

# *The* *Gender-Responsive* **Leader's Handbook**



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*Folke Bernadotte Academy*  
Swedish agency for peace, security and development



# *Folke Bernadotte Academy*

Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) is the Swedish government agency for peace, security, and development. As part of Sweden’s international development cooperation, we promote peace in conflict-affected countries. We offer training and advice and conduct research to strengthen peacebuilding and governance, in peace and security contexts. Moreover, we deploy civilian personnel to peace operations and election observation missions primarily led by the UN, EU and OSCE. The agency is named after Count Folke Bernadotte, the UN’s first peace mediator.

This Handbook is part of FBA’s initiative on gender-responsive leadership. It is designed to be used alongside other FBA resources on gender-responsive leadership, including a Participant Workbook, Facilitator Guide, short films, and other capacity-building material. These can be found at [www.fba.se/grl](http://www.fba.se/grl)

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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# Foreword

We need to see more leadership on gender equality and women's rights in international peace, security and development! This is why the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) supports leaders and managers to be gender-responsive.

Gender-responsive leadership is based on the simple notion that actions speak louder than words. That leaders and managers must lead by example on gender equality and drive the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, by setting the vision, agreeing on priorities and making sure staff have what they need to succeed.

Leaders and managers are key because we have the authority, experience and mandate to effectively drive sustainable institutional change.

As a gender-responsive leader you take visible action on gender equality to create an equitable work environment for all personnel as well as ensuring gender equality in all external activities. FBA's Handbook and capacity-building resources on gender-responsive leadership provide you with the knowledge and skills to achieve both. They are designed around five key leadership skills: 1) Lead by example; 2) Set priorities and targets; 3) Communicate clearly and convincingly; 4) Manage staff, resources and activities, and 5) Hold yourself and others to account. Under each skill you will find several concrete actions that you can take to lead on gender equality in your daily work.

At FBA, it is our mandate to support the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda and to promote gender equality in all our work. We know from experience just how important it is that leaders and managers have the knowledge, motivation and skills to proactively lead on gender equality.

This is why we have published *The Gender-Responsive Leader's Handbook*. I hope you will find it as useful as I do!

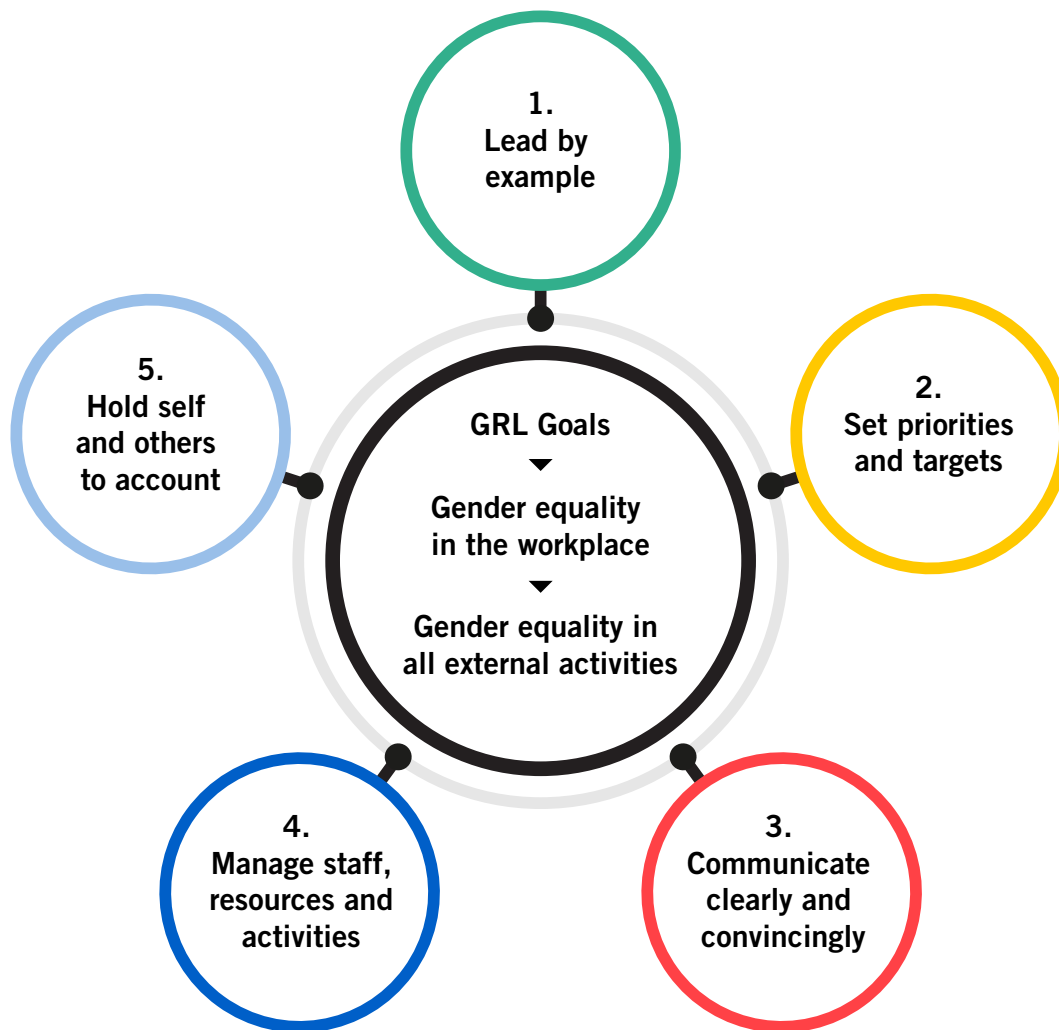


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# Introduction



## Why do we need gender-responsive leadership?

**PROGRESS ON GENDER** equality and women's rights continues to be slow. With ongoing wars, violence, the global climate crisis, pandemics, and widening inequalities within and between countries, the situation is deteriorating in many places, and hard-won gains are under threat. Moreover, gender equality work, both in conflict-affected contexts and elsewhere, remains severely underfunded, and international organizations working for peace, security, and development remain far from achieving gender equality internally. All this, despite a multitude of national and international policy commitments and laws on gender equality.

One missing piece of the puzzle that has prevented us from progressing as intended on gender equality is a lack of systematic and sustained leadership at all levels. While there have been pioneering leaders, some of whose work is showcased in this Handbook, their actions have yet to become established leadership practice. Still, gender equality is a leadership responsibility and a requirement if we are to implement our policy commitments and achieve our joint goals on gender equality, sustainable development, and peacebuilding.

As a leader, you play a pivotal role in driving your organization's contributions to gender equality and women's rights. You have the responsibility and authority to initiate and sustain organizational change towards gender equality. This involves developing organizational practices as well as your own and your team's knowledge, skills, and behaviours. This Handbook shows you how to do that.

## What is a gender-responsive leader?

A gender-responsive leader uses their leadership position and skills to actively work toward achieving equality between diverse women and men, both in the workplace and in their organization's external activities. They do this by ensuring that day-to-day tasks are done in ways that promote gender equality and through targeted actions to promote women's and girls' rights where gaps exist. They also understand, and consistently take action on, gender inequalities in connection with other inequalities based on, for example, social class, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, and ability.

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.**

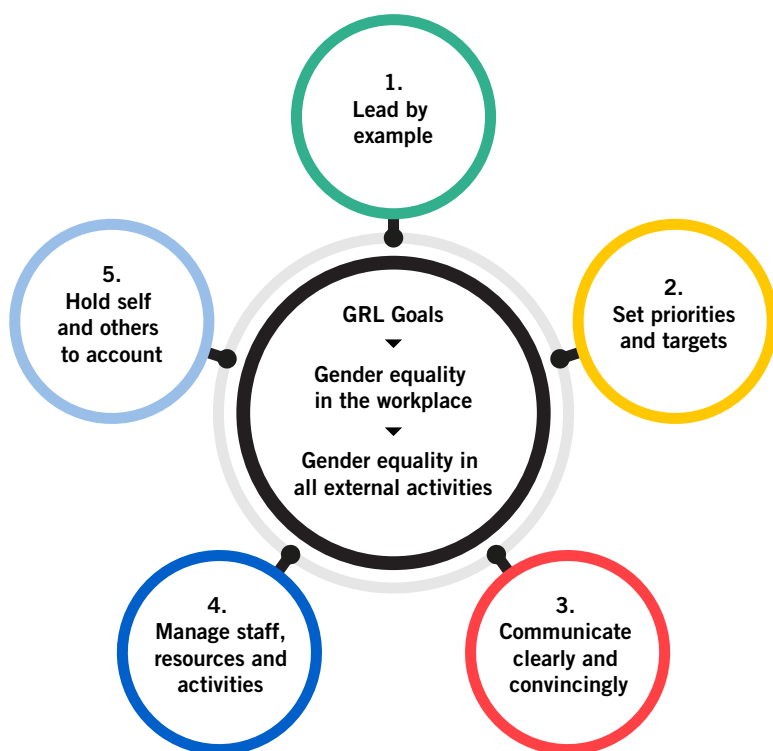
As a gender-responsive leader you are not required to be a gender equality expert. But you are required to use your leadership and management skills to implement organizational policies on gender equality. This means identifying and taking action to reduce gender inequalities, both in the workplace and in your and your team's activities.<sup>1</sup>

This Handbook is based on an extensive literature review and decades of experience working with leaders on gender equality. It presents five core leadership skills that gender-responsive leaders use to achieve gender equality and women's rights. The Handbook is structured around these leadership skills and provides practical guidance on how to develop and implement them.<sup>2</sup>

The five core gender-responsive leadership skills are:

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

Figure 1 below summarizes the gender-responsive leadership framework, highlighting its twin goals as well as the five core skills of gender-responsive leaders.



## How to use this Handbook

This Handbook is a practical guide for leaders and managers in peace, security, humanitarian, and development organizations who want to upskill to effectively lead progress on gender equality and women’s rights within their given area of responsibility.<sup>3</sup>

The Handbook content is sequenced so that chapters build upon each other. Reading the chapters in order will give a comprehensive overview of key actions one can take as a gender-responsive leader.

The Handbook is also designed to be a go-to resource. Jump to the specific skill or action that you want to focus on today and try out one of the practical tips. Come back later and delve into another topic. Use the Handbook for support in daily problem-solving.

The Handbook can also be used by gender experts and leadership specialists interested in gender-responsive leadership. It is designed to be an accompanying resource for gender-responsive leadership learning programmes. Use it together with the Gender-Responsive Leadership Facilitator Guide, Participant Workbook, videos, and other learning material available for free on the FBA website: [www.fba.se/grl](http://www.fba.se/grl)

## CONTENT

The Handbook includes one chapter on each of the five core gender-responsive leadership skills. In each chapter you will find:

- **Gender-responsive leadership actions:** guidance on what actions to take, including links to additional resources.
- **Real-life examples:** leaders share how they are taking action on gender equality.
- **Facts and figures:** summaries of up-to-date research.
- **Reflect and act exercises:** trigger your own thinking and use for discussion with your team.
- **Self-assessment:** identify which gender-responsive leadership actions you are already taking and which you want to prioritize going forward.

If you wish to deepen your exploration of this topic, you may wish to refer to the Gender-Responsive Leadership Participant Workbook, which has practical application exercises and even more tips!

## LIMITATIONS

### 1) Focus

This Handbook focuses on how leaders can take action to increase gender equality between diverse women and men. As women face higher rates of discrimination, sexual harassment and other forms of inequality globally in comparison to men, most of the examples in the Handbook focus on initiatives to increase women's equal rights. Throughout the Handbook, we emphasize the need to understand and consistently take action on gender inequalities in connection with other inequalities based on, for example, social class, race, ethnicity, age, geography, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, and ability (see section below on how gender inequality relates to other forms of inequality).

### 2) Terminology and data

We are aware that the terminology in the field of gender equality is constantly evolving and differs from country to country. In this English version of the Handbook, we strive to use the latest English terminology currently in usage in multilateral organizations. Please see the Glossary in Annex 1 for definitions of key terms used in this Handbook.

We acknowledge that a significant proportion of the research cited in this Handbook comes from North America and Europe. We have been intentional in seeking out research elsewhere, but have found limited data on gender inequality in organizations in the Global South. We also had access to more studies from the private sector than from international peace and security, humanitarian, and development organizations. Often research on the latter is restricted to internal audiences.

## What leaders should know about gender inequality

Having a basic understanding of where gender inequalities come from and how they manifest in your organization and country of operation is foundational to effective gender-responsive leadership. In this section, we provide you with brief background information before moving on to the core skills of gender-responsive leaders.

We use several gender equality terms in this section. You can find their definition in the Glossary in Annex 1. As a gender-responsive leader, it is important that you feel comfortable and confident using and explaining key gender equality terms.



## GENDER INEQUALITY IN SOCIETIES

Gender inequality is pervasive throughout our societies. The Social Institutions and Gender Index shows that women worldwide continue to earn less, own less, have less decision-making power, and face higher rates of domestic and sexual violence than men (see Box 1 below).<sup>4</sup> These manifestations of gender inequality are unfair, against the law, and, in some cases, deadly. Armed conflict, the global pandemics<sup>5</sup>, inflation, food insecurity, cost of living crises, supply chain disruptions, and natural disasters caused by climate change are all exacerbating gender inequalities. Biases against women are as entrenched as they were a decade ago, and gender equality progress has gone into reverse. According to the Gender Social Norms Index, nine out of ten people harbour at least one bias against women; a figure unchanged from data collected more than a decade ago.<sup>6</sup> However, it is important to remember that gender inequalities don't only affect women. For example, research has shown that the population group most consistently targeted in mass killings and state-backed oppression is non-combatant men roughly fifteen to fifty-five years of age.<sup>7</sup>

How did we end up here? Most societies in the world are organized along the binary sex categories of female and male.<sup>8</sup> At first glance, this societal system—also referred to as 'societal gender structures'—may seem complementary and natural: assigning women certain qualities and responsibilities, and men others. However, it is a societal system that generates gender inequalities, which impacts us at different levels: societal, organizational, and individual.

Gender structures intersect with other systems of inequality. This means that there is significant variation within the group 'women' and the group 'men', meaning all women do not face the same inequalities, nor do all men. This means that all men are not better off than all women. But if you compare a man and a woman of the same age from the same racial, ethnic, and economic background, then the man is likely to earn more, do less unpaid work, and have more decision-making power.

### BOX 1

#### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS<sup>9</sup>

Violence against women and girls is one of the most devastating expressions of societal gender inequality. An estimated 736 million women—**almost one out of every three women**—have been subjected to physical or sexual violence.<sup>10</sup> To put this number into perspective, think about how many women there are in your family or in your team at work. Statistically speaking, it is likely that several of them are survivors of violence.

Women also experience widespread violence in the workplace, including sexual harassment. For example, a study across five regions showed that 82% of female parliamentarians reported having experienced psychological violence while serving their terms.<sup>11</sup>

Several groups of women and girls face increased risk of violence. For instance, **women and girls with disabilities are two to three times more likely to experience physical or sexual abuse** than women and girls without a disability. They are also at increased risk of forced marriage, sterilizations, abortions, and institutionalization.<sup>12</sup> The risk of physical and sexual violence is also significantly higher for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, and queer people. In the United States, **sexual and gender minority women are five times more likely to face violence, and sexual and gender minority men are twice as likely to face**

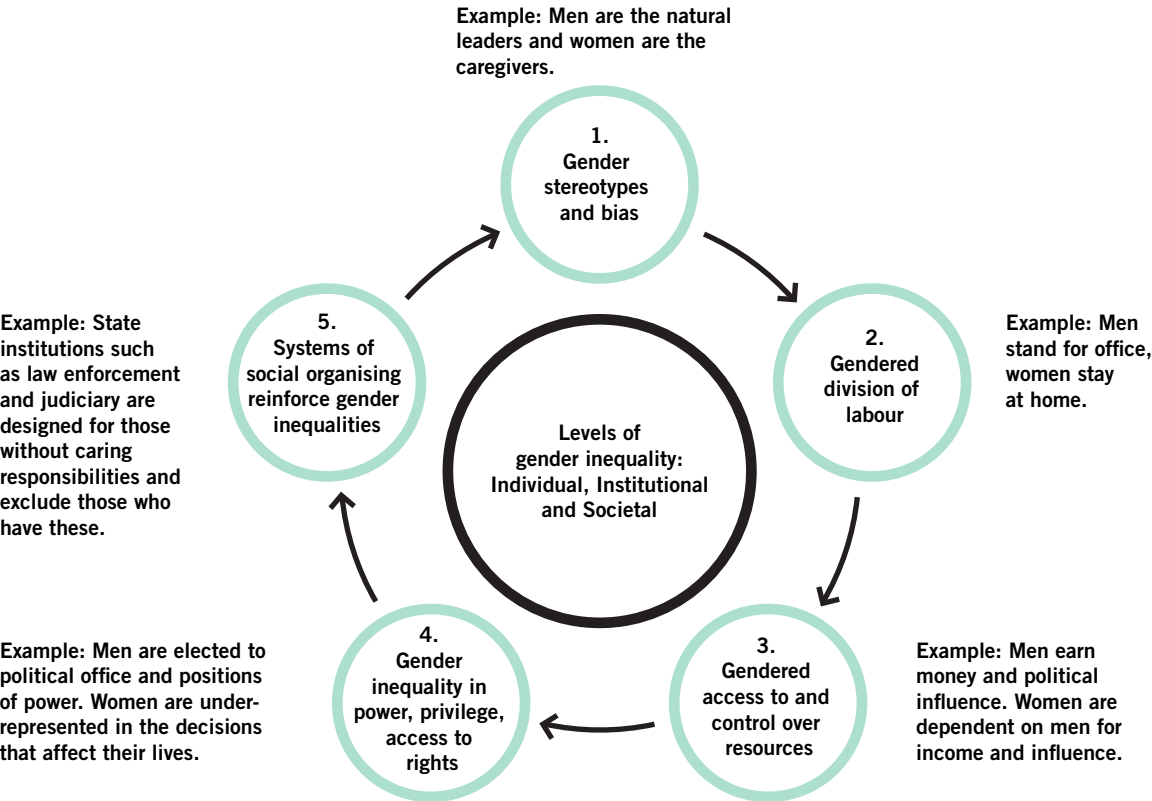
**violence** compared to cisgender, heterosexual men.<sup>13</sup> One in five **refugee or internally displaced women** has faced sexual violence, and the situation continues to worsen globally. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has reported that in the Central African Republic, for example, one gender-based violence incident is recorded every hour.<sup>14</sup>

In many countries, there has been an increase in women’s and girls’ experience of violence, accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, and sustained since. This has been compounded by continued underfunding and shrinking space for the women’s movements and women’s rights organizations attempting to address this violence across local, national, and global contexts.<sup>15</sup>

Violence against women and girls comes with a high societal cost. A recent study on gender-based violence conducted by the European Institute for Gender Equality estimates the cost for the European Union alone to be EUR 366 billion per year.<sup>16</sup>

**SOCIAL CYCLE OF GENDER INEQUALITY**

The visual below shows the social cycle of gender inequality at individual, institutional, and societal levels. For illustration purposes, the example that is demonstrated in the visual relates to a lack of women in decision-making positions.



Let’s take a moment to break down the visual, starting with gender stereotypes and biases.

**Gender stereotypes** are grounded in and reinforce a gender binary by defining what are considered to be ‘natural’ masculine and feminine qualities, as well as culturally appropriate and inappropriate behaviours for women and men. For instance, in most societies women are seen as ‘naturally’ more appropriate caregivers than men, and men are still seen as ‘naturally’ more appropriate leaders than women. These gender stereotypes often lead us to make biased judgements and decisions; i.e., we expect women and men to behave in accordance with gender stereotypes and we often judge them negatively if they don’t.

Gender stereotypes create and justify a **gendered division of labour**, a social division of roles and responsibilities between women and men both inside and outside the home. In almost all societies, women are expected to take on the majority, if not all, domestic unpaid chores, such as caring for children and older people and cooking and cleaning, even when they also engage in full-time paid work. In contrast, men are expected to take on official/public paid work and are expected to be decision-makers, community and organizational leaders, and income earners. This gendered division of labour also influences where, and at what level, women and men work within peace and security, humanitarian, and international development organizations and how much that work is valued and remunerated.

The gendered division of labour influences who has **access to and control over resources**—financial, social, political, and cultural. Men remain the vast majority of decision-makers in the private and public sector, including as leaders of countries, parliamentarians, and Chief Executive Officers of businesses (CEOs). As a result, we see **gender inequalities in terms of who has power and privilege and who are able to access their rights** to, for example, political representation, education, healthcare, and security.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, inequality in access to rights and control over resources influences our **systems of social organization**. Our legal, economic, political, educational, religious, cultural, and other systems are based on and reinforce an artificial separation between women and men, girls and boys; in many cases, men and boys continue to have greater access to rights, thus perpetuating gender inequalities. Think, for example, about which sporting events are most popular, why legal systems in many countries are still biased in favour of men’s rights, even which toys girls and boys are expected to play with.

This social cycle of gender inequality impacts everything we do; both within our organization and in our country/context of operation. While the societal impact is indisputable, it is important to remember that, as individuals, we relate to these gender structures in different ways: some like and conform to them; some dislike and challenge them, but still adapt to them; and others distance themselves from them entirely, particularly the binary aspects. Nevertheless, leaders in peace and security, and humanitarian and international development organizations should use their political leverage, funding, and partnerships to reduce inequalities between diverse men and women in conflict-affected countries. Understanding the social cycle of gender inequality will enable you to see the underlying dynamics of gender inequality and help you assess your best entry points to challenge the cycle of gender inequality in the workplace and in all other activities.



Only 25% of all national parliamentarians are women, with only six countries in the world—Cuba, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Rwanda, and the United Arab Emirates—having achieved gender parity in their parliaments.<sup>19</sup> In conflict and post-conflict countries, women's representation in parliament is even lower, at just under 19%, and women's participation in public administration is less than half the average of all other countries.

Gordana Comic was Minister for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue in the Republic of Serbia between 2020 and 2022. She founded the Women's Parliamentary Network of the National Assembly and is a key member of the women's movement in Serbia. In February 2020, the Serbian Parliament adopted amendments proposed by Gordana that introduced quotas of 40% female candidates on electoral lists for both parliamentary and local elections. The 2020 National Assembly was composed of 40% female MPs, up from 37% in 2016. However, in 2023, this was down to 35%.<sup>20</sup>

These fluctuations demonstrate the need for sustained vigilance and gender-responsive leadership action over time.

## HOW GENDER INEQUALITY RELATES TO OTHER FORMS OF INEQUALITY

Gender inequality is compounded by other social systems of inequality based on, for example, social class, race, ethnicity, geography, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, and ability. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina Roma women have less access to healthcare, education, housing, and employment, and Roma girls are more likely (27%) to be married before they are 18 years old than other girls (11%).<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Yazidi women in Iraq and Rohingya women in Myanmar have been targeted specifically for their ethnicity, as well as for being women.<sup>22</sup> And when we look at women's labour force participation in Sri Lanka by geographic location, we find great variation between different areas, influenced by ethnicity and by other factors.<sup>23</sup> Another example is how sexism and Islamophobia intersect, resulting in Muslim women who wear headscarves experiencing more discrimination than other women when applying for jobs with high levels of customer contact in Germany and the Netherlands.<sup>24</sup> All these examples show that intersecting dynamics have consequences for access to power and rights. Sometimes these can mean that there are more differences within the group 'women' and within the group 'men' than there are differences between these groups.<sup>25</sup> This is why it is so important to adopt an intersectional approach to gender equality and women's rights. See Box 2 for more information.

