuses on achieving equality between women and men. However, gender inequality is compounded by other inequalities based on social class, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion and ability, to mention some. Each of these affects our experience of privilege or compounds our experience of discrimination. Therefore, gender-responsive leaders understand and consistently take action on gender inequalities in connection with other forms of inequality.

Do I need to become a gender expert to be a gender-responsive leader?

No. But you do need to use your leadership and management skills to identify and take action to reduce inequalities between diverse women and men, girls and boys.

Figure 1 below is a visual of the gender-responsive leadership framework, highlighting the twin goals as well as the five key skills of gender-responsive leaders.



What concrete actions do gender-responsive leaders take?

Gender-responsive leaders use their five overarching leadership skills to take the following concrete actions to contribute to greater gender equality and the achievement of women's and girls' rights.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS	GENDER-RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP ACTIONS
Leading by example	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mitigate gender stereotypes, biases and privileges.• Intervene in cases of sexism.• Be an ally to women.• Demonstrate your commitment to institutionalizing the work on gender equality and women's rights.
Setting priorities and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyse gaps, barriers and opportunities.• Set priorities for gender equality and women's rights.• Set SMART targets for gender equality and women's rights.
Communicating clearly and convincingly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use gender-responsive language.• Be clear, convincing and consistent when communicating on gender equality and women's rights.• Check that your message is received and understood.
Managing staff, resources and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build a gender equal and safe work environment.• Attain gender parity at the office and in external activities. Work strategically with your gender expert function/s.• Manage, allocate and develop your budgets, procurement processes and resources so that these equitably benefit women and men, girls and boys.• Ensure systematic gender analysis.• Set performance targets on gender equality and women's rights.
Holding self and others to account	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hold yourself and staff to account for meeting performance targets for gender equality and women's rights.