*“Leadership is first and foremost about power—it is about holding power, exercising power, and changing the distribution of power in multiple forms and settings”.*

Srilatha Batliwala<sup>26</sup>

## BOX 2

### **THE ORIGINS OF THE TERM “INTERSECTIONALITY”**

An intersectional approach to gender equality and women’s rights was developed and spearheaded by North American Black, lesbian, and working-class feminists who noted that their multiple struggles were not adequately reflected in women’s rights movements which, at the time, were often led by white Northern heterosexual women.<sup>27</sup> The person who first coined the word was the American law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw. Crenshaw describes intersectionality as “basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other”.<sup>28</sup> She coined the term following the case of Emma DeGraffenreid, an African American woman whose case for race and gender discrimination against a local car manufacturing plant was dismissed. Emma DeGraffenreid claimed that she was not hired because she was a Black woman. The reason the judge gave for the dismissal was that the employer hired African Americans and they hired women. The real problem, though, was that the African Americans who were hired—usually for industrial or maintenance jobs—were all men. And the women who were hired—usually for secretarial or front-office work—were all white. If the court was able to see how these policies came together, they would be able to see the double discrimination that Emma DeGraffenreid was facing.<sup>29</sup>

Being a gender-responsive leader means that you understand and address gender inequality in relation to these multiple systems of inequality and discrimination. This can include ensuring that you meet with women and men, girls and boys, from different groups and backgrounds; that you understand, for example, what ethnic minority women need to access their right to justice; or that you ensure job advertisements include photos of ethnically and religiously diverse women and men of different ages. Each of these actions can break the cycle of inequality.

Having an intersectional approach to your gender-responsive leadership actions increase the chances of having a positive impact on the lives of diverse women, men, girls, boys, and people who identify as non-binary. It reduces the risk of gender parity initiatives only benefiting white women or post-conflict access to justice programming only benefiting urban, middle-class women. Box 3 provides an example of the consequences of failing to adopt an intersectional approach to gender equality in Afghanistan.

## BOX 3

### **THE COST OF FAILING TO USE AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO GENDER EQUALITY IN AFGHANISTAN**

Political and social scientist Cheryl Benard writes, that when organizations entered into Afghanistan with the intention of supporting women’s rights, “we had no idea of who, how, or why. We worked with those we could readily find and interact with, the urban and urbane, the ones who figured us out and gratified our need for photogenic success. We never got to the ones in the slums and the villages (...) The largest segment of Afghan women are the urban poor, the rural population, and the internally displaced living in camps. Their lives have barely changed over the past two centuries—never mind the past twenty years.”<sup>30</sup>

As a gender-responsive leader, you will need to support your team to consistently take action on gender inequality together with other forms of inequalities; asking them to dig a little deeper into which women, girls, men, boys and non-binary people are being included in—and excluded from—a given initiative. This Handbook includes information, guidance, and practical tips for you so you can address multiple systems of discrimination.

## GENDER INEQUALITY IN ORGANIZATIONS

The social cycle of gender inequality also affects our institutions and organizations. Just like society, organizations are marked by gender stereotypes and biases, a gendered division of labour, and unequal access to resources, power, and rights.<sup>31</sup> Below are some examples of how gender inequality commonly affects personnel:

- In many peace and security, humanitarian, and international/regional development organizations, staff are expected to work long hours and there is little room for work–life balance. This is especially challenging for women, who, due to the gendered division of labour, are more often expected to take on most of the care work and domestic chores at home.
- The gendered division of labour affects the division of roles in many organizations, with men still holding most leadership positions, while women outnumber men in supportive positions with less pay and power, such as administration, human resources, and junior or entry-level positions.
- The gendered division of labour is also reflected in different thematic areas of work. For example, men are often over-represented in work on security matters and women in human rights-related issues. Cleaning services are often provided by female national staff while male national staff are more often drivers and local security staff.
- In international organizations these gendered divisions of labour are compounded by inequalities between international and national staff. For instance, female national staff with similar workloads and responsibilities as female international staff often receive lower wages and benefits.

As a result, perceptions of women and men’s different competencies are perpetuated, and women and men continue to have different access to valued resources, status, and decision-making power within most organizations.<sup>32</sup> The unequal power relations that follow are built into organizational structures and culture.<sup>33</sup>

### Recruitment, retention, and advancement

- When identical CVs are submitted with only the sex of the applicant differing, **men receive a more favourable response, are more likely to be hired, and are offered a higher salary.**<sup>34</sup>
- **The number of women is reduced in favour of men at each level of seniority.**<sup>35</sup>
- **Managers are 50% more likely to ask women to perform non-promotable work/tasks** and women are 50% more likely than men to say yes.<sup>36</sup>
- **Women with children experience multiple discrimination** for being both women and mothers. In the UN system, studies showed that—all merits being equal—mothers were 79% less likely to be hired.<sup>37</sup>

### Sexual harassment

- **Sexual harassment in the workplace** affects women in most organizations, in every country, and across all socioeconomic levels. The 2019 United Nation’s Safe Space survey, conducted by Deloitte, revealed that 39% of respondents had experienced sexual harassment while working at the UN.<sup>38</sup> In the United States 60% of women reported being sexually harassed at work,<sup>39</sup> and in the European Union, 55% of women reported they had been sexually harassed at least once.<sup>40</sup>

- **Sexual harassment often comes with impunity**—or even worse, is followed by retaliation. Within the UN, some women who reported sexual harassment or sexual assault have been forced out of their jobs or threatened with the loss of their contract.<sup>41</sup>
- A 2006 survey of employees from five large U.S. companies found that **women of colour are the most likely to experience workplace harassment** among all groups. They are also often held to a much higher standard than their white and male peers and presumed to be less qualified despite their credentials, work product, or business results.<sup>42</sup>

#### Gender pay gap

- 25% of women in a study reported having earned less than men for doing the same job (compared to 5% of men).<sup>43</sup>
- A study of 20,000 employees showed that **women and minority employees had to achieve better** performance ratings to get similar salary increases as non-minority men.<sup>44</sup>

#### BOX 4

#### **EQUIPMENT DESIGNED FOR MEN LEADS TO INCREASED INJURIES FOR WOMEN IN THE MILITARY**

Women in the military (as well as in many other industries) have had to use equipment that doesn't fit their bodies. This leads to increased risk of injury compared to their male colleagues. For example, women in the British military are up to seven times more likely than men to suffer from musculoskeletal injuries, even if they are of the same strength and fitness, and are ten times more likely to suffer from hip and pelvic stress fractures. This has been linked to women being forced to match male stride length (9%–10% longer on average than women's). Since the Australian army reduced stride length for women, pelvic stress fractures have been reduced.<sup>45</sup>

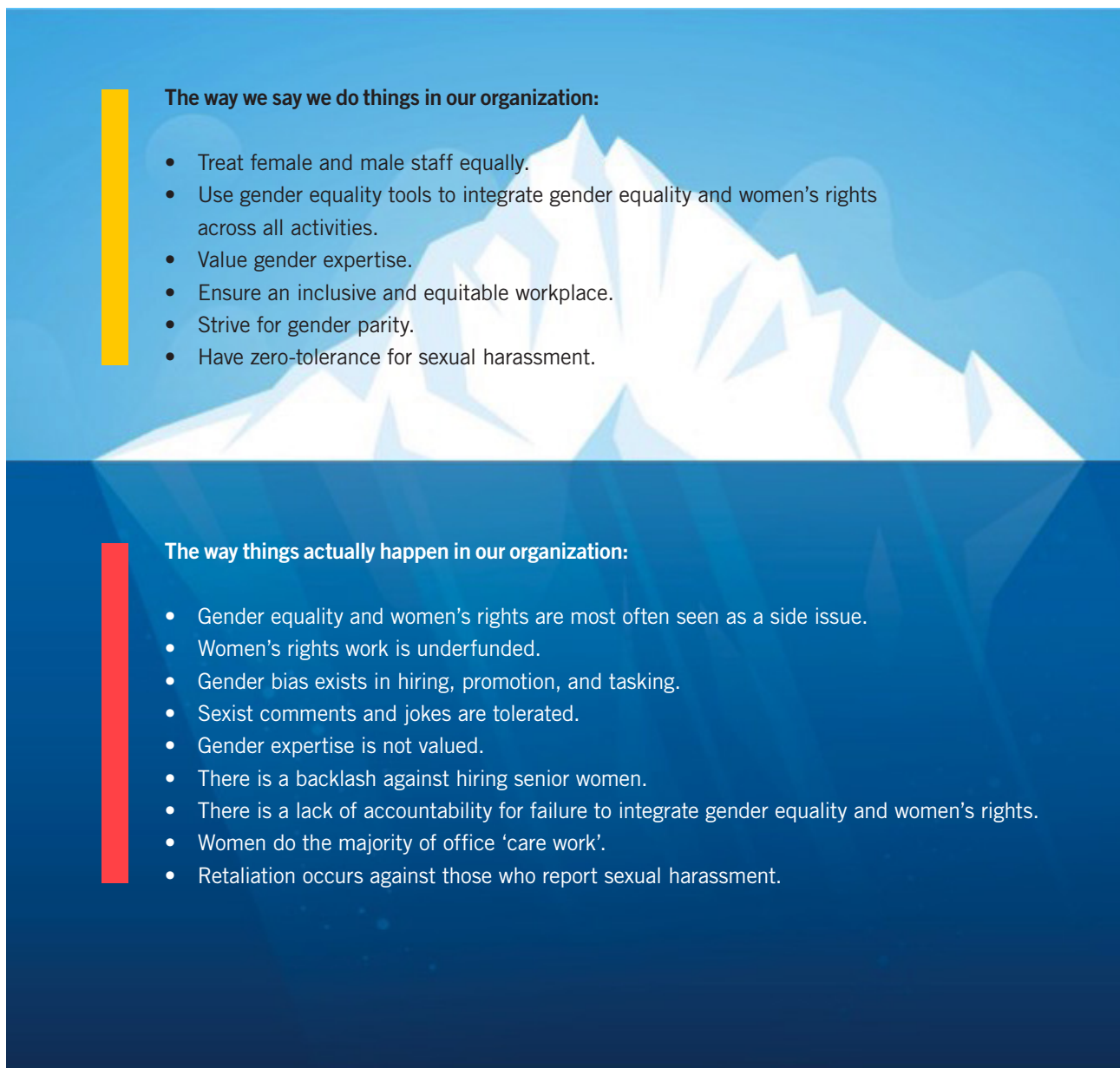
For more on gender bias within organizations and how to mitigate it, see Skill 1: Leading by example, and Skill 4: Managing staff, resources, and operations.

## THE ICEBERG MODEL: GENDER INEQUALITY IN ORGANIZATIONS<sup>46</sup>

While there have been plenty of efforts to develop formal policies, strategies, and action plans for gender equality in the workplace, there is often a disconnect between these and day-to-day practices which hampers implementation. For example, many organizations have developed policies on flexible working arrangements to enable better work–life balance, only to find that neither women nor men make use of them because they know doing so is likely to curtail promotion opportunities. While formal mechanisms are necessary, they are unfortunately insufficient. The iceberg model helps us to understand why.

If we imagine an iceberg, our formal policies, strategies, and “the way we say we do things” are located on the visible tip of the iceberg. What is under the waterline represents “the way things actually happen in our organization”. This is influenced by the informal organizational culture, which in turn replicates our societal culture. As a gender-responsive leader, you must be proactive in addressing the invisible part of your organizational culture. If you don’t, your change efforts will likely be resisted and subverted.<sup>47</sup> In this Handbook we will help you work both above and below the waterline.

**Figure 2: The iceberg model: Gender inequality in organizations**





## GENDER INEQUALITY IN LEADERSHIP

Above we have explored gender inequality in our societies and within our organizations. Since this is a leadership handbook, we will look specifically at how gender inequality affects formal leadership.

A study of 1100 organizations showed there was near gender parity at the support staff level, with this parity reducing in favour of men at each level of seniority.<sup>48</sup> This pattern of female under-representation or male over-representation is also replicated in public leadership positions—only 25% of all national parliamentarians worldwide are women.<sup>49</sup> In conflict-affected countries, women’s average representation in parliament is even lower, at just under 19%, and women’s participation in public administration is less than half the average of all other countries.<sup>50</sup>

Gender-responsive leaders have yet to resolve the blockages in the career pipeline that continue to impede women’s chances of equal representation in leadership. Studies show, for example, that it takes longer for women to advance into leadership positions than men. An analysis of Fortune 1000 CEOs showed that it takes women 30% longer than men to reach the top.<sup>51</sup> Within the UN, it takes an average of 5.4 years for women to move from P3 to P4, while for men the average is 4.6 years.<sup>52</sup> This is not due to a lack of desire for advancement. When women and men enter the workplace, they have similar leadership aspirations.<sup>53</sup> In fact, one study of corporate America by McKinsey and Lean reveals that more women than men were seeking promotion (83% of Asian women, 80% of black women, 76% of Latinas, and 68% of white women, compared to 75% of all men).<sup>54</sup>

### LEADERS IN ACTION

#### WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION IN SENIOR LEADERSHIP



Significant efforts and strong, committed personal leadership by the United Nations’ Secretary-General António Guterres have shown that change can happen, and it can happen fast. As of February 2021, gender parity had been achieved for all Heads and Deputy Heads of UN Field Missions—up from 20% female representation only 5 years earlier. In May 2022, there was gender parity at Under-Secretary-General (USG) and Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) levels.<sup>55</sup> In November 2023, the UN Gender Parity dashboard showed that the needle had moved in favour of men with 55% of USGs and ASGs in the Secretariat being men. This demonstrates the need for sustained attention.

Barriers women who aspire to leadership face include:

- 1) **Gender stereotypes and biases:** Recruitment at senior levels is even more vulnerable to gender stereotypes and biases than at earlier career stages, due to their more discretionary and less criteria-based processes.<sup>56</sup> For example, research has shown that gender stereotypes of women being emotional present a fundamental barrier to women's ability to ascend to and succeed in leadership roles.<sup>57</sup>
- 2) **Harsher evaluation:** Studies suggest that women in leadership are evaluated far more harshly than men in leadership. In one example, researchers analysed a large-scale military dataset (over 4,000 participants and 81,000 evaluations) and found that managers used more positive words to describe male leaders and more negative words to describe female leaders, even though there were no differences in their performance levels.<sup>58</sup> A study examining performance evaluation bias towards highly successful women in different workplaces, including commanding officers in the United States (US) military, found that evaluating officers gave female subordinates whose pay grades were close to their own lower performance scores than they gave male subordinates. Female (but not male) subordinates were punished by male (but not female) evaluators for violating gender norms.<sup>59</sup>
- 3) **Lack of meaningful mentoring and sponsorship** is a key challenge faced by women wanting to advance within organizations. Women generally, and minority women specifically, are more likely to fall outside of the informal networks that advance people in their careers. They are less likely to have bosses who promote their work contributions to others, help them navigate organizational politics, or socialize with them outside of work.<sup>60</sup>
- 4) **Glass cliff:** Women are more likely than men to be promoted to high-risk leadership positions—the so-called 'glass cliff'. Often lacking the back-up, support (previous point), or authority they need to succeed and accomplish their strategic goals, they risk having shorter tenures compared to men.<sup>61</sup>
- 5) **Women do not fit the success prototype**<sup>62</sup> for leaders. In most organizations, the 'success prototype' will be male, middle/upper class, and from the dominant race/ethnicity, usually with a partner who follows their spouse's career, taking on the family care-giving role. Interestingly, it may also be a man who is tall—50% of the top ten Fortune 500 CEOs in the United States are white men over six feet tall, yet only 4.65% of the US adult population fits this description.<sup>63</sup> When a female leader conforms to the male leadership prototype, she may find herself subject to stereotypical typecasting and labelled 'bossy' or a 'queen bee'. If she doesn't conform, instead calling out bias or stereotypes, she may be labelled 'not a team player' or an 'angry (black) woman' and found responsible for her own exclusion or marginalisation—so-called 'victim shaming'. Whether she speaks out or doesn't speak out, her professional success may be limited. This is known as the 'double bind' or 'damned if I do, damned if I don't' phenomenon.<sup>64</sup>

Let us note that we refer here to formal leadership positions within international and regional peace and security, humanitarian, or development organizations. Throughout society, women occupy leadership roles within civil society and activist networks, but these often do not translate into leadership roles within traditional power structures or organizations. See Box 5 below.

## BOX 5

### WOMEN IN ACTIVIST LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN SUDAN

Throughout history, Sudanese women have been known to stand up for their rights and for their activism. In fact, female Sudanese protesters are referred to as ‘Kandaka’; a title given to the Nubian queen of ancient Sudan, reflecting a legacy of empowered women who fight for their country and for their rights.

During the Sudanese revolution, women of different ages and backgrounds mobilized people—the majority of whom were women—to take part in mass protests (the so-called ‘December protests’ of 2018–2019). Women challenged their social gender roles, instigating physical demonstrations and taking to the front lines in the face of assaults, arrests, tear gas, and live bullets. Many were taken to detention centres, held for days and even weeks, verbally and physically assaulted, and had their heads shaved by security officers—only to go back to the streets again after being released. Neighbourhood women also opened their homes to hide the protesters, supplying them with food, water, and first aid. In addition to protesting with their bodies, women also used art, poetry, and social media to further their protests.

Despite their visible leadership in the revolution, Sudanese women were, and continue to be, largely side-lined in the formal political process in its aftermath. Women have continued to protest their exclusion with slogans such as “You thank us in demonstrations and forget about us in negotiations”; “I am 100% a protesting female, but I am outside the power structures”.<sup>65</sup>

## EXERCISE

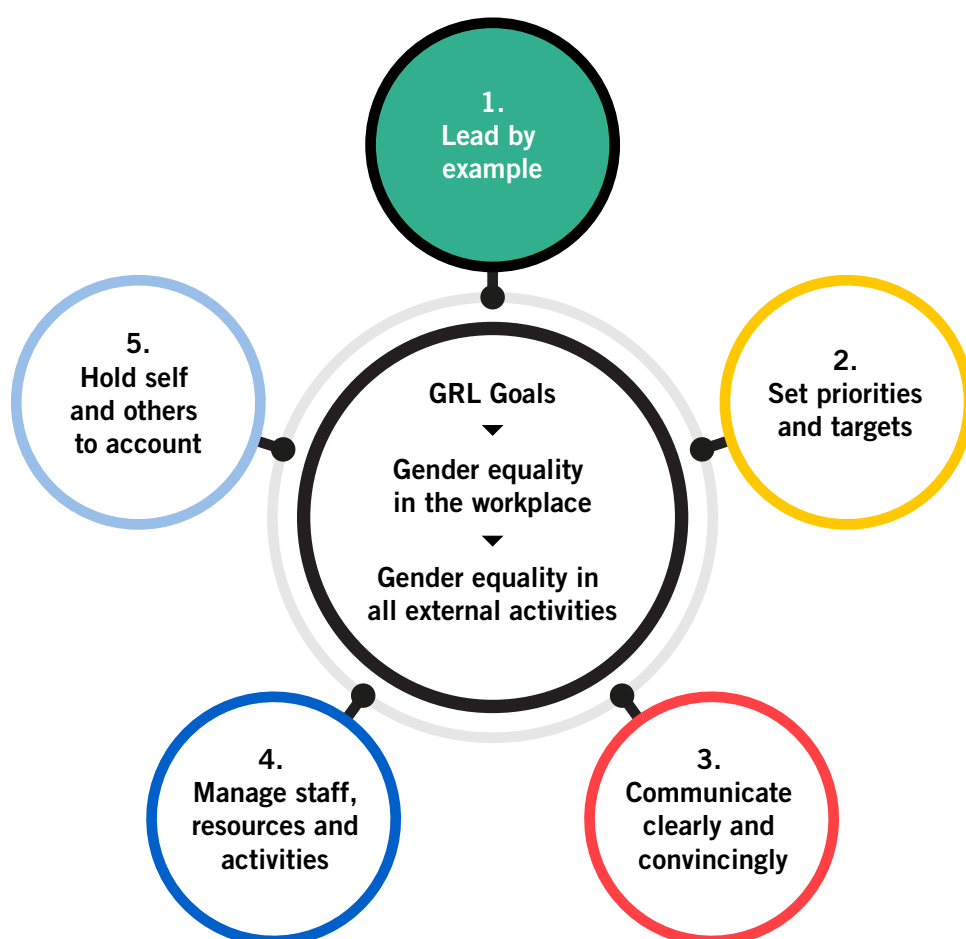
### REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE



Reflect on the iceberg model and think about gender inequality in your organization. How does your organizational culture operate under the water-line to maintain gender inequality—both in the workplace and in external activities?

Don’t forget to explore how other systems of inequality intersect with gender inequality and enable certain people to have more power and others to have less power. Think about social class, race, ethnicity, geography, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, and ability. Other systems may also be relevant to your given context.

# *Skill 1: Leading by example*



**COMPETENT LEADERS UNDERSTAND** that they are always leading by example.<sup>66</sup> They know that people pay attention to what they say and do, and when they demonstrate self-awareness, integrity, and consistency regarding gender equality they are more credible and motivate others.<sup>67</sup>

Gender-responsive leaders lead by example through consistently demonstrating that they prioritize and act on gender equality and women's rights—not just in words but also in deeds.

Leading by example is a powerful skill. Your words and actions as a leader shape organizational culture and influence staff behaviour. In a study of the US Armed Forces, researchers found that in cases where Commissioned Officers led by example on gender equality, rates of sexual assault against US servicewomen dropped by 50%.<sup>68</sup>

There are 4 key leadership actions you can take in order to lead by example on gender equality:

- 1) **Mitigate gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges.**
- 2) **Intervene in sexism.**
- 3) **Be an ally to women.**
- 4) **Demonstrate your commitment to institutionalizing the work on gender equality and women's rights.**

In this chapter we will support you in honing your skill in leading by example on issues pertaining to gender equality and in taking relevant action in your workplace.

#### LEADERS IN ACTION

#### IMPLEMENTING PLAN INTERNATIONAL'S FEMINIST LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES



Virginia Saiz, Country Director of Plan International in the Dominican Republic, lets the organization's feminist leadership principles<sup>69</sup> inspire her own leadership:

- **“Honouring the girls' rights movement”** requires that Virginia systematically ensures that the organization builds on what others have done and are doing.
- **“Courage”** gives her the confidence to set higher ambitions—from ambition for her organization to ambition for the country.
- **“Tackling bias”** supports her in challenging and examining her own privileges and biases and supporting her team in doing the same.
- **“Sharing power”** is a constant reminder to listen actively to her staff and partners and to lead collaboratively rather than hierarchically.
- **“Self and collective care”** supports her in focusing on building staff capacities to grow, change roles, and learn. Every Monday, Virginia and 120 staff meet online in an open, agenda-free meeting where everyone can contribute, and staff take turns leading the meeting. This helps build a sense of collective care, where people can bring issues to the collective table. Focusing on collective care has led to the office being certified a “best place to work” ([www.greatplacetowork.co.uk](http://www.greatplacetowork.co.uk)) and a “best place to work for women.” Working hours are adaptable, a breastfeeding room is available, and insurance policies have been reviewed to support LGBTQIA+ families, and much more.

## EXERCISE

### PERSONAL REFLECTION EXERCISE



**To what extent does your team see that you are:**

- 1) Mitigating gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges?
- 2) Intervening in sexism?
- 3) Being an ally to women?
- 4) Demonstrating commitment to organizational change for gender equality and women's rights?

**On a scale from 1 to 10, where would your team place you?**

**Where 1 is 'doesn't lead' and 10 is 'leads strongly on gender equality'?**



If you think that your team would rank you lower down on the scale, use this chapter to improve your skills in leading by example on issues pertaining to gender equality and women's rights. If you already think your team would place you near the top of the scale, use this chapter to cross-check and further develop your skills!

## Action 1: Mitigate gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges

Most of us believe that we treat everyone the same, while in fact our personal and organizational decision-making processes are rife with gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges. For instance, the International Labour Organization recognizes that gender bias is a leading cause of discrimination in the hiring and promotion of workers with the same qualifications and merits.<sup>70</sup> In Part I, we highlighted numerous studies that demonstrate the impact of gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges. For example, studies showed that women in leadership are evaluated more harshly than their male counterparts,<sup>71</sup> that men receive more favourable responses to identical CVs where only the sex differs,<sup>72</sup> and when equally qualified candidates were considered, mothers were 79% less likely to be hired.<sup>73</sup>

#### BOX 6

**Gender stereotypes** are generalized ideas about the expected behaviour and qualities of 'women' and 'men'. For example, 'men are natural leaders' and 'women are emotional'. They reflect cultural ideas and norms about femininity and masculinity.

**Gender bias** is an inclination towards, or prejudice against, someone/a group, based on gender stereotypes. For example, choosing a man for a leadership role over an equally qualified woman because I think men are better leaders (positive gender bias) or women are not as good leaders (negative gender bias). Negative gender bias can also be called 'sexism'.

**Privilege** refers to the advantages and preferential treatment that some people are afforded by virtue of belonging to a particular group. For example, being heterosexual, male, and middle class will most likely open up opportunities that are less available to those who are homosexual, female, and working-class.

Neurological shortcuts help us process the 11 million or so bits of information we receive every moment.<sup>74</sup> Unfortunately, these shortcuts reflect socialised stereotypes, based on sexism, racism, and other systems of discrimination. As we saw in the Social Cycle of Gender Inequality above, these shortcuts then influence our decision-making and continue to ensure that people are categorised in ways that sustain dominant unequal social structures. For example, 'men are breadwinners' and 'women are homemakers' are common gender stereotypes in many countries. These stereotypes inform belief systems. A study revealed that 44% of people in the European Union believe the most important role of a woman is to take care of the home, and 43% believe the most important role of a man is to earn money.<sup>75</sup> As a result of these stereotypes and beliefs, women in the European Union and most parts of the world still do more domestic work than men, even when they are breadwinners.<sup>76</sup> The International Labour Organization (ILO) has estimated that women in Europe perform 65% of all unpaid work. The global average is 75%.<sup>77</sup> The domestic workplace burden can slow down women's career progression directly and be translated into workplace practice, with women often allocated 'office care work', such as making coffee or organizing birthday cards and social events—none of which are remunerated or generate promotions.

Unmitigated gender stereotypes and biases can influence leaders' daily work decisions, causing discrimination. This happens both consciously and unconsciously.<sup>78</sup> Gender biases also maintain gender privilege, whereby advantages and preferential treatment are given to people by virtue of belonging to a particular group. For example, the labour market rewards men for having children, granting them a 'child salary premium'—in other words, a financial bonus, whereas it penalizes women, who experience a 'child salary penalty'—in that they may take parental leave at a reduced salary, or a part time job, or a lower position that allows for flexible work hours but is less well-paid.<sup>79</sup>

Adding an intersectional lens reveals the ways in which belonging to one category may trigger discrimination, but this might be reduced through belonging to a privileged group. For example, studies have shown that white leaders are more likely to accept white women than women of colour, further limiting the access of women of colour to informal networks and mentors and thus to potential promotion opportunities.<sup>80</sup> If you work in North America or Europe and are white, male, heterosexual, and upper/middle class, you will experience the cumulative benefits of your different privileges. In contrast, if you are black, female, lesbian, and of working class, you will experience compounding negative impacts of stereotypes, biases, and systems of exclusion.

**CHECKING FOR UNEXAMINED GENDER BIASES AT THE OSCE**

Omer Fisher and Jennifer Croft, Head and Deputy Head of the Human Rights Department at the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, decided to assess whether they had any unexamined gender bias in their management practices. They conducted a gender analysis of how budgets, resources, and career-enhancing opportunities were being allocated amongst team members. They discovered that there was some unexamined gender bias that no one had picked up on previously. The data showed that male colleagues did have greater access to career enhancement opportunities and male colleagues were offered more speaking engagements than female colleagues. They also discovered that men were travelling more than women across all grades. This knowledge allowed them to have an open and evidence-based discussion with staff, and to take remedial action.

As a leader you can take action to reduce discrimination by recognizing and mitigating your own gender stereotypes, biases, and privilege. You can also support your team and organization in doing the same.

**STEP 1: RECOGNIZE GENDER STEREOTYPES, BIASES, AND PRIVILEGE**

The first step is to recognize gender stereotypes, biases, and privilege—both around you and your own. Above, we have shared evidence from different organizations, but it's important to take a look for yourself. Once you start looking, you can see how gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges are present and potentially influence everything from hiring processes, tasking, strategic planning, team meetings, collaboration with external partners, and programme implementation.

**A note on recognizing privilege**

The flip side of inequality is privilege. Those who are privileged over others have a responsibility to be aware of their privileges and act to share power through, for instance, allyship. In patriarchal societies—the vast majority of societies—men as a group have more access to, and control over, resources and decision-making than women as a group. This leads to male privilege. For instance, how a junior man in the room is assumed to be in the lead over a senior woman, or how men benefit from positive bias in hiring and promotion processes. This doesn't mean that all men are more privileged than all women. For example, white women will benefit from the privileges afforded by being white. Racial minority men will face specific forms of racism while still benefiting from male privilege in certain contexts.<sup>81</sup> As a leader, you must recognize and share your privileges—both the privilege that comes with holding a leadership function and the personal privileges that may have helped you achieve a leadership position.



## EXERCISE

### REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE



You can use these questions to guide your own thinking and actions, or include them in a discussion or workshop with your colleagues or team. You can also use them when doing the self-assessment exercise at the end of this chapter.

#### Identify relevant gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges

- **Brainstorm**, preferably together with your team, a list of gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges that could affect your work both inside and outside of the organization.

#### Observe gender stereotypes, biases, and privilege at work

- **Staffing:** How are roles, responsibilities, and tasks divided in the office? Who has a senior leadership or management role? Who works in junior positions, in administration and human resources? Who works on which thematic issues? What level of seniority does the gender advisor/gender focal point have? Where are they positioned within the organization?
- **Meetings:** Who talks in meetings? Who is quiet? Who is listened to? Who interrupts whom? Are there any groups that must constantly prove themselves more than others? How are gender equality and related issues discussed—are they mentioned in passing, on the agenda, or given importance by the meeting chair?
- **Partners:** Which officials are invited to senior-level meetings? Who do you think has important information? Who leads the organizations that you choose to collaborate with? Do these organizations have gender equality and women's rights expertise?
- **Country of operation:** What gender stereotypes and biases exist within your region/country of work?

#### Examine your own gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges

- Do you have personal privileges that have helped you in life? If yes, which ones?
- What stereotypes do you have toward women and men of different ages and ethnicities?
- How could these gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges be impacting how you lead your team and your area of work? For instance:
  - How are you ensuring that women and men equally contribute and actively participate in meetings and decision-making?
  - How do you distribute tasks within your team, including delegation of officer-in-charge?
  - To whom do you offer career-advancing opportunities like travel, public speaking opportunities, training, and challenging assignments?
  - How do you allocate resources within your team, including financial and material resources?
  - Who do you ask for advice?
  - Who do you eat lunch with?
- Who do you give space to in meetings/one-to-ones/mentoring/sponsorship?
- Which mitigation techniques, as described under Step 2, could you use to reduce the impact of your gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges?

Remember to adopt an **intersectional approach** when you explore stereotypes, biases, and privileges. What other systems of discrimination intersect with gender biases? Racism? Ageism? Heteronormativity? Ableism? Others?

## STEP 2: MITIGATE GENDER STEREOTYPES AND BIASES AND USE YOUR LEADERSHIP PRIVILEGE

Once you have become aware of how gender stereotypes, biases, and privilege manifest, it is important to mitigate them in yourself, your staff, and your organization. You can use your leadership position to ‘interrupt’<sup>82</sup> biases and reduce their negative influence on staffing decisions, workplace culture, and external work in policy and programming. Research confirms that it is particularly effective when those in a privileged position speak up for those who do not have the same privilege.<sup>83</sup> As a leader, you can create a team culture where it is safe to speak out and offer feedback when someone—including yourself—reveals unexamined gender bias or privilege.<sup>84</sup>

Here are a few practical tips and techniques that you can start implementing today.

### Personal leadership level: identify your own stereotypes and biases and take action

- **Stereotype and bias check:** Before making a decision, identify the relevant stereotypes and biases and reflect on whether or not they could be influencing your decision.
- **Counter-stereotyping technique:** Why am I thinking this? Could the opposite be true? Would I think the same if this person was a man (if it is a woman) and vice versa?
- **Individuation technique:** Am I making a generalization about a whole group of people?
- **Perspective taking:** What if I was this person, what might the situation look like from their perspective?
- **Check yourself:** Are you giving equal access to your leadership time, or do you find yourself giving this time to a limited group of individuals? Or are there any other behaviours that are based on bias or stereotypes? Go back to the facts, such as verbatim notes from an interview. Ask a colleague, particularly a person of a different sex/nationality/ethnicity/sexual orientation, for a second opinion.
- **Visualization:** Imagine situations before they happen to avoid your brain’s default stereotyping/biased reactions and open yourself to different possibilities. For instance, the nurse you are going to meet might be a man, or the police commander may be a woman.

### Organizational leadership level: design to reduce bias

- **Build in extra time** for decision-making processes to avoid snap judgements that rely on bias.
- **Use structured processes for decision-making**, such as requiring written justifications for decisions including criteria, different courses of action, what was chosen, and why.
- **Draft clear criteria and objective standards** for management processes such as hiring and performance evaluations, as well as collaboration with external partners.
- **Remove names and personal information** from CVs to reduce biases in hiring, funding, and other resource allocation.
- **Rotate ‘housekeeping work’** within the team and with external partners, such as taking notes at meetings.
- **Implement participatory meeting procedures** such as giving everyone the floor to speak (tour de table), rotating the chair, interruption-free space, ground rules, speaking-time limits, etc.
- **Gather, compile, and analyse sex and diversity-disaggregated data** on hiring, salaries, promotion, access to training, work environment, funding, etc., and take action when inequalities exist between different groups of women and men.
- **Develop ways of recruiting that reduce gender bias**, such as removing identifiers from application forms<sup>85</sup> while being cautious of using screening software that is known to reinforce gender biases<sup>86</sup> or insisting that any candidate pool is meaningfully diverse and doesn’t include only a single female candidate.<sup>87</sup>

- **Request the Human Resource Function (HR) to provide data** on hiring, posts, salaries, promotion, training, staff wellbeing, etc., that is disaggregated by sex, race/ethnicity, and other relevant factors. Take action when inequalities exist.
- **Ask a woman to speak first.** In meetings where men outnumber women, women are less active than men.<sup>88</sup> Inviting a woman to speak first can change the dynamic and lead to equal participation.<sup>89 90</sup>
- **Avoid same-sex panels,** both as the organizer and when you are invited to participate. Promote broader diversity as well.
- **Meet and consult with diverse groups of women and men** and not only formal representatives and community leaders. Meet with people who work on gender equality and women's rights.<sup>91</sup>

#### **Team leadership level: mitigate gender stereotypes, biases, and privilege among your staff**

- **Regularly ask for feedback** from your colleagues and team, including asking them to help you identify your 'blind spots' such as stereotypes and biases. Take feedback gracefully and with thanks.
- **Create structured opportunities to discuss** with colleagues and your team how to make the workplace more equitable and how to mitigate biases when working with external partners.
- **Ensure your staff receive regular training** on gender stereotypes and biases, anti-racism, etc.

If you see or hear potentially biased remarks or actions, you can:

- **Speak out,** ask questions, and have one-on-one conversations.
- **Contact a human resources colleague,** your ombudsperson, or your staff association.

#### LEADERS IN ACTION

#### **ACTING TO MITIGATE GENDER BIAS AT UN DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AND PEACEBUILDING AFFAIRS (DPPA)**



As Chief of Office in the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, Markus Bouillon is committed to ensuring gender equality in the workplace. When a female staff member returned from parental leave, he was keen to enable a good work-life balance. He started by considering reducing some tasks from her full portfolio. However, it turned out she didn't want a slimmer portfolio. In fact, the tasks that he had thought helpful to remove were those that were most interesting to her and most career-advancing. Markus said this made him realize the importance of examining one's gender biases, even when one thinks one is choosing the right course of action. This time, the simple step of checking in with the staff member made all the difference.

## LEADERS IN ACTION

### ENDING SINGLE-SEX PANELS AT THE OSCE



Thomas Greminger, while Secretary General of the OSCE, issued a memorandum to all staff in September 2018 entitled “Ending male-only panels in OSCE-organized events”. This clear leadership commitment had a significant impact. Within two years, there was a 27% increase in inclusion of women as speakers in panels, and by 2021 the organization was only 7% short of parity in panel composition.

## EXERCISE

### REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE



**Following the reflect and act exercise to identify gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges, and work with your team to reflect on and implement mitigation measures:**

- What is the impact of these gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges on the team?
- What can you do, as a team, to mitigate the impact of stereotypes, biases, and privileges?
- What gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges do you come across in your operating context?
- How could these impact your activities and ability to support gender equality?
- How can you mitigate gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges in your operating context?
- How can you use your organizational privilege to mitigate gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges?

## Action 2: Intervene in sexism

One real world impact of gender stereotypes, biases, and privilege is sexism. Sexism is discrimination on the basis of sex. Sexism exists on a continuum—from being a crime and against the law (such as wage inequality, sexual assault, the use of sexist words<sup>92</sup>), to a policy violation (such as sexual harassment), to everyday sexism (such as women frequently being interrupted, their work being valued differently, or sexist jokes).

Gender-responsive leaders consistently call out and intervene in sexism. They also act preventatively, establishing through clear and frequent communication that they will not tolerate sexism in any form. People will look to the most senior person in the room to intervene when sexism occurs. If you do not intervene, you signal that this type of language or behaviour is acceptable. As the Chief of the Australian Army, Lieutenant General David Morrison, said in his video on challenging sexual misconduct in the military: “The standard you walk past is the standard you accept. That goes for all of us, but especially those, who by their rank, have a leadership role.”<sup>93</sup>

Of course, it is easy to aspire to consistency between words and action, but it is much harder to do so. There are numerous reasons why we may fail to act on sexism:

- 1) **Bystander effect:** this is a social phenomenon which describes how people are less likely to intervene and help someone in need when there are higher numbers of people present. People are also less likely to intervene in situations that are ambiguous, where there is a perceived lack of authority, or when there is a lack of empathy with the person experiencing sexism.<sup>94</sup>
- 2) **Culture, gender, and personality:** in certain cultures, women and men are socialized to avoid conflict and confrontation. In addition, women and girls may be brought up to prioritize being nice and being liked, both of which may lead to more hesitancy to intervene. Research also shows that a woman who calls out sexism is likely to be seen less favourably than a man who does so.<sup>95</sup>
- 3) **Organizational culture:** organizations that are strictly hierarchical or have a culture of silence will make it harder to speak up. A Catalyst survey showed that as organizational silence increases, men are 50% less likely to be committed to interrupting sexist behaviour.<sup>96</sup> Some organizational cultures are more accepting of sexism than others. In such contexts, calling out sexism may have a real-life impact on someone's career or wellbeing at work.
- 4) **Individual confidence:** the same survey by Catalyst showed that an overwhelming majority of men (86%) said they were personally committed to interrupting sexist behaviours in the workplace, but only 31% felt confident in their ability to do so.<sup>97</sup> There may be a fear of backlash, of insulting someone, or of embarrassing or making the situation worse for a female staff member. There is also a lack of skill and practice in intervening.
- 5) **High risk:** it is more difficult to intervene if the perpetrator is in a leadership/more senior position. When it is a senior external stakeholder demonstrating sexism, calling it out might constitute a political risk, as it could endanger a key relationship.

See also Skill 4 on preventing sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment.

As noted above, there are numerous reasons why we don't act. Yet, as a leader with a position of power and privilege, it is essential that you take visible and prompt action when you see or hear sexism in the workplace and in the field. If you don't, who will?

## STEP 1: NOTICE SEXISM

Before you can intervene in sexism you need to see it and recognize it. In most organizations, people will assume that sexual harassment, for example, is an isolated event rather than an institution-wide problem.<sup>98</sup> Yet, the 2019 UN 'Safe Space Survey' by Deloitte revealed that 39% of respondents had experienced sexual harassment while working at the UN, with 33% of respondents experiencing at least one instance in the last two years.<sup>99</sup> And let's remember that sexual harassment is just one form of sexism. Had the study asked about sexism more broadly, the statistics would have been much higher. Sexism can also include interrupting women more than men; paying women less for tasks of equal value; believing that women alone need to be protected from men; choosing women for stereotypical assignments, such as taking meeting notes or getting drinks; or making unwelcome remarks about a woman's body or clothing.<sup>100</sup> As a leader, you must be on the lookout for all forms of sexism. You must educate yourself and find out how sexism manifests in your organization. Once you commit to noticing sexism, it will become more and more evident to you. This knowledge will help you take action.

## BOX 7

### MULTIPLE DISCRIMINATION FOR MINORITY WOMEN

As a leader committed to reducing sexism, you will need to be aware of the multiple forms of simultaneous discrimination faced by minority women. A survey of employees from five large U.S. companies found that women experienced more sexual harassment than men, racial minorities—both women and men—experienced more racism than white people, and minority women experienced more harassment overall, because they are both women and members of a minority group.<sup>101</sup> A 2019 study on LGBTQIA+ experiences of sexual harassment in British workplaces revealed that 68% of respondents had experienced at least one form of sexual harassment at work, and LGBTQIA+ women experienced higher levels of sexual harassment and sexual assault than men in many areas.<sup>102</sup>

When tackling sexism, you will therefore need to assess and take action to prevent and intervene in the compounded harassment and discrimination faced by minority women due to the combination of sexism and racism/heteronormativity/ableism and other systems of discrimination.

## STEP 2: INTERVENE IN SEXISM

Having zero-tolerance for sexism means that once you notice it, you intervene. It requires courage and practice. Your actions will inspire your team and peers to be more courageous.<sup>103</sup>

### Prevent sexism and enable intervention:

- **Be mentally prepared.** It is easier to do the right thing if you are mentally prepared. Therefore think through possible scenarios and how you would want to respond. Ask a trusted colleague for feedback/advice.
- **Clearly and strongly communicate** that you don't accept any form of sexism and that you will act immediately, including the enforcement of sanctions, if necessary.
- **Remind staff of their responsibility** to act. Remind yourself and your staff that everyone has the authority and obligation to intervene in sexism and that you expect them to do so. This will help counter the bystander effect and the perceived and actual risk of intervening.
- **Active observation.** Evidence shows that if we know we are being observed, we are more likely to intervene.<sup>104</sup> If your staff know that you are observing and expecting them to act, they are more likely to intervene.
- **Build shared understanding** of ways of working together. As a team, agree on your ground rules and expected ways of working. This should include denouncing sexism.
- **Build staff connection and capacity.** A lack of solidarity with an affected group and lack of training increases the likelihood of non-intervention. Therefore promote solidarity and train staff in appropriate forms of intervention.
- **Make sure external partners know your commitment.** You may not have the ability to act in the same way with external partners, but it is important that they know you have a zero-tolerance policy on sexism and that you are seen to be paying attention to sexism.

**PREVENTING SEXISM IN THE OSCE MISSION IN KOSOVO**

Kilian Wahl, Deputy Head in the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, has a long-standing commitment to tackling sexism in the workplace. Having chaired the OSCE-wide Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Task Force, he decided to tackle the issue of sexism within his own mission. As a starting point, he knew that he and the mission needed to better understand what was happening. With his human resource experts and gender advisor, he included questions on sexual harassment at the workplace in a wider staff wellbeing survey. To ensure follow up and sustainability, conclusions and recommendations based on the survey's findings were included in the draft of the 2023–2025 Mission Gender Action Plan. In addition, Kilian and the task force he set up for the purpose are developing and rolling out a “Gender Bias Bites” campaign and training, following up the successful campaign at the OSCE Secretariat. This will support staff in paying attention to sexism and bias. Through constantly seeking to better understand sexism and to support others to do so as well, Kilian leads by example in order to shift understanding in his organization and contribute to changing culture.

**Intervene in the moment:**

- **Do not validate humour** that is explicitly or implicitly sexist by laughing, staying silent, or making excuses.
- **Speak out then and there.** Don't let it pass. Both the person making the sexist action or comment and those who witnessed the sexism need to be aware of your stance. If you choose to address it afterwards one-on-one, make sure people who were there know that you have addressed it, and how.
- **Celebrate and reward good practice.** When you see employees calling out sexism or practising equality, note it, celebrate it, and inspire more of this good practice.
- **Create space for shared learning.** Admit your mistakes when you make them, apologise, and remain open to learning. If a comment/action comes up in a meeting, ask the team to reflect on what just happened and what the implications of it might be for everyone involved.
- **Refer up.** When the person making a sexist comment is senior to you or a key partner it can be even more challenging than when it comes from within your team. In this case you could go above the person or to someone that person trusts and communicate that the language or behaviour was inappropriate.
- **Offer support and guidance.** Build trust with your staff and external partners so that they feel comfortable discussing sexism with you. Know your organization's policies and procedures, the options available, and the potential risks. Be supportive, don't victim-blame, and be prepared to listen and brainstorm solutions together with full confidentiality.
- **Report it.** If, after speaking out, or even after having a one-to-one discussion with the person, the sexist comments or actions continue unchecked, then it is time to document the events and report them according to your organization's procedure. This can include a discussion with the person's direct supervisor, ombudsperson, or human resources. If the incident is of a serious nature and discriminatory, then it should be reported immediately.

## BOX 8

### CALLING OUT SEXISM – WHAT CAN I SAY?<sup>105</sup>

What to say when countering sexism depends on the situation. Sometimes it is enough to prompt self-reflection, but sometimes you need to be clear that something is unacceptable. Here are a few phrases that you can adapt and use:

- **Ask someone to repeat themselves:** “Sorry, what did you say?”
- **Ask someone to clarify:** “What do you mean by that?  
Can you explain why that is funny?”
- **Ask for evidence:** “What do you base that comment on?”
- **Reframe it correctly:** “Yes, and of course we know that women are just as competent as men.”
- **Turn to the group:** “What do others think about that statement?  
What are the implications?”
- **Call it out:** “That was inappropriate and disrespectful.  
That was sexist/racist/homophobic.”

## LEADERS IN ACTION

### INTERVENING IN SEXISM IN EU COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE (CSDP) MISSIONS



During her time as Deputy Head of Mission at the EU Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support, Lena Larsson questioned the sexist humour and gender-stereotypical comments being made by a particular senior police officer. She intervened several times both on the spot and through follow up conversations with the individual in question. When she, in her role as the Deputy Head of Mission, intervened on the spot, by asking for example “what do you mean by saying ‘just like a woman’”, or clearly marking that “the language you are using is sexist and not acceptable”, her colleagues and staff received a clear message that sexism was not appropriate or acceptable.



## EXERCISE

### REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE



Reflect on and answer the following questions individually. They can also be used during a staff meeting or workshop to discuss sexism with peers or staff.

Think about leaders you know and reflect on the following questions:

- Have you ever seen a leader who called out sexism? What did they do/say?  
How did it make you feel?
- Have you ever worked with/seen a leader who did not call out sexism?  
How did it make you feel?

Now, think about yourself and times when you failed to call out sexism:

- **When** did this happen?
- **How** could this failure have impacted on your team/colleagues and your area of work?
- **Why** did you fail to act? What stopped you?
- **How** did you feel about your failure to act?

Finally, think about yourself and times when you have taken action on sexism:

- **Why** did you intervene?
- **How** did you intervene?
- **What** was the result of your intervention?
- **How** did you feel about intervening?

## Action 3: Be an ally to women

Allyship means that you make “an active and consistent effort to use your privilege and power to support and advocate for people with less privilege”.<sup>106</sup> It is about countering and balancing dominant power structures to create space, equal rights, and opportunities for all. Allyship involves ensuring that “everyone is not only invited to the table but is also heard, acknowledged, and recognized for their contributions.”<sup>107</sup> And let’s note: being an ally is not about favouritism. On the contrary, it is about challenging in-group favouritism and allowing those outside the in-group to have a voice and access to influence. It is an intentional practice by members of an in-group to open up access and opportunities for an out-group that is discriminated against.

Many of us consider ourselves to be allies to women. But are we really? The evidence would suggest not. In a poll by Promundo, 60% of both women and men agreed that it’s still rare to see men speak out against discrimination against women.<sup>108</sup> Research by LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company shows that while more than 60% of employees consider themselves to be allies to women of colour at work, less than a third of white employees say they have consistently taken a public stand to support racial equity.<sup>109</sup>

Both female and male leaders can and should be allies to women. Men in general, but particularly men in positions of power, have significant contributions to make in being allies to women. Male leaders can use their influence to effect change for individual women; and perhaps more importantly, to effect systemic change towards gender equality for all. We know that when men are engaged in initiatives aimed at gender equality in the workplace,

96% of organizations see progress —compared to only 30% of organizations where men are not engaged.<sup>110</sup> Research shows that women want concrete action from men, particularly for them to call out other men when they act in sexist or discriminatory ways.<sup>111</sup> Research also indicates that men who speak out on behalf of women are more likely to be taken seriously by other men and women. Furthermore, when women believe they have strong allies at work, they feel a greater sense of inclusion and more energy and enthusiasm on the job.<sup>112</sup>

LEADERS IN ACTION

### **MEN TAKING ACTION FOR INCREASED GENDER PARITY IN LEADERSHIP**



In 2010, a group of eight senior men in Australia (CEOs and directors) formed the Male Champions of Change group, later renamed the Champions of Change Coalition. Their purpose is to increase women's representation in leadership. The Coalition now includes over 260 CEOs or board members from 225 organizations operating in 155 countries. While women leaders are critical collaborators and advisors, the accountability for action rests squarely with the men. This initiative shows how one small group of men could scale up to work together with female leaders for gender equality.<sup>113</sup>

The body of research on male allies against sexism reveals an ironic paradox. Compared to women, it is difficult for men to detect sexism; however, when they do detect and confront sexism, men experience more positive reactions from others and their condemnations of sexism are seen as more appropriate.<sup>114</sup>

Women also need to be allies to other women.<sup>115</sup> As a female leader, you have a special role in supporting other women in countering the traditional male allyship networks they may not have access to. This is particularly important for minority women, who face multiple forms of discrimination. While this is obvious to many female leaders, many others don't wish to be perceived as actively supporting other women. There are many reasons for this. For instance, they may lack awareness of their own privilege or existing structural discrimination against women, or fear that actions on their part could negatively impact their career.

LEADERS IN ACTION

### **BE AN ALLY**



In South Sudan Alokiiir Malual made history as the first woman to sign a peace agreement in Sudan—the 2015 Peace Agreement. She used her leadership to be an ally for the women who came with her and who would come after her. In 2018, she was no longer alone at the signatory table. Seven women signed the “Revitalized Peace Agreement”, and 28 women were involved in the negotiations. Alokiiir used her position to advocate for more women to be involved, leading to the adoption of a 35% quota for women's political representation in the peace agreement, ensuring their access to decision-making spaces. “We are growing. We have smartly taken advantage of the peace process, making sure to gain more for women: we achieved a 35% participation quota by uniting as women and as groups, and coming up with one position, one demand. A formidable achievement by the women of South Sudan.”<sup>116</sup>

**FEMALE ALLIES USING AMPLIFICATION STRATEGIES  
IN THE US GOVERNMENT**

When President Obama took office in the USA, two-thirds of his top aides were men. Women reported that they struggled to get into important meetings and when they did, their contributions were sometimes ignored. To address this, female staff adopted a meeting strategy that they called ‘amplification’. This meant that when a woman made an important point, other women would repeat it and specifically credit the woman who made the point. This stopped women’s views being ignored or appropriated without credit. It also led to Obama and others calling on women staff more frequently. During Obama’s second term women finally gained parity with men in Obama’s inner circle.<sup>117</sup>

Here are some tips on how you can use your leadership privilege to be an ally to diverse women:<sup>118</sup>

- **Proactively reach out to diverse women.** The first step of allyship is to inform yourself of how diverse women experience their work situations. Read articles and research, watch relevant Ted Talks, and hold informal discussions with your female colleagues and staff. It is also a good practice to ensure the distribution and analysis of regular staff surveys that ask questions about harassment and discrimination and can be disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity/race, and other relevant factors. The “100 Coffees for Inclusion” initiative by the International Trade Centre brought senior leaders with 100 randomly chosen staff together for a 30-minute coffee conversation to engage leaders in understanding the realities of their staff.<sup>119</sup>
- **Ask how you can support.** Instead of guessing, ask your female colleagues what you can do to support them. Small actions, such as micro-affirmations during their presentation which make other leaders also pay attention, or comprehensive introductions to new colleagues or partners praising your female colleague’s experience and skills, can have a large impact. Or you might be asked to take action to support larger changes; for instance, a mandatory annual review of pay equity.
- **Pass up and pass on.** This strategy involves passing up (saying no to) and passing on opportunities where you know women (or particular groups of women) are under-represented. For example, recommend a female colleague for a panel discussion where men are over-represented. Remember to prioritize women who face multiple forms of discrimination.
- **Celebrate and elevate.** To counteract a culture where women’s contributions may be invisibilized through appropriation or undervaluing of their ideas, intentional counterstrategies may be important. JPMorgan Chase has a “30-5-1” initiative designed to bring women and men together to support their female colleagues to promote gender parity. Employees are encouraged to spend 30 minutes each week meeting with a talented woman, 5 minutes congratulating a female colleague on a win, and 1 minute praising that woman to other colleagues.
- **Create or join a group of male or female allies.** Female staff associations exist within many organizations and can be a safe space for support, allyship, and collective action for increased women’s rights. Formal and informal networks of men raising awareness on gender inequality and talking together about what they can do to support women on the job and elsewhere are also a potential space for allyship and action. Unions and staff associations are other forums that can be powerful allies to women and support gender equality in the workplace.

- **Share the non-promotable workload.** Distribute tasks fairly among women and men that do not lead to promotion opportunities and are most likely to be done by women, such as photocopying, making coffee, and organizing birthday presents and social gatherings for work colleagues.
- **Sponsor a woman or a women’s rights initiative:** sponsors—both female and male—do more than mentor. They offer growth opportunities, visibility, and networks. Yet, men are more likely to have sponsors, and women more likely to have mentors.<sup>120</sup> So turn this trend around and actively sponsor a talented female staff member and/or get engaged in a women’s rights initiative.
- **Encourage others to practice allyship.** As a leader you have influence. Use this influence to encourage others to join you in being an ally to women. Start with people close to you as you build/join a movement.

**TIP:** Watch Lean In’s brief, informative, and engaging videos on [What is Allyship](#) and [Allyship in Practice](#), and read the HBR article on [How Men Can Become Better Allies to Women](#).

LEADERS IN ACTION

#### MAKING MEETING DIVERSE WOMEN MANDATORY AT UNHCR



As part of UNHCR’s Age, Gender, and Diversity Mainstreaming approach, the highest level of country leadership—country representatives—were required to meet with diverse groups of women, men, girls and boys as part of the annual planning process. The process of leaders meeting with different groups separately meant their specific needs were brought to the fore, which helped ensure that operations were more age-, gender-, and diversity-responsive. This is an example of institutionalizing the technique of asking—rather than assuming—how to best support women at the programme level. A participatory needs assessment handbook was developed to support the process.<sup>121</sup>

## Action 4: Demonstrate your commitment to institutionalizing the work on gender equality and women’s rights

Above we examined actions you can take to lead by example yourself. We discussed how you can challenge your own and your staff’s gender biases, learn to spot and call out sexism, and be an ally to diverse women. But, as a leader, it is important think about how you can go beyond acting at the individual level and lead efforts to **institutionalize work on gender equality and women’s rights**. By reforming day-to-day work processes and organizational structures, you can ensure that progress toward gender equality continues even when you are no longer there. You can also widen the reach of your efforts—from supporting individual women at a particular moment in time to supporting all women who will benefit from the long-term systems and culture change that you champion.

Institutionalizing work on gender equality requires organizational change. This is a task for leaders and managers. To lead by example you need to demonstrate your commitment to embedding change within your organizational policies and frameworks, within your organizational culture and structures, and within your organizational accountability mechanisms. Give it time and start small. In the following chapters, we will help you prioritize and embed institutional changes that will stand the test of time.

## EXERCISE

### REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE



Think about your organization, both in terms of the workplace but also your external activities:

- What can you learn from previous non–gender-related organizational change initiatives that can support you as you instigate change? For example, how did they manage to scale up the change initiative? What challenges did they face and how did they overcome these challenges?
- What gender-related organization change initiatives have been implemented? Which were effective? Which have failed? Why? What was missing?

Now, think about your own actions to date:

- 1) How have you used your leadership power to instigate reforms for gender equality and women's rights? Just as an ally or also as an advocate for key institutional changes? How have you driven change?
- 2) How have you worked with others to do this? Your team, peers, external partners, intended beneficiaries/target group/persons of concern, senior leadership, and others in your organization?
- 3) Do you have gender expertise functions that can support you?
- 4) Do you have people in other key roles to support you in institutionalizing work for gender equality and women's rights? If not, how could you build support for both yourself when you face resistance, but also in scaling up the work that you and others do?
- 5) What is your role as a leader in this work?

**TIP:** If you want to double check whether a gender equality initiative is institutionalized, just ask yourself: Will this live on if I or another colleague change position/organization? If not, what can I and my team set into place to ensure that the initiative continues?

## Leading by example: self-assessment



Now that we have come to the end of this section, think about what we have covered. What would you like to prioritize moving forward? What are you already doing?

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### 1) Mitigate gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges

- What actions and steps are you currently taking?
- Which actions and steps will you prioritize moving forward?
- How will you implement these? What tips can you apply from the Handbook?

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### 2) Intervene in sexism

- What actions and steps are you currently taking?
- Which actions and steps will you prioritize moving forward?
- How will you implement these? What tips can you apply from the Handbook?

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### 3) Be an ally to women

- What actions and steps are you currently taking?
- Which actions and steps will you prioritize moving forward?
- How will you implement these? What tips can you apply from the Handbook?

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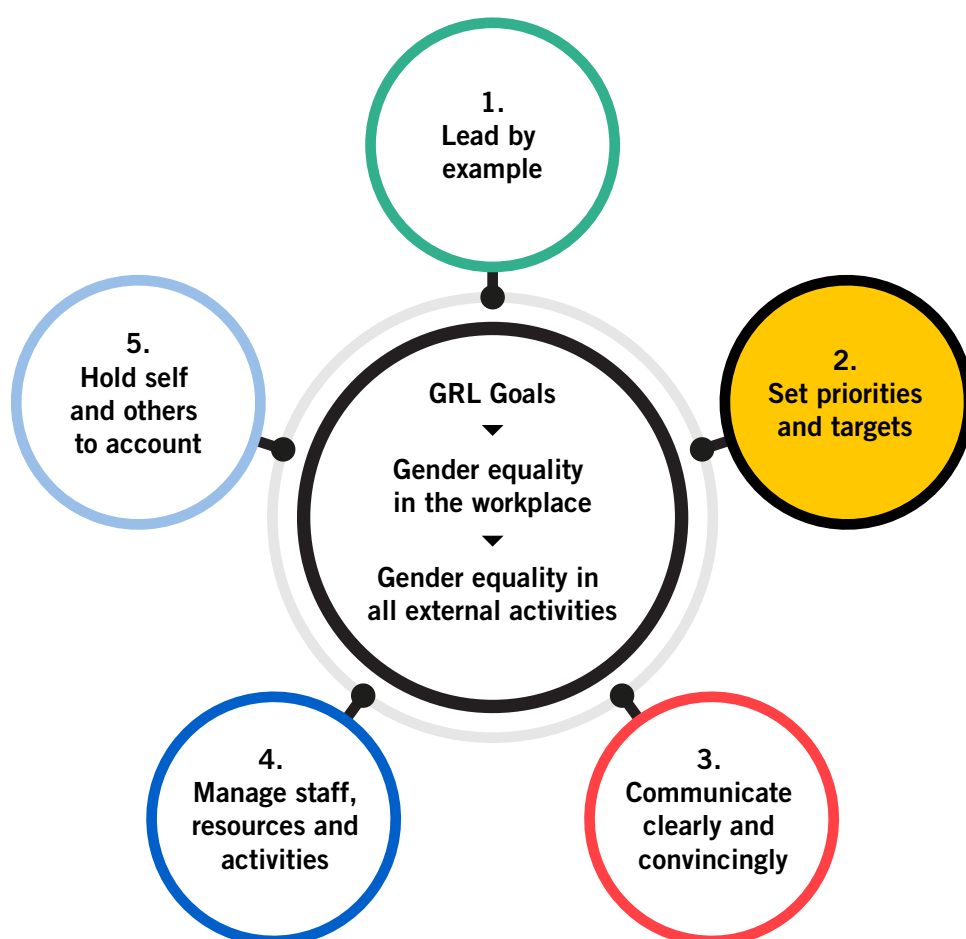
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**4) Demonstrate your commitment to institutionalizing work on gender equality and women's rights**

- What actions and steps are you currently taking?
- Which actions and steps will you prioritize moving forward?
- How will you implement these? What tips can you apply from the Handbook?



# *Skill 2: Setting priorities and targets*





A **CORE LEADERSHIP** skill is seeing the bigger picture, giving direction, and setting priorities. In setting your priorities for gender equality and women's rights, you will want to focus on what is most needed, and where you and your team can achieve sustainable change. Do not simply choose the lowest hanging fruit, such as rolling out a mandatory one-off gender equality webinar, since this alone rarely has a long-lasting impact on attitudes or behaviours. In this chapter, we will guide you in setting relevant and impactful priorities and targets.

There are two actions you can take to set your leadership priorities and targets for gender equality and women's rights:

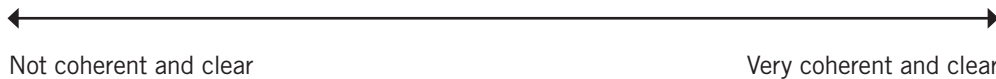
- 1) **Analyse your organization's mandate, context, and capacity.**
- 2) **Set your leadership priorities and targets for gender equality and women's rights.**

EXERCISE

#### **PERSONAL REFLECTION EXERCISE**



**Have you set priorities and targets for gender equality and women's rights for this year? Where do you think your staff would rank your priorities and targets on the scale below?**



If you ranked your priorities and targets as less coherent and clear, use this chapter to improve them. If you already think your priorities and targets are coherent and clear, use this chapter to cross-check and develop them further!

## **Action 1: Analyse your organization's mandate, context, and capacity**

Setting your priorities for gender equality and women's rights requires an overarching understanding of your organization's mandate and commitments, your operational context, and your organizational gaps and capacities regarding gender equality and women's rights.

Ask your gender advisor or gender focal point to compile a brief gender analysis, based on the organizational gender analysis framework presented below. They should draw on information that is available within the organization and in existing assessments, reports, research, and databases. The gender advisor/focal point can also connect with in-country women's rights organizations who have knowledge of the realities of diverse women, men, boys, and girls in the local context.

In its chapter on leadership, [the Handbook on Gender-Responsive Police Services](#) acknowledges the critical need for leaders to understand gender dynamics in their operating context: "Knowing the evolving and different security needs of your local communities will be the key factor in your operational success. Negative or biased attitudes of your team members that lead to, or result in, discrimination against certain members or a group within the

community, will undermine your operational effectiveness (...) it is fundamental that senior police leadership establish an informed and common understanding of the nature of gender inequality, its causes and consequences, and how it impacts women and girls differently and disproportionately. This will provide you, as the (...) manager, with the institutional legitimacy to be an active change agent in the transformation of your organization, and mitigate any harmful bias exhibited by your staff in the process”.<sup>122</sup>

#### BOX 9

#### **INTERNAL BARRIERS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES**

Decades of policies and action plans on gender equality and women’s rights have failed to fully deliver. This shows that the problem is not the lack of commitment, but its implementation. Below are some well-known barriers to implementation.

- Lack of political will and active leadership, leading to policy evaporation.
- Lack of translation of commitments into clear, concrete expectations for staff behaviour and actions.
- Inadequate resources for gender equality and women’s rights, both human and financial.
- Lack of organizational mechanisms for implementation.
- Limited capacity to mainstream gender equality and women’s rights in everyday work.
- Lack of accountability mechanisms to monitor and support implementation.
- Organizational cultures that condone sexual harassment, discrimination, and even abuse.
- Over reliance on ad-hoc ‘quick fixes’ that are unsustainable or even lead to backlash.

# Organizational gender analysis framework

<b>Analyse your organization's mandate, context, and capacity:</b> Questions to discuss with your gender advisor/gender focal points/team				
<b>Organization's mandate and commitments to gender equality and women's rights</b>	What are the relevant international, regional, and national laws and policies when it comes to gender equality and women's rights? <sup>123</sup>	What are the relevant organizational policies e.g., gender mainstreaming; women, peace, and security; gender parity; sexual harassment and discrimination; codes of conduct	Do we have any organizational Gender Equality Action Plans or other implementation mechanisms?	How are these directly applicable to my specific area of work/ leadership accountability?
<b>Organizational gaps and capacities to implement commitments on gender equality and women's rights</b>	Gaps: To what extent are our organizational goals/mandate/ policies on gender equality and women's rights being met? What are the key gaps?	Barriers: What are the internal and external barriers to achieving these goals/mandates/ policies?  See Box 9 below.	Opportunities: What are our strengths/ opportunities? What do we do well and why? What existing good practices can we scale up or adapt and replicate? Where do we have a relative advantage? What is already being done by others and where are the gaps that we have the mandate/skills/ funds to act on? What are upcoming opportunities, including events/ initiatives, that would be good platforms to promote gender equality?	Capacity: What do your personnel and others need from you as a leader? Time, knowledge, skills, tools, resources, other (see Chapter 4 on conditions of success)? What is needed at the institutional level to support gender equality work (see self-assessment checklist)?
<b>Operating and organizational context regarding gender equality</b>	What are the most urgent gender inequalities in your country/region/ thematic area of work?  For instance, if you have a mandate to support women's and men's equal access to justice, what is the current situation in your country/region?	If relevant to your position: What are the in-country women's rights organizations who have good knowledge about the realities of diverse women, men, boys, and girls in the local context?	What are the most urgent gender inequalities within your own organization?  For instance, how did women and men answer the last personnel survey that included questions on an inclusive and equitable working environment?	

**KNOWING AND ADDRESSING BARRIERS  
TO GENDER PARITY AT THE OSCE**

As Deputy Director, and then as Acting Director of Human Resources at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Micheál Conneely is committed to addressing gender inequalities in the workplace. He worked with his gender advisor and other human resource experts to understand, for example, why there was a falloff in female leaders from middle to senior management levels, and commissioned a study on women's experiences of sexual harassment in the workplace. He ensured, as a priority, that the voices of diverse women across the organization were heard, as well as those of gender equality experts.

Based on the evidence, Micheál worked with his team to develop the OSCE's first gender parity strategy. While introducing new initiatives, he made sure to build on what was already in place. The result was a cohesive framework, with clear priorities and targets. Targets include ensuring gender mainstreaming throughout human resource management activities as well as targeted actions to support women's progression through, e.g., a women's mentoring programme. Micheál and his team have ensured the strategy was operationalized through a time-bound action plan with regular progress reports. As a result the organization increased the number of female staff in senior leadership positions faster than anticipated.

**The importance of in-country women's rights organizations**

Some people believe that promoting gender equality means going against the culture of a particular country or region. While many cultural practices perpetuate gender inequality, it is important to remember that what is referred to as 'culture' is a multifaceted ever-changing phenomenon. There are often different sub-cultures existing within a society, and cultures evolve over time. And, in most if not all countries, you will find resistance to cultural traditions that are marked by inequality.

So, when culture is used to argue against interventions for gender equality you need to ask yourself 'whose culture?' You also need to remember that the most important and consistent factors driving change toward gender equality are local feminist movements and women's organizations, which often use international and regional conventions and agreements, among other techniques, as levers to influence policy-making at national and local levels.

As leaders wanting to understand your operating context, you will want to meet with these organizations face to face to better understand their realities as well as the realities of those they represent. It is equally important for your gender advisor to have a good working relationship with them.

## SYSTEMATIC GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN RULE OF LAW SUPPORT TO UKRAINE



Fran O'Grady is Senior Programme Manager of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) PRAVO (Rule of Law) Programme in Ukraine. When he reviewed the Programme, Fran noted that it was lacking information on how the Programme impacted diverse women and men. To address this gap, he commissioned Giorgia Depaoli, a Senior gender and diversity advisor, to ensure that gender equality and diversity was fully integrated into the entire Programme, as opposed to being an 'add on'. Fran also ensured that all key team members were trained on how to integrate gender equality into their day-to-day work. The EU—the donor—recognized the change in terms of gender mainstreaming and commended it.

## Action 2: Set your leadership priorities and targets for gender equality and women's rights

Once you have a clear overview of your mandate, situation, and capacity related to gender equality, it is time to set your priorities for advancing gender equality and women's rights.

### STEP 1: IDENTIFY YOUR PRIORITIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Your leadership priorities on gender equality will need to be directly aligned with your organization's goals or mandates on gender equality, as well as your organizational policies, strategies, and action plans for gender equality and women's rights. They should directly contribute to meeting your organizational mandate/goals and strategic commitments on gender equality and women's and girls' rights. As organizations often have many gender equality goals, and resources are limited, you will need to be rigorous in selecting the priorities that are most relevant to you and your team and make them as concrete as possible. One priority for a Director of Communications or Programmes, for example, might be "ensure that all communications and reports written by my department are gender mainstreamed". For a Director of Finance, it might be "roll out gender-responsive budgeting across the organization". For a Human Resources Director, it might be "ensure an enabling work environment so that female personnel are able to work in an environment without experiencing gender-based discrimination".

#### Top tips to avoid common priority-setting pitfalls

- **Delay or cancel non-priority work** to allow space for new priorities.
- **Be ambitious but realistic.** Ensure you have adequate personnel and budget to meet your priorities.
- **Work with other leaders** to align your priorities to achieve collective performance.
- **Frame your priorities** in specific terms so that it is clear to everyone what is to be done.
- **Mix short-term and long-term efforts** that address both immediate needs and root causes. Take small concrete steps and keep going.

## BOX 10

### GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND TARGETED ACTIONS

Think about your core activities and what you and your team can do to ensure that they are done in a way that advances gender equality. Think about a) how you will ensure that all organizational activities—99% or so of your organizational budget—are done in a ‘gender equal way’ so that they benefit diverse women and men equally (gender mainstreaming), and b) what kinds of targeted actions you can prioritize to address specific gender inequalities or violations of women’s and girls’ rights.

These two strategies—gender mainstreaming and targeted actions for gender equality / women’s rights—are referred to as the ‘twin-track approach’ to gender equality. The main difference between gender mainstreaming and targeted actions is the immediate objective. While targeted actions address a specific gender inequality, gender mainstreaming aims to ensure that whatever we do is done in a ‘gender equal way’. Gender mainstreaming came out of the realization that years of separate projects with an exclusive focus on women had been necessary and important, but insufficient. This is because everything that we do is likely to affect/benefit women and men differently, while specific projects for women’s rights remain marginal in comparison.

## EXERCISE

### REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE



Discuss the following questions with your gender advisor and team members to strategize together to identify which leadership priorities on gender equality will be most relevant to your own areas of work and impact. Working in a collaborative manner will build shared ownership, which often accelerates implementation.

- **Mandate and coherence:** Are these priorities in line with our mandate, organizational vision, and specific areas of work? Ensure that you are integrating both gender mainstreaming and targeted actions. See Box 10 above.
- **Urgency:** Which are the most urgent issues for us to address? What form of gender inequality most impacts our team/staff right now? What form of gender inequality is most urgent to address in the society in which we work?
- **Relative advantage:** Where do I as a leader and our team have a relative advantage? What is already being done by others and where are the gaps that I and my team have the mandate/skills to take action on? Are there any existing initiatives that we can build on or scale up?
- **Impact:** Will this lead to a change that is sustainable and long-lasting? Will it shift systemic and structural inequalities? Will it tackle power imbalances? Can we institutionalize these changes?

## STEP 2: SET SMART TARGETS FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Priorities without targets are 'hot air' and lead to what is known as policy evaporation—when good policy intentions are not followed through in practice. An important contributing factor in this evaporation is a lack of standards of measurement. A first step in being able to measure achievement is the setting of realistic and measurable targets.<sup>124</sup>

Targets are meant to make your priorities concrete. They need to be SMART (see Box 11). While it is important to develop targets that are specific to your context and area of expertise, you can draw from existing targets for gender equality and women's rights for inspiration.

Below are some examples of SMART targets. Make sure to combine short-term, quickly achievable targets with long-term targets that will lead to sustainable change by addressing the gender stereotypes and biases that enable discrimination or violence against women and lead to inequality.

### Workplace targets

- **Personal/Individual:** after one year, I will have enabled 75% of the staff responsible for drafting reports to have received adequate training on gender analysis and gender-responsive language.
- **Team:** after one year, my staff will have written 100% of all programme documents in gender-responsive language, and 80% of all relevant programme documents will include sex-disaggregated data and gender analyses.
- **Organization:** after one year, the communications policy will have been modified to state that gender-responsive language and gender analysis is required OR by the end of the year, all senior managers will receive three hours of gender-responsive leadership training during onboarding.

### External activity targets

- At least 20% of demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration programme funds will be dedicated to addressing specific gender needs, including the gendered dimensions of violence.
- 100% of UN early warning systems will utilize gender-specific indicators.<sup>125</sup>

#### BOX 11

#### SMART TARGETS

SMART targets are measurable targets that clearly set out what you aim to achieve to meet your gender equality priority or goal. SMART targets are:

- **Specific:** it should be clear to everyone what you aim to achieve. Your targets should be as concrete as possible.
- **Measurable:** it must be possible to measure whether or not you have accomplished your target.
- **Achievable:** it must be possible to achieve the target given available time and resources.
- **Relevant:** it must be relevant to the implementation gap you are trying to address as well as to your overall work.
- **Time-bound:** you need to have a clear end date by which targets should be met.

## Setting priorities and targets: self-assessment



Now that we have come to the end of this section, think about what we have covered. What would you like to prioritize moving forward? What are you already doing?

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### 1) Analyse your organization's mandate, context and capacity

- What actions and steps are you currently taking?
- Which actions and steps will you prioritize moving forward?
- How will you implement these? What tips can you apply from the Handbook?

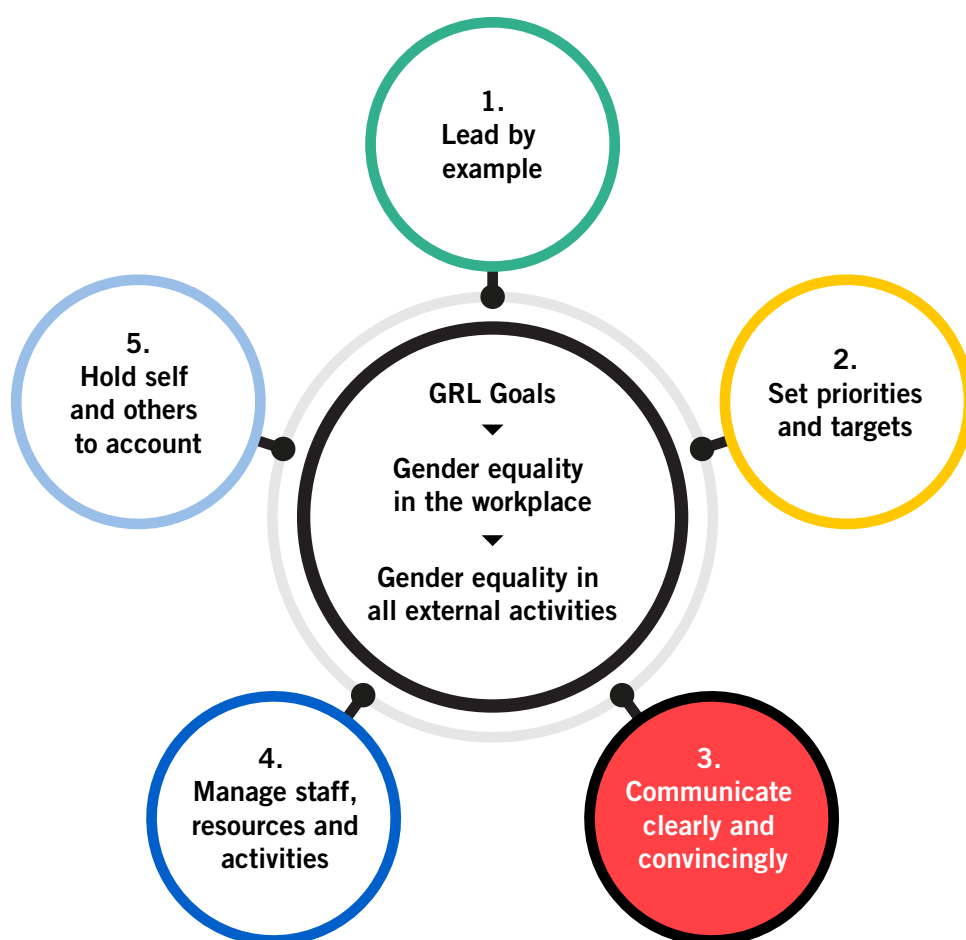
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### 2) Set your leadership priorities and targets for gender equality and women's rights

- What actions and steps are you currently taking?
- Which actions and steps will you prioritize moving forward?
- How will you implement these? What tips can you apply from the Handbook?



# *Skill 3: Communicating clearly and convincingly*



**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IS** a core leadership skill. When it comes to gender equality and women’s rights, your ability to communicate your priorities clearly and convincingly will be imperative to your success. To achieve results, your team needs to understand what the priorities are and why they are important. Together you will also need to agree on what needs to be done and by whom. Building up open communication with personnel will build trust and improve your team’s ability to meet challenges.

Here are the three actions to communicate clearly and convincingly on gender equality and women’s rights:

- 1) **Use gender-responsive language.**
- 2) **Be clear, convincing, and consistent in your communication on gender equality.**
- 3) **Check that your message is received and understood.**

EXERCISE

### PERSONAL REFLECTION EXERCISE



**When it comes to priorities for gender equality and women’s rights, how would your team rate your communication?**



Not clear and convincing

Very clear and convincing

If you think your team would rank you towards the lower end of the scale, use this chapter to improve your skills. If you think that your team would rate your communication skills regarding gender equality and women’s rights as very clear and convincing, then use this chapter to cross-check and develop them further!

## Action 1: Use gender-responsive language

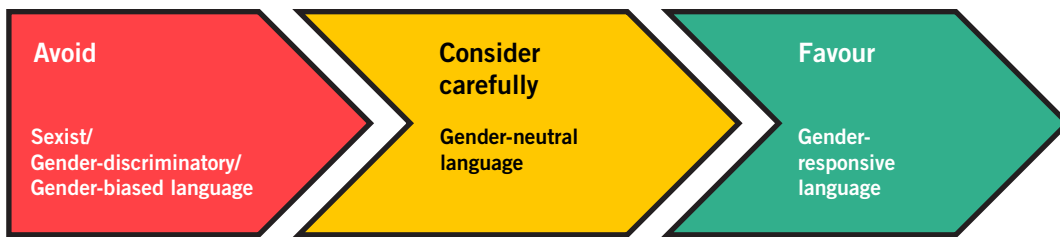
In Chapter 1 on Leading by Example we explored the ways in which gender stereotypes, biases, and privileges affect your leadership actions, particularly decision-making. Gender bias affects our communication—both verbal and non-verbal—through the people we choose to cite or whose images we use, the potentially sexist words we use, the way we make certain groups invisible through our communication, and the gender stereotypes we perpetuate. For example, studies conducted by the Global Media Monitoring Project found that in 2020 women made up only 25% of the people heard, read about, or seen in newspapers.<sup>126</sup> Using gender-responsive language makes diverse women and men feel included, challenges stereotypes, and signals to colleagues and personnel that you are competent and confident to take the lead on gender equality.

Our verbal and non-verbal language can be gender-biased, gender-neutral, or gender-responsive:

- **Gender-biased language** ranges from words linking one sex with certain characteristics (strong, aggressive, emotional, caring) and roles (‘chairman’, ‘policeman’, ‘guys’, ‘mankind’ or ‘cleaning lady’) to words, phrases, jokes, and remarks that are explicitly sexist and discriminatory.

- **Gender-neutral language**, such as ‘chairperson’, ‘police officer’, ‘people’, ‘humankind’, or ‘cleaning staff’ removes the link to sex. It is good to use gender-neutral language to avoid stereotyping and excluding people who identify as non-binary, but if used all the time it can make differences between diverse groups of women, men, girls, and boys invisible.<sup>127</sup> Accordingly, it is important to use gender-neutral language with care.
- **Gender-responsive language** is free from gender bias, includes gender-neutral language when relevant, and makes gender inequality visible through naming and addressing discrimination and unequal access to the rights of diverse women, men, boys, and girls.

It requires sustained effort to change our deeply engrained ways of speaking and communicating non-verbally. Develop new, non-biased ways of expressing yourself by avoiding gender-biased language, using gender-neutral language with care, and by always striving for gender-responsive language.<sup>128</sup>



Source: Adapted from *Toolkit on Gender-Sensitive Communication* (2019), The European Institute for Gender Equality, page 8.

Let’s also not forget to check our body language as this conveys our gender biases, even if we are using gender-neutral or gender-responsive words. For example, our use of eye contact, nodding, facial expressions, giving or not giving our full attention, will all be noted by others. Our body language will help convey the level of authenticity that lies behind our verbal language.<sup>129</sup>

LEADERS IN ACTION

**PRIORITIZING GENDER-RESPONSIVE COMMUNICATION IN THE OSCE**



Kateryna Ryabiko First Deputy Director at the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), knows how important it is to be clear and convincing in her messaging on gender equality. She is careful to use gender-responsive language because she does not want to reinforce gender stereotypes. However, she knows that she will make mistakes and therefore regularly seeks feedback on the way she communicates.

Kateryna also practises her messages on gender equality to ensure they are clear. She repeats them frequently and tailors them to her audiences, both externally and internally. She seeks dialogue to make sure her messages are understood and to understand whether there is resistance and why. She also uses her position to create platforms for women from a variety of backgrounds to ensure their voices are heard. She seeks dialogue and reflection moments, checking the understanding of her interlocutors to enhance the impact of the communication.

**STEP 1: EXAMINE YOUR LANGUAGE FOR GENDER BIAS**

The first step is to examine verbal and non-verbal language for gender bias. The suggestions below will support you in this.

- **Identify examples of language** used in the workplace or in your country/region that is 1) gender-biased, 2) gender-neutral, and 3) gender-responsive.
- **Observe your own use of language.** What gender-biased, gender-neutral, and gender-responsive language do you use? What terms and phrases do you use, and what stories/jokes do you tell? In what situations? With whom?
- **Reflect on your body language.** Who do you choose to sit next to in meetings or at lunch? Who do you listen to, agree with, or affirm through nodding? As a woman, do you minimize the physical space you take up (e.g., legs crossed, contracted body position), which potentially undermines your ability as a leader to engage in strong verbal messaging? Or as a male leader, is your ‘assertive’ body language (legs spread, expanded body position) undermining your professed commitment to active listening?
- **Ask trusted colleagues of different sexes, gender identities, ages, and ethnicities, and family and friends** for their feedback on your use of language, including body language. What gender-biased, gender-neutral, or gender-responsive terms, phrases, stories, and jokes have they noticed you use?

## STEP 2: MITIGATE GENDER-BIASED LANGUAGE

Once you are aware of where and when gender bias is likely to manifest in your language, you can take mitigating actions:

- **Replace gender-biased words with gender-neutral alternatives.** Instead of chairman, policeman, husband/wife, and cleaning lady, practice using chairperson, police officer, partner, and cleaning personnel. But be aware that most people still associate gender-neutral words like these with men.<sup>150</sup> If you want to address a specific person, but are uncertain as to their sex or preferred pronoun, you can use the third person ‘them’ or their first name. Or ask them—don’t make assumptions.<sup>151</sup>
- **Think before you speak** to avoid gender stereotypes. [The UN Guidelines for Gender-Inclusive Language](#) suggest that you ask yourself: Would I have said the same thing to a person of a different sex? A person who identifies beyond the sex/gender binary? A person of a different background? If yes, would it have the same meaning?
- **Review and eliminate gender bias in visual communication.** Ensure your visuals in publications, presentations, and online have an equal number of women and men from diverse backgrounds and that they are portrayed in non-stereotypical ways, such as men in supporting roles and women in leadership roles.
- **Not using sexist or discriminatory language, phrases, stories, or jokes.** For example, “aren’t you ladies looking beautiful today” as part of a welcome address or “let me present Professor Smith and Maria”, as opposed to Professor Cortez and Professor Smith. Avoid generalizations about all women or men as well as about all women/men from a certain ethnic or other group. For stories and jokes, think about whether you would tell it with a member of that group present in the room. If not—don’t say it.
- **Make sex and gender differences visible.**<sup>152</sup> Gender-neutral language is inclusive but also hides differences and inequalities within groups. So rather than always using generic terms such as civilians, survivors, refugees, and personnel, it is important to draw attention to the different experiences, needs, and access to rights by including language on, for example, “refugee men, women, girls, and boys” or “women, men, and non-binary personnel.” It is important to also highlight diversity and intersectionality. For instance, when discussing survivors of violence include sex-disaggregated information of ethnic minority survivors of violence of different ages. Look for places to also acknowledge those who identify as transgender or outside of the gender binary.
- **Ensure your body language is inclusive.** Sit next to and affirm women and men of diverse backgrounds, not just those who are most like you.

**TIP:** See more practical tips from the European Institute for Gender Equality’s [Toolkit on Gender-Sensitive Communication](#) or the [UN Guidelines and Toolbox on Gender-Inclusive Language](#) (available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish).

#### EXERCISE

#### REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE



- **Reflect on the questions highlighted in Step 1** individually or with your team to deepen your understanding of existing gender-biased language, both verbal and non-verbal. What stood out? Were there any particular biases that came to the fore? Did these align with the feedback received from others?
- **Select a few relevant mitigation techniques from Step 2.** Try them out in the workplace! How did it feel? What works? What didn't work?

## Action 2: Be clear, convincing, and consistent in your communication on gender equality

There are numerous terms used when it comes to gender equality and women’s rights. Personnel often feel confused and unclear about the ‘right’ thing to say or do. It is therefore important that, as a leader, you yourself are crystal clear about what you are saying. If you believe what you are saying, you are more likely to be convincing. If you are consistent, you are more likely to engage people in delivering results.

### STEP 1: BE CLEAR

It is important to ensure that what you say is clear, easy to understand, and easy to remember. Avoid jargon and only use key gender terms that you yourself understand and can easily explain. For example, it is useful to get comfortable explaining key gender policy terms such as ‘gender mainstreaming’, ‘targeted actions for gender equality and women’s rights’, and ‘intersectionality’. See Glossary in Annex 1. It is also important to be able to clearly reference your organization’s gender equality policies.

The What, Why, How format is an effective communication tool alongside delivering your messages in short sentences. Be clear on:

- 1) **WHAT you want to achieve.** Be clear about what exactly it is that you want to achieve. Here your defined leadership priorities and SMART targets will help you.
  - 1) For example, “By the end of the second quarter we will have reviewed our procurement processes to assess whether they inadvertently favour male-owned businesses”.
- 2) **WHY your priorities and targets are important.** Be clear about why your priorities and targets are essential for you, your personnel, your organization, and/or your partners and persons of concern. For example, “if we don’t do this, we are at risk of sex-based discrimination in our procurement systems, which would put us in violation of organizational policy on gender equality and potentially in breach of the law”. Box 4 highlights five responses to the “why?” question. What might you add to these?
- 3) **HOW you expect personnel to proceed.** It is important to be clear on exactly what you expect personnel to do. For example: “Conduct a market survey to identify female-run businesses and ensure they understand our procurement procedures”.

**FOUR REASONS WHY GENDER EQUALITY IS RELEVANT TO YOUR ORGANIZATION**

- 1) **Human rights:** non-discrimination on the basis of gender, and other factors, is a legal requirement in most countries and an organizational principle and value in international organizations.
- 2) **Operational effect:** to be successfully implemented, mandates on women, peace, and security and gender equality must be achieved. Gender analyses will offer you a better situational awareness and understanding of the operating context. It will help you to design more effective strategies that will benefit diverse women and men.
- 3) **Credibility and integrity:** organizations need to be visibly representative of those in whose name they work. Diverse women have different interests/needs from men and need to be fairly represented. Also, it must model the change that it is seeking to support.
- 4) **Organizational attractiveness:** as leaders, you want to attract, recruit, and retain the best candidates—both women and men. This will be easier in a workplace free of inequalities, discrimination, and sexism.

**STEP 2: BE CONVINCING**

Being convincing is a vital communication skill for gender-responsive leaders. One of the most effective ways to convince your team is to be accurate and contextually relevant. Use data, evidence, and concrete examples to build a convincing case for your gender equality priorities and targets. This will show that you have based your priorities and targets on solid analyses and will help your audience to see the reality of the problem. This is key because, as Kimberlé Crenshaw—the pioneering scholar, writer, and activist who coined the term ‘intersectionality’—tells us, “when you can’t see a problem, you pretty much can’t solve it”.<sup>153</sup>

Link gender equality and women’s rights to you and your audience’s wider mandate/priorities. Using statistics, evidence, and examples relevant to your audience’s area of interest/expertise has been shown to be effective.<sup>154</sup> For example, when working on peace processes, it is helpful to remind people that: “Statistical reports have found that when women are included in peace processes as witnesses, signatories, mediators, or negotiators, there is a 20% increase in the probability that any agreement will last at least two years, and a 35% increase in the probability that it will last at least 15 years.”<sup>155</sup>

To be convincing, you also need to be aware that what you are not communicating is as important as what you are communicating, especially when you are in a leadership position.<sup>156</sup> What you do not communicate leaves a lot of space for interpretation. For example, failing to mention gender equality or using sex-disaggregated information in a keynote speech will give the impression that you aren’t really serious in your commitment to reducing gender inequality.

You will be convincing if you believe in your message. Make the messaging your own and you will come across as authentic. Bring in your own personal stories and experiences or bring in others to tell their personal stories. Storytelling can be just as convincing and memorable, if not more so, than facts and figures. Stories can also bring a sense of urgency to the conversation. Consult your communications officer and gender experts. They will be able to give you good tips.

### STEP 3: BE CONSISTENT

Consistency is key. Repeat your core message on gender equality—what is consistently communicated takes root in the organization. The Rule of Seven in marketing states that a prospective client needs to ‘hear’ the advertiser’s message at least seven times within an 18-month period before they’ll take action to buy that product or service.<sup>137</sup> Ensure that you repeat your priorities for gender equality at least seven times to each of the people you would like to take action.

#### LEADERS IN ACTION

##### THE COMMUNICATION IMPACT OF SWEDEN’S FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY



Margot Wallström is a leader who has systematically used her position to advance gender equality and the rights of women. In February 2010, she became the first UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, establishing her credentials as a committed and experienced advocate. In 2014, as Sweden’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, she launched the world’s first feminist foreign policy, describing it as “standing against the systematic and global subordination of women” and a “precondition” for achieving Sweden’s wider foreign development and security policy objectives. She summarized Sweden’s feminist foreign policy clearly and concisely as being about three Rs:

- **Rights:** promote all women’s and girls’ full enjoyment of human rights, including combating all forms of violence and discrimination.
- **Representation:** Promote women’s participation and influence in decision-making processes at all levels and in all areas, and seek dialogue with women representatives, including those in civil society.
- **Resources** are allocated to promote gender equality and equal opportunities for all women and girls to enjoy human rights.

Under her leadership all Swedish ambassadors were required to systematically communicate about women’s rights and gender equality, including the three Rs. Between 2017 and 2019, Sweden was an elected member of the UN Security Council, and Margot Wallström and her team used this opportunity to take an unprecedented approach to furthering the integration of women, peace, and security into the Security Council’s processes and decisions, including effective communication.

Margot’s strong leadership and effective communication has resulted in strengthened visibility, implementation, and accountability on gender equality and women, peace, and security issues.<sup>138</sup>

**TIP:** Learn more in [Sweden’s Feminist Foreign Policy Handbook](#).

**USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO COMBAT SEXISM AND RACISM**

Bruno Donat, Chief of the Geneva Office of the United Nations Mine Action Service, has a strong commitment to promoting the participation of women of colour at the UN, especially in peacekeeping operations and humanitarian affairs. He consistently uses communication opportunities across his extensive network—be it speaking at events or through his social media presence—to reiterate his message and raise awareness on the need for further transparency and commitment toward a more diverse work environment and to oppose discrimination. His proactive leadership on inclusion demonstrates to his team his deep commitment to cultural change on these issues and has led to the establishment of several Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Groups, which periodically share thoughts and ideas, take stock of the progress that has been made so far, and propose steps to address gaps.

## EXERCISE

**REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE**

Individually, or with your colleagues or team, use the following questions to discuss and practice being clear, convincing, and consistent in your communication on gender equality and women's rights.

- When asking personnel, staff, or others to take action on gender equality and women's rights, check in with them: do they understand what you are asking of them, why you are asking it, and how best to proceed?
- How will you best convince your audience? Do you have data on gender equality and women's rights that is relevant to your/their area of work/context? Do you have concrete examples? Have you tailored your communication to their needs? Have you thought about possible reasons for push-back? Have you used a personal story and evidence to make your case?
- How consistent are you with your communications? Do you frequently talk about gender equality, or does the topic only come up on special occasions, for example on International Women's Day?

## Action 3: Check that your message is received and understood

Sending out clear, convincing, and consistent messages will ensure that people will hear your leadership priorities on gender equality.<sup>139</sup> But you still need to check that your message is received and understood for colleagues, personnel, and partners to take action. Communication is a two-way process.

**STEP 1: CHECK IN WITH YOUR AUDIENCE**

Communication about priorities on gender equality and women's and girls' rights tend to be received differently by different people. Accordingly, it is important to check in with your audience to find out how your communication is received and understood.



Because of their social upbringing (influenced by gender stereotypes), women and men sometimes communicate differently. Being aware of this can help you understand that your communication may not be received or responded to in the way you had expected. Sociolinguist Deborah Tannen notes that conversations among the men she studied were more likely to be negotiations through which they achieved status and preserved independence, whereas for the women they were a means of establishing connections to other people.<sup>140</sup> Research has also shown that whereas a man might nod to express agreement, a woman might nod to encourage the speaker to continue to speak.<sup>141</sup> Moreover, women and men are judged differently by how they communicate. For example, research has evidenced that female leaders find themselves in a ‘double bind’—if they are seen as communicative and nurturing, they are often not seen as good leaders. However, if they are seen as taking charge and being assertive—i.e., adopting stereotypically male leadership styles of communication—they may be seen as good leaders, but they are also seen as unlikeable ones.<sup>142</sup>

Suggestions for action:

- **Listen:** check how your message has been received and understood. It is better to ask an open-ended question, such as “What have you understood?” than a yes/no question such as “Did you understand?”
- **Dialogue:** seek opportunities for dialogue and moments for reflection, allowing for disagreement and difficult conversations—these are vital elements of any change process and enable creativity and new opportunities to evolve.
- **Ask:** ask if you are making sense to them and their realities.

When planning communications with external audiences, it will be helpful to task your communications team to conduct a basic gender analysis. This will highlight the most appropriate and effective communication channels and types of communication materials to ensure that diverse women and men equally receive your communication. This might reveal, for example, that women may be more likely to listen to the radio, whereas men may be more likely to attend public meetings. Gender analysis might also improve your social media reach. For example, research shows that men are more likely to use social media to seek information, while women use social platforms to connect with people.<sup>145</sup>

#### LEADERS IN ACTION

##### **UNOPS MAKING MOVIES IN IRAQ TO REDUCE WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION**



As UNOPS Iraq Mine Action Senior Programme Manager, Pehr Lodhammar is committed to changing perceptions and stereotypes that limit women’s full participation in the workplace. He had a practical aim: to tap the talent of the half of the workforce typically excluded from mine action simply because of perceptions of ‘appropriate roles’ for women. He worked with a gender expert and the UNOPS Communications Advisor, William Cleary, on a number of projects, including a six-part television drama entitled “Safe Home”. They understood that communication, and film in particular, are powerful mediums for cultural change regarding gender equality. To ensure their communication initiatives were received well by different audiences, they used 36 diverse focus groups to test characters, plot, and dialogue in advance of production. The series was high impact — a social media campaign to introduce the drama through [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#) reached 4.5 million Iraqis, and the drama’s six episodes generated more than 2.5 million views on Facebook and YouTube. Endline surveys showed that the series contributed to increasing individual awareness of discrimination against women in the workplace.

## STEP 2: RECOGNIZE, PREVENT, AND RESPOND TO PUSH-BACK

Many of us react to change with denial and frustration (see Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross' "Change Curve"). So, it is quite normal, even with our best communication efforts, to receive push-back when communicating a change, such as a new priority on gender equality. In addition, gender equality and women's rights are linked to deeply held personal values and bring up emotions which can lead to resistance.<sup>144</sup> To communicate effectively and proactively drive change on gender equality, it is vital that you understand and plan for these reactions and proactively address both conscious and unconscious resistance."<sup>145</sup>

In one organization, the roll out of a gender parity strategy did not make opportunities for personnel and leadership to discuss concerns and experiences together. As a result, targets on gender parity were welcomed by some, but heavily resisted by others (both women and men). This could have been avoided with a more robust personnel engagement strategy that would have picked up on the resistance. In contrast, one organization that was undergoing a more comprehensive shift to girls' rights spent a number of years facilitating the process, building up personnel understanding, engagement, and ownership of the new direction. This brought personnel into step alongside leadership, rather than placing them in opposition to the change.

To order to effectively handle push-back on gender equality, we have three tips. If you do the first one well, you will be in a much stronger position.

### 1) Prevent push-back

Create a participatory process where people are included, such as jointly setting gender equality priorities and targets with your team. This will ensure that people will have ample opportunity to share their concerns, and to feel heard and included in the process. This, in turn, will reduce push-back or even resistance when it comes to implementing gender equality activities, and changes will not come as a shock.

Use the skills you developed earlier on convincing communication to persuade people why action is necessary to address gender inequality. Outline the impact of gender inequality and its benefits for men, as well as for women. Offer compelling accounts of the problem and the solutions, and debunk any myths around the topic—for example, the myth that incompetent women will be promoted over competent men.

Be prepared. Write a list of potential push-backs and brainstorm how to effectively counter them. Even if you have been participatory and communicated convincingly, some push-back is still likely to occur. The next step is to understand the form of push-back that you are facing.

### 2) Identify the form of push-back/resistance and use appropriate counterstrategies

Resistance can range from passive denial to active resistance. VicHealth in their publication on *(En)Countering resistance* developed a continuum which helps us understand different forms of resistance to gender equality:

- **Denial** that there is a problem with gender bias and inequalities. This can lead to victim blaming. For example, minority women who speak out about gender biases are seen to be the problem: "There is no problem, she is just an angry black woman".
- **Inaction.** Gender inequalities are not considered important enough, or too sensitive, to warrant action. Often the response is that something else needs to be addressed first: "We need to end the armed conflict first".
- **Appeasement** is when people give lip-service and say they agree but nothing happens: "Yes. Yes. We must do something (one day)".

- **Co-option** involves using the narrative of gender equality and women’s rights but with the intent to resist: “What about men’s rights? Men are victims too, you know”.
- **Backlash** is the most extreme form of push-back and can include outright threats to those highlighting gender inequalities: “These feminists deserve all the abuse they get.”<sup>146</sup> Overt backlash is less likely to be expressed within peace and security organizations, but such threats are commonly expressed on social media and other communication platforms.

**TIP:** Read the VicHealth publication on [\(En\)countering Resistance: Strategies to respond to resistance to gender equality initiatives for more practical information.](#)

#### BOX 13

#### HOW TO COUNTER DOMINATION TECHNIQUES IN THE WORKPLACE

The term “domination techniques” was coined by the Norwegian psychologist and philosopher Ingjald Nissen in 1945 and further developed by the Norwegian social psychologist Berit Ås in the 1970s. Berit used the concept to describe the behaviours that men use against women in the workplace to suppress their voices and influence. These domination techniques are a form of resistance faced by diverse women and men. Likewise, they can be used by both men and women, but most often they are used by people in power against people with less power. As a gender-responsive leader, you might face one or more of these domination techniques when communicating on your gender equality priorities or see them at play between others. If you can identify an action as a domination technique, don’t blame yourself, but see it for what it is and then choose the appropriate strategy to address it. Domination techniques include:

- **Making it invisible** by not responding to emails or calls, or interrupting or ignoring what has been said.
- **Ridiculing** someone or their arguments—for example, calling a man advocating for gender equality “the gender police” or a group of women “the gender mafia.”
- **Withholding information**, including not circulating an important email to someone or not inviting them to a meeting.
- **Double bind**, meaning that whatever a person does, it is always wrong: if a female colleague is being thorough, she is described as too controlling, and if she is less thorough, she is accused of being sloppy.
- **Shaming**, by blaming a person for his/her own predicament.

Ways to counter these techniques include:

- **Taking up space**—for example, through reclaiming the space after being interrupted or ignored.
- **Asking questions**—for example, asking someone what they meant by their comment or name calling.
- **Inviting yourself to meetings** or getting an ally to invite you; asking why you were not included and questioning how decisions are made.
- **Break free of the pattern** by understanding and communicating that you are being caught in a double bind. Stick to your principles and priorities.
- **Intellectualize**—analyse, explain, and only take responsibility for what you are reasonably responsible for.

### 3) Handle difficult conversations with the LEEP model

It is important not to take push-back personally and to go on the offensive. We also need to remember that resistance can be valid and might help you find a better path forward. Use the LEEP model, developed by Kristin Valasek at FBA, to develop your skills in both preventing and addressing resistance by understanding why you are facing resistance and having a productive discussion:

- **Listen actively:** ask questions, don't judge, focus on understanding other people's concerns, and be prepared to take on good suggestions/changes deemed necessary to move forward.
- **Empathise:** understand and acknowledge others' feelings without necessarily agreeing.
- **Explain the situation:** clarify the rules, your intention, and your expectations.
- **Problem-solve:** brainstorm solutions together and set out clear next steps.

#### EXERCISE

#### REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE



Individually, or with your colleagues or team, use the following questions to discuss and practice handling resistance to gender equality.

- What does push-back/resistance to gender equality look like in your organization/team/area of work?
- What can I/we do to prevent resistance?
- Based on the type/form of resistance, which strategies could I use to address resistance when it comes up?

## Communicating clearly and convincingly: self-assessment



Now that we have come to the end of this section, think about what we have covered. What would you like to prioritize moving forward? What are you already doing?

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### 1) Use gender-responsive language

- What actions and steps are you currently taking?
- Which actions and steps will you prioritize moving forward? How will you implement these?
- What tips can you apply from the Handbook?

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### 2) Be clear, convincing, and consistent in your communication on gender equality

- What actions and steps are you currently taking?
- Which actions and steps will you prioritize moving forward? How will you implement these?
- What tips can you apply from the Handbook?

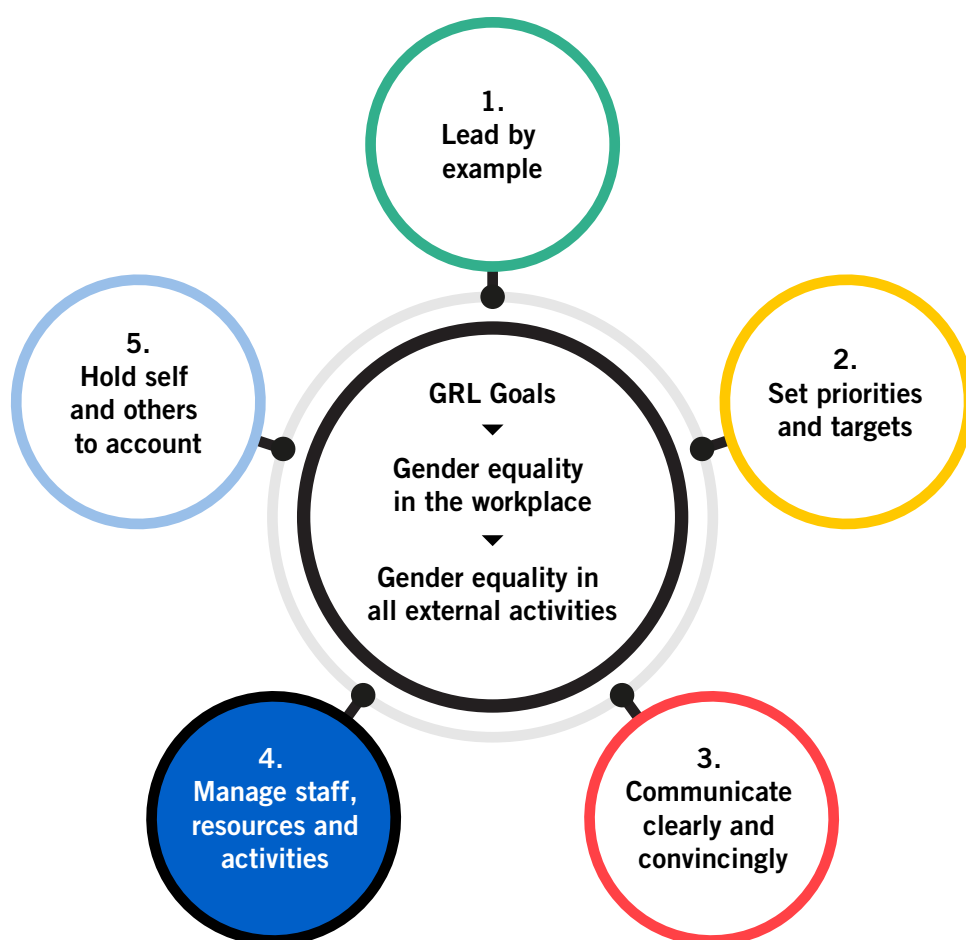
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### 3) Check that your message is received and understood

- What actions and steps are you currently taking?
- Which actions and steps will you prioritize moving forward? How will you implement these?
- What tips can you apply from the Handbook?

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# *Skill 4: Managing staff, resources, and activities*



**MANAGING YOUR STAFF**, resources, and activities effectively allows you to create conditions of success for yourself and your staff to make your gender equality priorities a reality. By creating an equitable, inclusive, and healthy work environment, and ensuring activities, budgets, and procurement processes support gender equality and women’s rights, you will concretely demonstrate that you walk the talk on gender equality and that you and your team are making the changes required to get results.

There are seven key management actions you can take to make sure that you promote gender equality in all external activities as well as in the workplace:

- 1) **Work strategically with your gender equality experts.**
- 2) **Ensure gender analysis in all activities.**
- 3) **Promote equal participation of diverse women in external activities.**
- 4) **Strive for gender parity and insist on equal opportunities in the workplace.**
- 5) **Prevent sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment.**
- 6) **Ensure gender equality in your budgeting and procurement processes.**
- 7) **Set performance objectives on gender equality and women’s rights.**

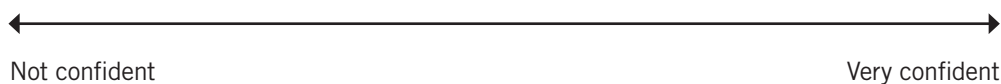
We have started to explore some of these actions in the previous chapters. Here we will go into more depth and provide additional tips.

EXERCISE

**PERSONAL REFLECTION EXERCISE**



**How confident are you that you manage staff, resources, and activities gender-responsively—in both external activities and in the internal workplace?**



If you have ranked yourself as ‘not confident’, use this chapter to improve your skills. If you already rank yourself as very confident, use this chapter to cross-check and further develop your skills!

## **Action 1: Work strategically with your gender equality experts**

Being a gender-responsive leader means leading the work on gender equality in your team/organization, but it does not mean that you are required to be an expert on gender equality. Your best resource to ensure successful implementation of your priorities on gender equality and women’s rights are your gender equality experts, such as gender advisors and gender focal points.

### **GENDER ADVISORS**

Gender advisors are there to provide strategic support for you and your personnel. They are not there to do all gender equality work for you. They are experts on how to effectively advance gender equality and women’s rights, and you will benefit from drawing on their

expertise. To date, the thinking has often been “As a leader, I support my gender advisor in getting the gender equality work done”. This line of thinking needs to be shifted to “I lead the work on gender equality, expect all my staff to work for gender equality, and I get expert advice from my gender advisor/gender focal point on how best to do this.”

Here are some tips on building a strategic working relationship with your gender advisor/gender focal point:

- **Ask for advice:** ask for their advice in your daily work, including in key priority areas of work such as politics and policy dialogue.
- **Involve them from the start:** involve gender advisors from the very start of important initiatives, programmes or projects, as well as in planning, policy development, and budgeting.
- **Seat at the table:** give them a seat at the table and ensure they provide input in strategic decision-making processes; for instance, by including them in weekly senior management meetings.
- **Realistic mandate:** make sure they have realistic terms of reference and that their mandate is clear to their colleagues.
- **Right conditions:** make sure they have the necessary seniority and resources to fulfil their roles.

Explain to all staff, including during onboarding of new staff, what their specific responsibilities are regarding gender equality and what kind of advice and assistance they can seek from the gender advisor or gender focal point.

#### LEADERS IN ACTION

##### ESTABLISHING A POLICE UNIT FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN GHANA



As Head of the Ghana Immigration Service, Comptroller-General Mr. Kwame Asuah Takyi established the first-ever internal Gender Mainstreaming Unit to initiate and support the implementation of gender-friendly policies intended to lead to gender equality and empowerment of women in the Service. So far, the Unit has several officers, both male and female, and 18 regional focal persons across the country to coordinate activities. He personally participates in programmes organized by the Unit.<sup>147</sup>

## GENDER FOCAL POINTS

In addition to a gender advisor, your organization might have an active network of gender focal points. Gender focal points are most often staff in all functions who, in addition to their existing role, have been appointed to act as catalysts within their departments/teams by sharing information and supporting staff to mainstream gender equality in their work. Gender focal points are often not gender experts to begin with but are trained when appointed. Strive for gender parity and diversity among your focal points, including people of different levels of seniority to ensure sufficient leverage and influence.

As a leader you are responsible for ensuring that your gender focal points have the right conditions to allow them to deliver results. These include:



- 1) **A clear and well-communicated mandate:** do gender focal points have clear and realistic terms of reference and allocated work time to focus on gender equality? Have you clarified to your gender focal point/s what is expected from them? Do your personnel understand the role of the gender focal points and what kind of support they can get from them?
- 2) **Demand and responsiveness:** do all your personnel understand what is expected of them in terms of implementing gender equality policies? Do they take responsibility for this, using gender focal point support appropriately, or do they expect gender focal points to shoulder the workload alone? Do you take remedial action when gender focal points refer concerns to you? Too often gender focal points report that they refer concerns to leaders who then fail to take action.
- 3) **Capacity-building and support:** do your gender focal points have the gender equality competence required for the role? Have they received sufficient training? Do they have ongoing support from the organization's gender advisor or from other training providers?
- 4) **Recognition:**<sup>148</sup> are you recognizing the additional task that staff take on when they agree to be a gender focal point? Do you hold regular meetings with them to discuss the implementation of gender equality policies and celebrate progress? Are there clear reporting lines to a senior leader?

#### EXERCISE

#### REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE



If you have a gender advisor or gender focal point, use the tips in this section to reflect on how you can work more strategically with them. Reflect on the following questions:

- What are you already doing to work strategically with your gender advisor or gender focal point?
- To what extent do you expect your gender expert (advisor/focal point) to do all the gender equality work or support you and others in tackling your respective responsibilities?
- What two actions can you take in the next month to strengthen your working relationship with your gender advisor or focal point?

## Action 2: Ensure gender analysis in all activities

One of the most important tools for a gender-responsive leader is gender analysis. Gender analysis is the tool that helps us both mainstream gender and identify targeted actions to address gender equality gaps.

### WHAT IS GENDER ANALYSIS?

As a manager you will be doing analyses all the time. You will be asking questions, gathering data, sense-making, and drawing conclusions. This is essential in developing and deciding upon appropriate actions.

Gender analysis involves deepening the analysis that you do anyway to intentionally understand the different situations of women, men, girls, and boys with diverse backgrounds and experiences and how these affect your work. Without it you will not be able to make fully

informed leadership decisions—be it in your policy and political dialogue, your programming, your HR management, your budgeting, your procurement, or other. It ensures that you act in a way that increases gender equality, rather than inadvertently making it worse. There are different levels of gender analysis, depending on its scope and depth: basic, intermediate, and advanced.

BOX 14

#### **THE EU GENDER ACTION PLAN III: INTERSECTIONAL GENDER ANALYSIS**

The EU Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) clarifies that gender analysis is the starting point for gender mainstreaming. Gender analysis identifies the differences between and among women and men in terms of their relative position in society and the distribution of resources, opportunities, constraints, and power in a given context. In this way, conducting a gender analysis allows for the development of interventions that address gender inequalities and meet the different needs and interests of women and men. The Plan also specifically calls on staff to address the intersectionality of gender inequality with other forms of discrimination. The “focus should also be on the most disadvantaged women; for instance indigenous peoples and persons belonging to racial/ethnic/religious minorities, forcibly displaced, migrant, economically and socially deprived women, those living in rural and coastal areas, as they face multiple discrimination (...) All intersecting dimensions are equally relevant.”

**Basic:** you and your personnel can and should be using basic gender analysis in your everyday work: what is the situation of diverse groups of women and men<sup>149</sup>, and how does our work impact them? You should always ask yourself and your personnel for this level of gender analysis. It is a key tool in your work as a gender-responsive leader. Basic gender analysis is not about performing a separate assessment or analysis. It is about you and your staff always asking two key questions (see Box 15 below) about existing processes.

BOX 15

#### **THE TWO BASIC GENDER ANALYSIS QUESTIONS**

1) **Situation: do I/we understand the situation of diverse women and men?**

What is the situation of diverse groups of women and men in a particular context of work (external or internal)? What are the different rights, specific needs, and opportunities of diverse groups of women and men? Are their rights and specific needs being met fairly and equally?

2) **Impact: do I/we understand the impact of our work on diverse women and men?**

What is the different impact of our work on diverse groups of women and men? What do we need to do to ensure that our activities include the participation of, and benefit, diverse groups of women and men equally?

**Intermediate:** This gender analysis is more nuanced. The objective is to highlight key gender inequalities in a particular situation/context by gathering and analysing sex-disaggregated information regarding the needs, opportunities, and access to resources and rights of diverse groups of women and men. It is required for staff who plan, implement, and report on activities in a certain work area; be it strengthening border management or improving staff wellbeing. There are often checklists with key questions available to guide this level of gender analysis.<sup>150</sup> An intermediate gender analysis should ideally be an integral part of an assessment, report, or evaluation.

BOX 16

#### GENERIC QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE GENDER ANALYSIS

- What roles and responsibilities do diverse groups of women and men have?
- What access to participation, decision-making, resources, and rights do diverse groups of women and men have?
- What security needs do diverse groups of women and men have?
- What is the impact of gender stereotypes on diverse groups of women and men?
- Do your findings differ for specific groups of women or men? If so, how?
- How do your findings impact your proposed/current work and what can you do about it?

**Advanced:** This gender analysis is in-depth and requires solid gender equality expertise. It provides comprehensive information on diverse groups of women and men in a thematic area, region/country, conflict, or organization and a deeper analysis of the social cycle of gender inequalities. Advanced gender analysis is often written as a stand-alone report and will provide you and your staff with a fundamental understanding of the gender inequalities in your area—both thematic and geographic. As such, it can be a knowledge base for the day-to-day gender analysis and a good source for both internal and external communication. It is also necessary to identify the need for targeted action on women’s rights. Ensure that you are briefed of the results and that the analysis is used by wider categories of staff who work in the thematic or geographic area. See Box 17 for an example of an advanced gender analysis.

**TIP:** See [ILO gender audit](#), [UNDP gender seal](#), [Interaction handbook on gender audits](#), [CARE Rapid gender equality rapid assessment tool](#), [DCAF Gender self-assessment guide for police, armed forces and the justice sector](#)

## BOX 17

### RAPID GENDER ANALYSIS TO INFORM HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN UKRAINE<sup>151</sup>

Ninety percent of those who have fled Ukraine are women, girls, and boys. The majority of men aged 18–60 are required to stay behind. To gauge the differential impacts of the war, UN Women and CARE International produced a Rapid Gender Analysis that showed:

- The war is impacting women and men in different ways and is exacerbating pre-existing inequalities.
- Women from high-risk groups are left behind and disproportionately affected by disruptions caused by war.
- Women and men largely take on different roles in the context of war. While women and women's organizations play a crucial role in the humanitarian crisis, they are largely absent from decision-making at the local and national level, as well as in the negotiation process between the Russian Federation and Ukraine.
- Female-headed households are even more food insecure than male-headed households; 23% versus 13%.
- People on pensions and social support are most affected by barriers to accessing cash. Women constitute two-thirds of this group.
- Disruptions to health services, including access to sexual and reproductive health, affect at least 265,000 pregnant Ukrainian women.
- Displaced Ukrainian women and unaccompanied male and female minors face safety concerns related to survival or transactional sex and sex trafficking.

## EXERCISE

### REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE



Think about a current work priority such as a programme, activity, or initiative you are involved in and apply the two basic gender analysis questions (Box 15).

- **Situation:** what gender inequalities exist in this area of work; i.e., do diverse groups of women, men, girls and boys have unequal access to participation, resources, and rights? Do they have different needs and are these needs being met?
- **Impact:** how will your work impact diverse groups of women, men, girls, and boys differently? Does your work take account of existing gender inequalities and try to reduce them?
- **Action:** What can you and your team do differently to ensure that diverse groups of women, men, girls, and boys participate equally? What can you and your team do differently to ensure that this area of work reduces existing gender inequalities?

## Action 3: Promote equal participation of diverse women in external activities

Women don't always have the same access to participation and decision-making as men. This is why efforts to increase women's equal participation is a global policy commitment. As a leader, you have the responsibility to promote diverse women's full and equal participation in all activities that you are responsible for and/or participate in. This involves ensuring that women have equal representation by removing the barriers that stop women from attending—even when invited—and proactively enabling their active participation and influence.

LEADERS IN ACTION

### UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR IN GHANA LEADS “NO MANEL” PLEDGE DRIVE <sup>152</sup>



Charles Abani, the Resident Coordinator of the United Nation System in Ghana, was key in the “#NoManel” campaign. As part of the annual retreat for the UN country team in Ghana in 2021, senior UN leaders took a ‘No Manel’ pledge to say no to all forms of male-only panels constituted by the United Nations.

The #NoManel campaign is part of a move to ensure women's equal representation in conferences, meetings, and decision-making processes in the UN in Ghana.

Below are actions you can take to ensure women's equal participation in external activities:

#### Women's representation

- **Make a point of regularly meeting with key leaders from women's rights organizations** and enable their meaningful participation in meetings, workshops, negotiations, and other external events that they might not have access to.
- **Avoid participating in meetings and events that have a strong under-representation of women.** When possible, request organizers address any under-representation.
- **Request your staff always strive for equal representation** of diverse women and men in all external activities, including in projects and programmes. Encourage them to always ask: how many women vs. how many men? Do we have women and men of different ages, ethnicities, religions, abilities, income levels, etc.? Who have we missed and how can we reach them? Is there representation from women's rights organizations? Don't assume that having women present means you get input on gender equality issues.
- **Enable women to participate.** This could include ensuring that meetings are scheduled at a suitable time and location for women's participation, noting that cultural norms and real safety concerns may prevent women from travelling alone, and that women who need it have access to childcare, and the means to get back and forth to the venue.
- **Support quotas for representation.** Quotas can have a powerful impact. In conflict-affected countries, women's representation in parliament was twice as high when there were legislated quotas: 23.3% with quotas in 2022, compared to 11.6% without quotas in 2020.<sup>153</sup>

### Women's contributions

- If you chair an external meeting or event, **facilitate women's contributions**. Use the same principles and techniques you use in workplace meetings. For example, invite a woman to speak first or ask to hear from someone who hasn't spoken already.
- **Request your staff to enable diverse women to contribute**. Once women attend, you need to ensure they can contribute. Make sure they don't end up sitting at the back of the room, that they are invited to speak, and can do so without being interrupted. Consider to what extent they are listened to, and whether their input is included in final reports and has an impact on decisions. Sometimes women are more comfortable speaking when there are no men around. It may therefore be useful to have separate consultations with women. You may also need to break into different diversity groups, if relevant. You can also actively delegate decision-making to women and use facilitation methods to ensure everyone's voices have been heard and that decisions are made jointly.
- **Request all the above from your partners**. If relevant, make it a priority for funding and support.

#### EXERCISE

#### REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE



- Which of the previous tips for promoting equal participation of diverse women do you already do?
- Which ones do you currently not do? Pick a few that might be relevant for you to try out!

## Action 4: Strive for gender parity and insist on equal opportunities in the workplace

In the introduction, we examined the data on gender in the workplace and saw that there is significant gender inequality, sexism and discrimination. We saw how this impacts the recruitment, retention, and advancement of female personnel, we saw the impact of the gender pay gap and sexual harassment, and we examined specific kinds of gender discrimination faced by female leaders.

As leaders and managers, you are accountable for creating a gender equal workplace. This means:

- **You have equal representation** of diverse women and men at different levels and in different areas of work; i.e., gender parity.
- **There are equal opportunities for diverse women and men** within the remit of their roles and responsibilities.
- **All personnel can go to work without fearing gender- or sex-based discrimination, sexual harassment, or other forms of gender-based violence**. Staff must know that action will be taken when required (we will explore this point in Action 5 below).

While there is no silver bullet when it comes to building gender equality in the workplace, there are evidence-based actions that leaders and managers can and should take.<sup>154</sup> This is first and foremost a matter of equal rights and non-discrimination. In addition, research has shown that organizations with more equal opportunities and inclusive work cultures are:<sup>155</sup>

- **Six times** more likely to be innovative.
- **Six times** more likely to anticipate change and respond effectively.
- **Twice times** as likely to meet or exceed financial targets.

Staff in these organizations are:

- **Forty-two percent less likely to plan on leaving** for another position within a year.
- **Five times** more likely to be empowered to do their best work.

## GENDER PARITY

Despite longstanding organizational policy commitments to gender parity, senior leadership positions in many international organizations continue to be predominantly occupied by men. Research by the UN suggests that at the current pace, it will take 140 years to achieve gender parity in leadership positions in the workplace.<sup>156</sup>

### LEADERS IN ACTION

#### RECRUITING FEMALE SECURITY STAFF AT THE UN



Bonnie Adkins, the Chief of Security and Safety Service at the UN Office in Vienna has made great strides in increasing female representation within the security service, a traditionally male-dominated sector. In her current post, she has hired 12 female officers so that 31% of her staff are now female. She has also promoted more women to management and specialized teams that are usually thought to be male-only positions.<sup>157</sup>

One reason for the lack of gender parity is bias in recruitment. It is known that women apply in lower numbers to jobs advertised using adjectives associated with masculine stereotypes.<sup>158</sup> One company found that applications from women increased from 5% to 40% only by replacing “aggressiveness and competitiveness” with “enthusiasm and innovation” in a job advert. Harvard Business Review’s Innovation Lab and Ericsson tested four different messages to attract women applicants. The only message that effectively closed the gender parity gap at the expression of interest stage was “you don’t have to be 100% qualified”.<sup>159</sup> This does not mean that gender-responsive recruitment is about selecting less qualified candidates. It means reducing the barriers that often prevent women with merit from both applying and being recruited.

Below are some key actions you could take when striving for gender parity within your personnel:

- **Establish your baseline on gender parity.** Check your organizational policy commitments to gender parity and existing initiatives/procedures/trainings/tools, and ask your human resources for data on gender parity at different levels of seniority and types of work. Request data that is as diversified as possible to gain a more nuanced picture of different groups of women and men as well as people who identify as non-binary.
- **Set SMART targets on gender parity** (see Box 11: SMART Targets). The UN and others have established a clear goal of gender parity, and annual targets for each part of the UN system to achieve this goal at all levels, with clear consequences if the targets are repeatedly not achieved. Remember that the targets you set should be linked with targets for geographical/ethnic diversity. Recruiting only white women is not what we are aiming for.

- **Reduce gender bias in the recruitment process.** Aim for gender parity and diversity in the recruitment panel as well as in the candidates interviewed. Work closely with your human resources department to reduce the influence of bias in job adverts and terms of reference. Circulate the job advert both broadly and in a targeted manner to reach diverse women. Remove names and personal information from application forms at the initial stage. Review interview questions for biased language and set clear criteria for senior appointments. Reflect self-critically on possible gender bias when assessing both applications and interview performance: Do you use words that reflect gender bias? Would your assessment be the same if the person was of a different sex? Remember to also check for racial and other biases, such as biases toward people who don't conform to expected gender norms. For more ideas, see Skill 1: Leading by Example.
- **Ask for progress reports** every six months on attaining gender parity and hold staff accountable to these. You could create a working group/task force or other forum inviting human resources and senior managers to meet, share challenges, brainstorm solutions, try out new initiatives, and engage in joint data collection and reporting.

#### LEADERS IN ACTION

#### UKRAINIAN DEPUTY CHIEF OF POLICE DRIVES RECRUITMENT AND ADVANCEMENT OF POLICEWOMEN



As the First Deputy Chief of the Patrol Police Department of Ukraine, Captain Oleksiy Biloshytskiy actively works toward equal rights and opportunities for both women and men in police patrol units. He initiated a recruitment campaign that showed women actively engaged in tactical and operational response units, traditionally considered as an exclusively male domain. He played a leading role in promoting the Ukrainian Association of Women in Law Enforcement by involving international partners and donors, and has repeatedly initiated the appointment of women to leadership positions in various structural units of the police patrol of Ukraine.<sup>160</sup>

#### EXERCISE

#### REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE



Think about a current work priority such as a programme, activity, or initiative you are involved in and apply the two basic gender analysis questions (Box 15).

- How close are you to achieving gender parity in your team/department/organization? At different levels? In different areas of work?
- What measure above do you already have in place and what additional actions can you take?
- What are the blocks and how can you effectively address them?



## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Remember that the recruitment process is only the beginning. Once strong women candidates are recruited, they need to be retained. This requires—among other things—equal opportunities, because as Chamorro-Premuzic notes, “removing bias at the selection point will fix nothing if there’s still plenty of bias contaminating our performance management systems”.<sup>161</sup> One of the most tangible examples of unequal opportunities is the unequal pay between women and men. In the 38 OECD countries, the wage gap between full-time women and men stands at 13%.<sup>162</sup> Globally, the figure is around 20%.<sup>163</sup>

Too often, gender bias and inequalities in the workplace are addressed by targeting women. But research shows that messages saying that women need to change in order to progress in their careers—for example by being more assertive—leads both women and men to think workplace gender inequality is women’s responsibility to solve.<sup>164</sup> However, as Nordell argues, no matter how hard a person subject to bias works, “it will never be possible to outmanoeuvre another person’s biases.” Those who are on the receiving end of bias can’t stop it.<sup>165</sup> The problem is structural, and as a leader you need to both do your best to prevent gender bias in the workplace and respond as required. Below are some areas to pay extra attention to when promoting equal opportunities in the workplace.

### Roles and responsibilities

- **Gender bias in advancement opportunities.** Track and disseminate sex-disaggregated data that also monitors other variables relevant to all advancement opportunities.
- **Internal representation.** Men interrupt more frequently, and they interrupt women more than they do other men.<sup>166</sup> Make sure diverse women and men are given equal visibility and speaking time. This can be done by clocking or by initiating rounds with equal time to speak.
- **External representation.** Give diverse groups of women and men a chance to take the lead in your place when you are away (for instance, as officers in charge). Appoint both women and men of diverse backgrounds to represent the organization externally.
- **A fair distribution of non-promotable work** such as note-taking, preparation, and organizing of rooms before and after meetings, organizing social events, onboarding new staff, and taking care of visitors. Make sure everyone knows you value these vital but often invisible tasks. Women are both more likely to be asked to perform these tasks and they are also more likely to say yes.
- **Work–life balance,** or allowing staff to take care of their responsibilities outside the office through flexible working arrangements. Make sure your work–life policies are used by everyone, including yourself, and that there are no drawbacks (usually it is less acceptable for men to use such policies). Create a work culture where flexibility and achievement are rewarded, not one that rewards those who stay the latest in the office. This is good for all personnel.

### Distribution of resources

- **Equal pay for equal work.** Compile sex- and diversity-disaggregated salary data and make sure it is analysed and reviewed once a year for unwarranted differences. Implement pay transparency measures to reduce wage gaps.<sup>167</sup>
- **Equal access to resources.** Review and improve how resources are distributed within your team/organization between diverse women and men. Include both concrete and intangible resources: equipment, vehicles, information, training, travel, internal exposure, speaking-time, decision-making, etc.

### Physical needs and security

- **Biological realities and needs.** Do you have space for breastfeeding or pumping in the workplace and a changing table for babies? Do you have free menstrual health products and painkillers accessible in staff bathrooms? Do you have policies for health problems related to menstruation and menopause? In a recent survey, 88% of employees who had menopause felt it affected their work.<sup>168</sup> Talk to your human resources experts about adopting a menopause policy or conduct a survey on the impact of menopause on personnel.
- **Gender- and sex-based security and safety risks.** Make sure your organization has gender-responsive security and safety policies.<sup>169</sup> Simple measures include ensuring that security training, briefings, and other communications address specific security risks that female personnel may face; for example, sexual violence in certain locations and in specific situations.

**TIP:** Check out the [UN’s Guidelines for creating an enabling environment](#)—there is also a [field-specific version](#)—for more good tips on how to achieve gender parity in staffing (also available in Arabic and French). They also developed supplemental guidance focused on creating an enabling environment for LGBTQIA+ staff, persons with disabilities, geographic and cultural diversity, and people with care responsibilities.

#### LEADERS IN ACTION

#### IMPROVING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH DIALOGUE ON GENDER, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION AT ITC



Matthew Wilson, Chief of Special Projects and Diversity at the International Trade Centre (ITC), and Gender Consultant Hannah Reinl were keen to increase employee engagement with gender and inclusion topics and identify the root causes of inclusion fatigue. Over a two-month period, with the active support of the Deputy Executive Director, Dorothy Tembo, they implemented Hannah’s idea to create a direct feedback loop between leadership at all levels and ITC employees. As part of the “100 coffees for inclusion” process, 100 randomly selected ITC employees were matched with diversity and inclusion focal points and senior leaders for individual, 30-minute coffee conversations. The Deputy Executive Director was an active supporter of the initiative, sending a personal and much appreciated thank you letter to all participants.

Conversations were unplanned and generated many ideas that have since been actioned. For example, a platform was created to allow men to have a safe space to engage with, and discuss, questions on gender equality. It also led to the creation of a Racial and Geographic Diversity Focal Point and the development of clear goals on diversity and the inclusion of employees. This focus on dialogue around gender, diversity, and inclusion continues to be led by the Deputy Executive Director and current ITC Executive Director Pamela Coke-Hamilton.

## EXERCISE

### REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE



- Go through the tips above and identify two to three points where more needs to be done.
- Check in with your staff: what do they think? Do women and men have different input?
- What is within your power as a manager to do now? What institutional changes are needed? Set up a meeting with human resources and gender and diversity advisors to discuss solutions. Implement this and review how it worked out in practice.

## Action 5: Prevent sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment

Peace, security, development, and humanitarian sectors are riddled with case after case of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment by staff towards other staff members as well as toward women, girls and boys from the local or host community.

### SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is a common experience for women in the workplace. Female UN staff have been reporting sexual harassment and abuse by male staff for many years.<sup>170</sup> Racial minority women, lesbian and transwomen, disabled women, and gender non-conforming people face higher rates of sexual harassment, and men can also be victims.<sup>171</sup> In 2019 Deloitte surveyed over 30,000 UN personnel and the resulting ‘Safe Space Survey Report’ found that one in three reported experiencing at least one instance of sexual harassment in the last two years.<sup>172</sup> Respondents who categorized themselves as female, transgender, gender nonconforming, or other reported the highest prevalence rates (41.4%, 51.9%, 50.6%, and 50.0%, respectively).

Sexual harassment comes in different forms: verbal (remarks about figure/appearance, sexual jokes, verbal sexual advances), non-verbal (staring and whistling), and physical (unsolicited physical contact).<sup>173</sup> Researchers have found that organizations that are male-dominated, hierarchical, and where impunity reigns tend to have higher rates of sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse.<sup>174</sup> In contrast, studies show that when leaders take visible, consistent, and firm stands against sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence and discrimination—i.e., when they lead by example (see Skill 1) and communicate clearly and convincingly (See Skill 3)—it results in safer and more equal and inclusive environments.<sup>175</sup>

An essential part of creating gender equality in the workplace is to have routines and mechanisms in place to prevent and respond to sexual harassment, and to make sure these policies are known to all staff. Lack of knowledge of such mechanisms is pervasive. In one study, 75% of respondents either didn’t know, or weren’t certain whether there was an effective system in place to respond to sexual and abusive behaviour.<sup>176</sup> Even where knowledge does exist, and harassment is reported, you will need to be vigilant regarding the risk of retaliation against the person making the complaint. One study showed that in at least 75% of cases where sexual harassment is reported, retaliation took place. Retaliation can include demotion, being given less desirable tasks, being fired, or further harassment.<sup>177</sup>

## SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

In 2002, a report detailing the sexual abuse and exploitation of refugees by aid workers in West Africa triggered a major response across the international sector. Reports of sexual exploitation and abuse have also been made against UN peacekeeping forces, not least in the Central African Republic and in Haiti. In 2017 the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, pledged that the UN will put the rights and dignity of victims at the forefront of efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse. Training has been introduced on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, as has a learning package for UN partner organizations.<sup>178</sup>

In September 2022, a report named multiple international organizations whose staff had committed sexual abuse in the Malaka refugee camp in South Sudan over the years.<sup>179</sup> The question therefore remains: why, despite the ensuing introduction of additional training, safeguarding policies, and mechanisms after each scandal, do men, the vast majority of perpetrators, continue to sexually abuse and exploit women, girls, and boys? Analysis has revealed that abuse of power, diplomatic immunity, a culture of impunity, and the fact that redress mechanisms are led by people within the organizational hierarchy mean that victims/survivors have little to gain and much to lose by reporting what has happened to them. Furthermore, responses to incidents often focus more on reputational risk than on victim protection.

As a leader, you have an important role to play in advocating within your organization to ensure that appropriate prevention, protection, and redress systems are in place and are being used effectively. You also have the responsibility to proactively intervene and follow your organization's reporting procedures if information reaches you about potential cases of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment.<sup>180</sup> Below are key leadership actions:

- 1) **Ensure there is a comprehensive and clear code of conduct** that your staff understands and knows how to implement in daily situations.
- 2) **Communicate to everyone**—personnel, partners and beneficiaries—that you have a zero-tolerance for sexist attitudes, language, and behaviours, and will intervene whenever required (see Skill 1, Leading by Example).
- 3) **Build the capacity of all managers, including yourself**, to identify sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, and how to intervene promptly and effectively, including by having discussions directly with the perpetrator or with their manager.
- 4) **Establish victim-centred reporting and response mechanisms** that everyone, including partners and intended beneficiaries are aware of. This includes a whistleblowing policy that provides protection to victims at risk of retaliation and allows for anonymous reporting<sup>181</sup> alongside a clear plan for addressing inappropriate behaviours and a reporting procedure.
- 5) **Conduct recurring personnel surveys** that include questions related to sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse, and that track the impact of prevention efforts.
- 6) **Build an open feedback culture** where personnel, partners, and beneficiaries are encouraged to observe and report what is happening in the workplace and in their community. A culture of openness builds trust<sup>182</sup> and will help tackle the culture of silence that surrounds sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse, thus increasing the chances that personnel and beneficiaries will come to you with concerns.
- 7) **Have routines to prevent your organization from rehiring offenders** from within or outside of your organization.

Despite your best prevention efforts, there will be times when you need to intervene. Make sure you follow your organization's policies and routines. Building a strong relationship with your human resource department and your legal team will support you in ensuring that relevant policies are being appropriately implemented and that redress is available. It will also support you in developing and implementing new policies when required to address bias/stereotypes/gaps in existing provisions.

## EXERCISE

### REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE



- What would you say and do if one of your personnel tells you they have been sexually harassed? Do you know what the procedures are? If not, find out!
- How many of the above tips do you already have in place and what else do you need?
- How can you build your managerial skills to intervene when someone discloses sexual harassment or sexual exploitation and abuse to you? Find a trusted colleague and practice a fictive scenario together!

## Action 6: Ensure gender equality in your budgeting and procurement processes

Budgeting, procurement processes, and other resource management activities are often seen as objective and not directly relevant to gender equality. Yet all these activities can either contribute to increasing gender inequalities or to reducing them.

**Gender budgeting** means applying gender analysis (see Action 2: Ensure gender analysis) to your budgetary process to see how it affects diverse women and men differently and, where necessary, making reallocations to promote greater gender equality. This involves asking yourself and your management team the following questions:

- 1) **Situation:** In addition to the gender analysis described above, you need to also be explicit in asking how you allocate your budget. Who benefits from the expenditure? Women? Men? Girls? Boys? Which women/men/girls/boys?
- 2) **Impact:** What's the impact of your budget allocations on diverse women and men?
- 3) **Adjustments:** Do you need to make adjustments to ensure a more equal allocation of resources? To avoid perpetuating gender inequalities? To promote gender equality and women's rights across all activities?

## LEADERS IN ACTION

### SETTING RESOURCE ALLOCATION TARGETS FOR GENDER EQUALITY



The UN System Wide Action Plan 2.0 (UN SWAP 2.0) recommends setting financial benchmarks for resources dedicated to gender equality and women's rights. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has led by example and said that 15% of the UN's peacebuilding funds should specifically target gender equality and women's rights. In another example, a gender marker was introduced to the UN's COVID-19 Fund with a commitment to allocate at least 30% of the Fund to projects with gender equality as their principal objective. This saw a significant jump in funds allocated to programmes with gender equality as their principal objective. The EU Gender Action Plan III includes a target that by 2025, 85% of all new actions in external relationships will contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment.

**GENDER ANALYSIS OF PROJECT EXPENDITURE**

After a gender mainstreaming training, Floriane Hohenburg, then Head of the Human Rights Department of an international organization, and two colleagues commissioned a gender analysis of project level expenditure. They found that 73% of their budget went to projects that paid no attention to gender inequalities, 23% to ones that contained inadequate mention of gender inequalities, and only 4% to projects that demonstrated adequate gender mainstreaming. Floriane and her colleagues took prompt action and allocated funds for all staff to be trained on gender mainstreaming, and gender analysis tools were developed and used during project cycle management. A gender action plan was also developed by the three departments involved in the exercise.

**TIP:** See UN Women's [Financing for Gender Equality platform](#), [EIGE's toolkit for gender-responsive budgeting](#), the Commonwealth Secretariat's [Gender Makes Cents](#) or watch a film about [Morocco's Gender Responsive budgeting](#).

## BOX 18

**UNDERFUNDING GENDER EQUALITY REQUESTS IN AID ALLOCATIONS**

The 2021 Women and Peace and Security Report of the UN Secretary-General<sup>183</sup> cites studies that reveal consistent underfunding of funding requests related to gender equality. It cites a 2019 study by the International Rescue Committee and Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies (VOICE) that found that two-thirds of requests for gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention, and response in humanitarian emergencies went unfunded, and the actual allocated funding only amounted to 0.12% of the \$41.5 billion spent on humanitarian aid between 2016 and 2018. However, we know that gender-based violence, including sexual and domestic violence, escalates during humanitarian emergencies. Women's rights organizations are also significantly underfunded. By way of illustration, the report notes that in 2016, the total operating budget of 740 feminist civil society organizations worldwide was \$106 million, less than the cost of one F-35 fighter plane.

**Gender-responsive procurement** means applying gender analysis to your procurement procedures to reduce/eliminate gender inequalities in procurement processes. It can be a powerful way to advance gender equality and women's rights.<sup>184</sup>

Procurement practices, such as procuring consultants, security, drivers, cleaning services, technical equipment, etc., have been widely criticized for reproducing biases against women. For example, uniforms and personal protection equipment are often designed for men, and women are expected to make do with them despite this being a safety risk. For example, 85% of US women soldiers deployed to Afghanistan in 2012 were issued a small size of the standard outer tactical vest. Studies found that the vest, designed for the average male, restricted the women's movement, and even hampered shouldering a rifle. As a result, a version has been designed for the female body.<sup>185</sup>

It isn't only the quality of the procurement, but also the quantity and expenditure of the procurement that reproduces gender bias. For example, according to research, women-owned businesses globally "earn less than 1% of the money" that large corporations and governments spend on products and services.<sup>186</sup> Gender-responsive procurement can support gender equality and women's rights by implementing processes that endorse supplier diversity, both with regard to gender-responsive companies and women- and minority-owned businesses. You can also include specific provisions in tenders on gender equality, including requiring a code of conduct, sexual harassment reporting procedures, and a minimum number of female or male personnel.

#### LEADERS IN ACTION

#### GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROCUREMENT



As Deputy Head of Mission in an EU mission in the Middle East, Lena Larsson addressed gender biases in procurement systems to improve gender parity in security personnel. She worked with the senior security officer and the procurement team to re-write the specification to require that tenders included both female and male security guards. The exercise resulted in the first female guard with equal conditions of service to the male guards. This new guard challenged gender stereotypes, and in subsequent rounds, a second female guard was brought in. The experience shows that you can get what you ask for and Lena's recommendation is to set a minimum requirement, such as at least 30% female guards, to encourage procurement companies to make even more of an effort to hire female security guards.

#### CHECKLIST FOR GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROCUREMENT

- **Are your finance and procurement staff** integrating legal commitments to gender equality and women's rights in procedures, documents and activities to ensure that organizational resources benefit diverse groups of women and men fairly?
- **Does your procurement team have routines that increase supplier diversity and gender equality**, including gender-responsive companies and women owned/led businesses?
- **Do specifications in tender processes:**
  - a) Use language free of gender stereotypes?
  - b) Encourage women and other under-represented groups to apply?
  - c) Demonstrate commitment to gender equality and women's rights (e.g., equal pay, codes of conduct, sexual harassment procedure, etc.)?
  - d) Require a minimum number of female or male staff (such as 30%)?
- **Do goods procured respond to the different physical needs and sizes of female and male personnel**, such as uniforms, personal protection equipment and safety and health materials?

## LEADERS IN ACTION

### UNDERSTANDING AND REACTING TO BARRIERS OF GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROCUREMENT



Following their participation in the Folke Bernadotte Academy's gender-responsive leadership programme, Kilian Wahl, Deputy Head of the OSCE's Mission to Kosovo, began to implement gender-responsive procurement within the mission. The Finance and Procurement teams, led by Priscilla Mannis, Head of Finance and Administration, conducted a gender analysis of current procurement and found that the majority of suppliers were male-run businesses, including the ones who applied for tenders. A cross functional Mission team, which included the field offices' gender focal point, made a map to identify women-led businesses operating in the Kosovo region and reached out to these businesses to understand the barriers to their application and to advertise the fact that the OSCE was an equal opportunities procurer. As a result, women-led businesses have been engaged as suppliers including the provision of materials for one of the Mission's major campaigns: 16 Days of Activism in 2022.

## EXERCISE

### REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE



- Has a gender analysis been conducted of your budgets and procurement procedures?
- Are you clear about how expenditures will impact diverse women, men, girls, and boys?
- Do you have earmarked funds for targeted actions for women's rights?

## Action 7: Set performance objectives on gender equality and women's rights

### PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES FOR PERSONNEL

In Skill 2: Setting priorities and targets for gender equality and women's rights, we explored the important role of setting priorities and targets for gender equality and women's rights. The next step is for these priorities and targets to be cascaded down into the performance management system and translated to individual performance objectives<sup>187</sup> for yourself as a leader and for your team members. Many organizations have moved to mandatory performance objectives on gender equality and women's rights. In the European External Action Service (EEAS), OSCE, UN DPPA-DPO, and UNOPS, for example, it is obligatory for managers and staff to include a goal on gender equality in their annual work plan. Having a concrete performance objective on gender equality written into the formal performance management system will provide staff with clarity on what is expected of them, a standard procedure for follow-up, and increases motivation and accountability to succeed in implementation. This follows the saying that what isn't counted is unlikely to be done, thus "remaining outside of the circle of attention and care".<sup>188</sup>



## MANDATORY LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES ON GENDER EQUALITY IN THE EU



Within the European Commission, the Directorate General for International Partnerships included a performance objective on gender equality in the job description of all Heads of Units (both in headquarters and in the EU Delegations). The objective requires them “to promote gender equality and implementation of the Gender Action Plan III throughout the mandate: (i) leading by example both in the workplace and when directing implementation of the mandate; (ii) mainstreaming gender equality; (iii) consulting gender focal points, gender advisors, and experts; and (iv) motivating and holding staff to account in implementing gender equality policy commitments.” They have followed up with reminders and simple guidance.

Performance objectives can be set jointly with your team. Developing objectives jointly is likely to foster motivation. With a common understanding of the objectives, you will all be working in the same direction. Remember to set SMART performance objectives (see Box 11 on SMART Targets) that link directly to your gender equality priorities, targets, and organizational goals on gender equality. For instance, a collective workplace target could be *“After one year, 100% of all reports include intersectional gender analysis and are written in gender-responsive language”*. You and your staff then need to have performance objectives that contribute to these goals. E.g., your leadership performance objectives could be *“I have ensured that all reports are based on intersectional gender analysis and written in gender-responsive language”*, while the performance objective of your personnel could be *“I have written all my reports based on intersectional gender analysis and in gender-responsive language”*. In addition, to ensure conditions for success, you may want to complement these with one more performance objective for yourself: *“Ensure that 100% of staff responsible for drafting reports have received adequate training on intersectional gender analysis and gender-responsive language”*.

### BOX 19

#### CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

As a manager, it is your responsibility to ensure that your staff have the necessary conditions to succeed in implementing their gender equality performance objectives: understanding, time, capacity, resources, motivation, and effective accountability mechanisms. Talk to your staff to better understand which of these conditions are already in place and take action to enhance the rest:

- **Understanding:** do your personnel understand what is expected of them? Have you checked that everyone knows what they are supposed to do on gender equality and understand why this is important?
- **Capacity:** do your personnel have the required skills? Your personnel need to be able to do what you expect from them in terms of gender equality and women’s rights; for instance, be able to apply an intersectional gender analysis or use gender-responsive language. You can support them in different ways: formal training, guidance and checklists, mentoring, support from gender focal points, brown bag lunches with experts, etc.

- **Time:** do you provide the required time to achieve their performance objectives? Make sure your personnel have portfolios that allow them to meet their performance objectives on gender equality, and if not, reallocate or remove other tasks.
- **Resources:** do your personnel have sufficient resources to succeed in meeting their performance objectives? Are resources like additional funding, sufficient personnel, or material or logistical support needed?
- **Motivation:**<sup>189</sup> do your personnel have sufficient motivation to act on gender equality? If not, find out why not and what you can do to increase motivation.
- **Accountability:** how do you hold your staff to account on their performance objectives regarding gender equality? See Skill 5: Holding Self and Others to Account for more information.

Ensuring these conditions are in place will enable your personnel to meet their performance objectives on gender equality and women's rights. Not ensuring these are in place will be setting yourself and your team up to fail. This will lead to frustration, resistance, and potentially, to an unwillingness to try again.

#### PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES FOR PARTNERS, CONSULTANTS AND CONTRACTORS

When working with external partners, consultants, and contractors, you will also need to ensure that these partnerships include performance objectives that relate to their expected contributions to your organization's gender equality and women's rights goals.

For example:

- **Initiatives funded by your organization** should reflect your gender equality and women's rights priorities. Clear performance objectives should be included in collaboration documents. For example, you should require that all peace and security-related projects and programmes are designed based on intersectional gender analysis, that sex-disaggregated monitoring data is reported, and that outputs and outcomes regarding gender equality are evaluated.
- When negotiating **new partnerships**, you can also ask for X% of the budget to be spent on activities targeting women's rights, and that a partner works closely with women's organizations and strives for gender balance in both team and activities.
- Ensure that implementing **partners sign a clear code of conduct** with strong language to prevent sexual harassment, exploitation, abuse, and other forms of discrimination and abuses of power.

#### EXERCISE

##### REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE



- Do you and your staff have SMART performance objectives on gender equality and women's empowerment? Are they relevant and being followed up on? Do they need improvement?
- Review the conditions of success. Do you and your staff have all you need? What else do you need?

## Managing staff, resources, and activities: self-assessment



Now that we have come to the end of this section, think about what we have covered. What would you like to prioritize moving forward? What are you already doing?

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### 1) Work strategically with your gender equality experts

- What actions and steps are you currently taking?
- Which actions and steps will you prioritize moving forward? How will you implement these?
- What tips can you apply from the Handbook?

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### 2) Promote equal participation of diverse women in external activities

- What actions and steps are you currently taking?
- Which actions and steps will you prioritize moving forward? How will you implement these?
- What tips can you apply from the Handbook?

### 3) Promote equal participation of diverse women in external activities

- What actions and steps are you currently taking?
- Which actions and steps will you prioritize moving forward? How will you implement these?
- What tips can you apply from the Handbook?

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**4) Strive for gender parity and insist on equal opportunities in the workplace**

- What actions and steps are you currently taking?
- Which actions and steps will you prioritize moving forward? How will you implement these?
- What tips can you apply from the Handbook?

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**5) Prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment**

- What actions and steps are you currently taking?
- Which actions and steps will you prioritize moving forward? How will you implement these?
- What tips can you apply from the Handbook?

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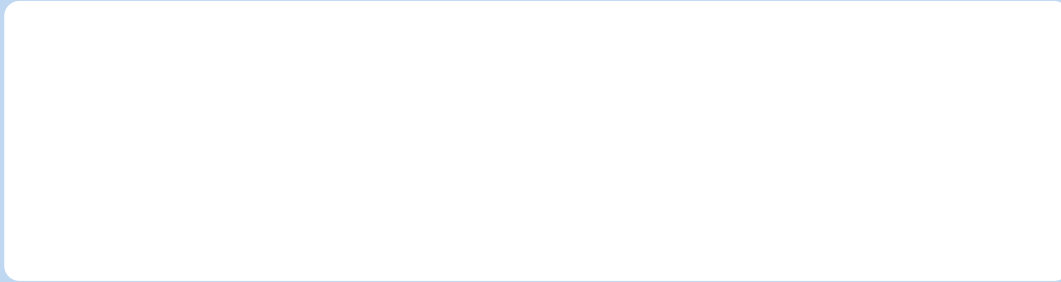
**6) Ensure gender equality in your budgeting and procurement processes**

- What actions and steps are you currently taking?
- Which actions and steps will you prioritize moving forward? How will you implement these?
- What tips can you apply from the Handbook?

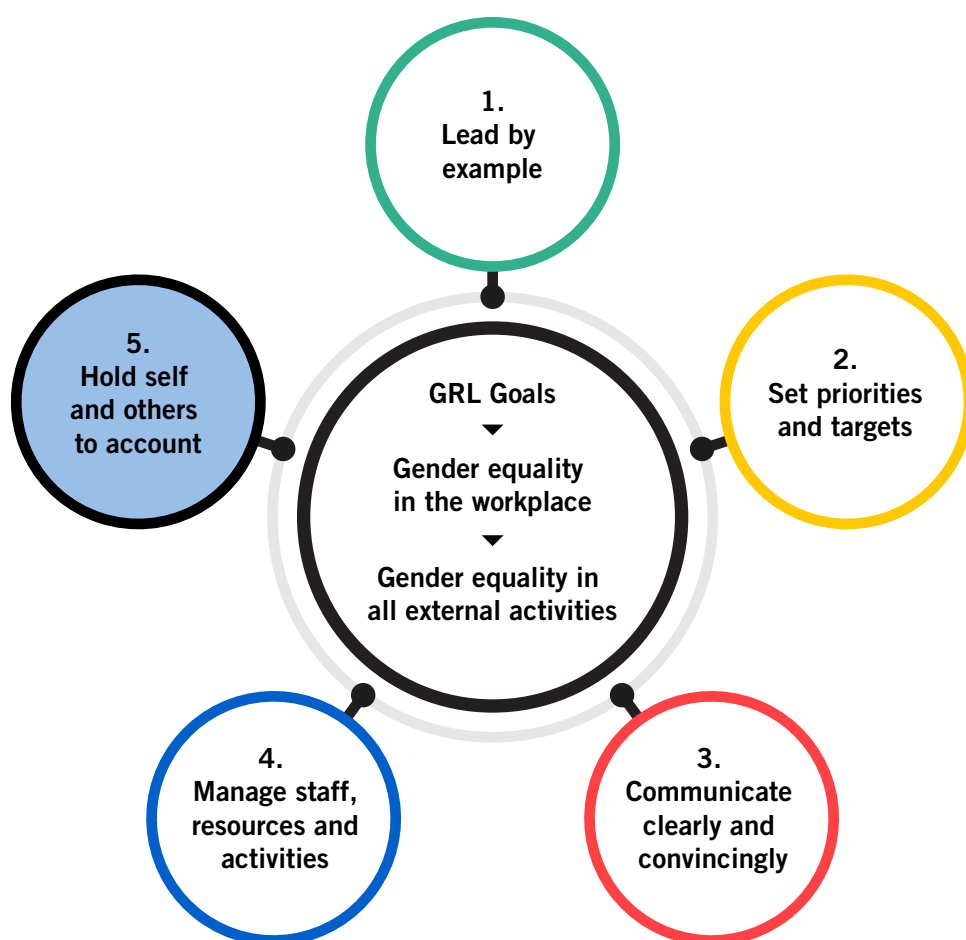
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**7) Set performance objectives on gender equality and women's rights**

- What actions and steps are you currently taking?
- Which actions and steps will you prioritize moving forward? How will you implement these?
- What tips can you apply from the Handbook?



# *Skill 5: Holding yourself and others to account*



**IN AN OPEN LETTER** from women in the aid sector to Senior Managers, CEOs, and Board Members of Humanitarian and Development Organizations, female staff asked for deeds not words. They asked for leaders to commit to action and resources to implement those actions. They asked for leaders to foster a culture where whistleblowing is welcome and safe; where sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse are no longer discussed in “hushed tones in our offices”; and where allegations are treated with priority and urgency.<sup>190</sup> Effectively, they were asking for accountability.

Accountability is possibly the most critical element in achieving your leadership priorities on gender equality. It is also the least developed action. After decades of gender action policies, action plans, and verbalized commitments, leadership accountability is still often missing from both individual leaders and from leadership teams.<sup>191</sup> According to the Landmark Workplace Accountability Study, 84% of the professionals surveyed highlighted leaders’ behaviour as the single most crucial factor influencing responsibility in their organizations.<sup>192</sup> Without accountability, your gender equality targets are unlikely to be achieved, and decades of gender equality policy evaporation will continue.

BOX 20

#### **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ‘ACCOUNTABILITY’ AND ‘RESPONSIBILITY’**

‘Accountability’ is the obligation to explain, justify, and take ownership for one’s actions. While responsibility refers to someone’s duty to carry out a task to completion, accountability generally refers to what happens after something has been completed. Accountability is therefore concerned with the results and consequences of the action, rather than with the initial duty to carry out the action. Everyone is responsible for gender equality in their work, but, as a leader, you are ultimately accountable for explaining, justifying, and taking responsibility for your and your team’s performance on gender equality and women’s rights.

In order to hold yourself, your personnel, and your organization to account, you and your staff need to know what you will be held to account for. This goes back to Setting Priorities and Targets; as a leader it is vital you know your organization’s mandate and policies on gender equality and, together with your staff, translate these into measurable performance targets on gender equality. Hold yourself accountable for putting required work practices into place and for achieving results.

There are two avenues for exercising this accountability on gender equality; formal accountability mechanisms and informal accountability measures. The two key leadership actions for improving accountability on gender equality and women’s rights are therefore:

- 1) **Use formal accountability mechanisms** to hold yourself and your staff to account for meeting performance targets for gender equality and women’s rights.
- 2) **Use informal accountability mechanisms** to hold yourself and your staff to account for meeting performance targets for gender equality and women’s rights.

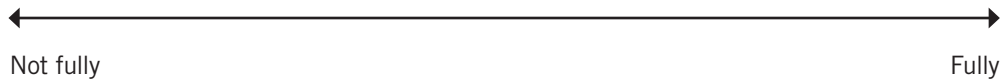
Both these actions will help you develop a strong accountability culture for gender equality and women’s rights. They will also support you in having the evidence that you need to scale up successful initiatives and to adapt or drop unsuccessful initiatives.

## EXERCISE

### PERSONAL REFLECTION EXERCISE



Would your staff state that you hold yourself and others accountable for meeting targets on gender equality and women's rights?



Use this chapter to improve your accountability skills and move the scale towards 'fully'. If you already fully hold yourself and others accountable for meeting targets on gender equality and women's rights, use this chapter to cross-check and further develop your skills!

## Action 1: Use formal accountability mechanisms

Your organization will have formal accountability mechanisms that you can use to hold yourself and others to account for meeting goals, targets, and performance objectives on gender equality and women's rights. However, these formal accountability mechanisms for gender equality are often not used effectively by leadership. Still, they offer valuable opportunities to take stock, request and review data and analyses, and document institutional and team learning to assess implementation. They also provide an opportunity to engage in conversations with your staff and superiors, and to take remedial action if necessary. Moreover, formal accountability mechanisms are essential for internal and external transparency. Use them to promote implementation, learning, and improvement.

Below are some formal accountability mechanisms for gender equality and women's rights that you can use:

- **Performance evaluation.** We have previously talked about setting performance objectives on gender equality and women's rights for your personnel (Skill 4). Accountability means that you follow up on this at each stage of the annual performance management cycle. Refer inappropriate staff conduct, poor performance, or other issues to the appropriate channels. You should also recognize strong performance. Public recognition is important for motivation as well as for sharing and learning from good practice. Some organizations offer team or individual awards or recognition, while others have linked gender equality and women's rights performance to performance pay.



**GENDER-BIASED PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS**

As with everything, unexamined gender biases will impact on your ability to use formal accountability mechanisms in a fair manner. Performance evaluations are often confidential and unstructured, which can be ripe territory for affinity and confirmation bias.<sup>193</sup> Studies have shown that men are given more and better (actionable and career-enhancing) feedback than women.<sup>194</sup> Written feedback is not immune either. One study has shown how men's and women's written performance reviews differ, with women 30%–45% more likely to receive vague non-actionable feedback, whereas men are more likely to receive detailed and technical feedback that would allow them to advance.

The study also showed that women are around 80%–90% more likely to receive feedback on their personality, with arguably gender-stereotypical use of words such as 'supportive', 'collaborative', and 'helpful' nearly twice as often as men. Women's reviews had more than twice the references to team accomplishments, rather than individual achievements. In contrast, men's reviews contained twice as many words related to assertiveness, independence, and self-confidence—words like 'drive', 'transform', 'innovate', and 'tackle'.<sup>195</sup>

Unfortunately, the situation worsens when we look at other forms of intersecting inequalities: one study in USA showed that "43% of people of colour and 31% of white women had at least one mistake mentioned in their evaluation, compared to 26% of white men."<sup>196</sup>

- **Internal monitoring and evaluation.** Most organizations have results-based management systems in place with specific analysis, planning, monitoring, and evaluation tools. Request that gender equality is mainstreamed into the entire system—standardize it by including it in templates and providing practical checklists. You can also request the use of a gender marker system (see Box 22) and include gender equality questions in your after-action review template.

An important, but often neglected, part of internal monitoring is to formalize follow-up of gender equality implementation on a managerial level. Engaging managers on different levels in formal discussions on data collection, reporting, problem-solving, and organization-wide information sharing and collaboration can strengthen accountability and implementation.

LEADERS IN ACTION

### SUPPORTING ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH UN-SWAP



As Director of the UN System Coordination Division at UN Women, Aparna Mehrotra worked with a senior consultant, Tony Beck, to develop and roll-out an accountability mechanism for the UN System-Wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. This mechanism, known as “UN SWAP”, lays down standards for expected results in the form of key indicators that all UN entities are mandated to report on annually. This accountability mechanism has been recognized by the Joint Inspection Unit in 2019 as a model for the UN system. As a result of UN-SWAP, executive leaders in the UN system are now not only clear about what they are accountable for, but are also able to measure their progress and identify areas for improvement. Entity heads receive an annual performance report from the UN SWAP Secretariat. Furthermore, according to the annual Secretary-General’s reports on SWAP performance, since the mechanism’s inception there has been quantifiable and significant improvement against gender mainstreaming indicators across the UN system.

- **External evaluations and audits.** These mechanisms can be used to hold yourself, your team, and your organization to account for delivering set priorities and targets. Gender equality implementation should be included in evaluations and audits. In addition, gender audits can be commissioned to set a baseline, update policy, and accelerate implementation.
- **Stakeholder feedback mechanisms.** These are mechanisms for soliciting feedback from those intended to benefit from your external activities—gather data from diverse women, men, girls, boys, and people who identify as non-binary. Remember to ask women’s rights organizations for feedback, even if they are not immediate beneficiaries.

LEADERS IN ACTION

### ACCOUNTABILITY TO VICTIMS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE



In 2017, the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, pledged that the UN would put the rights and dignity of victims at the forefront of efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse. One action was to appoint Jane Connors as the UN’s first Victims’ Rights Advocate to strengthen accountability to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. Jane Connors and her team have strengthened accountability to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by calling for victim assistance to be rapidly and sensitively delivered; for victims to be respected, heard and listened to; for their cases to be taken seriously; and for perpetrators to be appropriately sanctioned.

- **Peer review mechanisms.** This can involve partnering with another organization and, together, reviewing and learning from each other’s performance—include gender equality and/or focus the peer review specifically on women, peace and security, or gender parity.<sup>197</sup>
- **Reporting on work on gender equality and women’s rights** is a fundamental accountability mechanism for both your internal and external stakeholders. You may be required to identify, monitor, and report on both gaps and achievements in addressing gender inequality. Most organizations produce specific reports on gender mainstreaming implementation; women, peace and security; gender parity; and other gender-specific mandate implementation. Your team will most likely be asked to contribute to these reports and they should be ready to do so in a rigorous manner. For example, if you are within the UN system you might be asked to report on UN SWAP indicators. In the OSCE, the Secretary General presents an annual report on gender mainstreaming. These mechanisms require sex-disaggregated data and analysis and require different departments engage in reporting. Reporting on gender equality and women’s rights performance can be challenging as it requires attention to qualitative issues that can be harder to tease out. But remember: gender equality consists of both addressing practical needs and long-term societal and cultural shifts.

#### LEADERS IN ACTION

#### TRANSPARENT LEADERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY AT UNHCR



In 2005, Terry Morel, then Head of the Community Development, Gender Equality and Community Affairs section at the UNHCR, linked up with Erika Feller, then Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, to roll out the first UN system-wide accountability framework for “Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) Mainstreaming”. The framework included provisions for the senior leadership level, from the High Commissioner and the top leadership team to Country Representatives. Leslie Groves Williams was brought in to work with these senior leaders. This led to a series of specific “accountability actions” for leaders, as outlined in the AGD Accountability Framework. Each year, senior leaders reported on progress and would then develop a new set of actions for the subsequent year to ensure ongoing improvements. Reports were made public, and leaders therefore held themselves up to scrutiny by their staff, donors, partners, and persons of concern. This ensured an ongoing high level of ambition. Successes were celebrated and challenges were learned from. The process was ground-breaking and developed a leadership and organizational culture that was able to take the lead on issues of gender equality.

Reporting on achievements, gaps, and follow-up actions should be integrated into your standard reporting, be it your annual external performance report, reporting to individual donors, or internal monthly mandate implementation reports to headquarters. Clearly request that all reporting integrates information about diverse groups of women and men throughout as well as information on gender equality and women, and peace and security results.

Moreover, make use of your reports! Highlight good results and ensure the reports are read (not only by your gender expert/s) and discussed in relation to wider mandate implementation. If you have reported on performance gaps, you will want to take relevant follow up action. Taking relevant action will increase your credibility as a leader and

increase your impact. This is part of creating institutional memory and a learning culture where learning feeds into the next round of prioritization on gender equality and women's rights.

BOX 22

### GENDER MARKERS

Gender markers are a formal accountability mechanism on gender equality that are increasingly being used in international organizations. Gender markers are a self-assessment tool to measure the level of gender-responsiveness of an activity/project/programme and help your staff determine whether their work is:

- **Gender harmful/exploitative:** ignores realities and gender inequalities in the given context and may therefore perpetuate or worsen gender inequalities.
- **Gender accommodating/sensitive:** adapts to gender norms, working around existing gender differences and inequalities to ensure fair allocation of support.
- **Gender positive/transformational:** seeks to redefine gender roles and relations to promote equality and achieve programme objectives.<sup>198</sup> Fosters critical examination of inequalities, and transforms underlying social structures, policies, and norms that perpetuate inequalities.

**TIP:** To read more about different gender marker systems, see [OECD-DAC Gender Marker Handbook](#), [IASC Gender with Age Marker](#), and the [UN Gender Equality Marker](#). [UN Gender Equality Marker](#).

EXERCISE

### REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE



- What are the different formal accountability mechanisms that you can use to hold yourself and personnel to account for achieving gender equality commitments and priorities? Do you need to create additional ones?
- Which will you use to hold yourself to account for implementing your gender-responsive leadership priorities and targets?

## Action 2: Use informal accountability mechanisms

Formal accountability is key but needs to be complemented by day-to-day accountability measures. These are key in showing that you are serious about meeting your gender equality targets. As a leader, this can be as simple as asking your staff whether they have asked the gender advisor/expert for input or how they are planning on ensuring women's full and equal participation. Be clear about what you expect—send draft reports and budgets back unless they incorporate sex-disaggregated data, information on the situation of diverse women and men (gender analysis), or score well on your gender marker. Use these opportunities to problem-solve, identify the need for additional managerial support, foster informal and collective learning, and ultimately develop a culture of accountability on gender equality.

Below are examples of informal accountability measures that will help you hold yourself and your team to account on gender equality and women's rights.

- **Put in place measures for self-accountability.** The first step is to hold yourself to account. One way to do so is to develop your own short personal action plan for gender-responsive leadership with concrete actions you want to take during the year. Pin it next to you on the wall, check it regularly, and go through it with your gender advisor a few times a year. Other useful measures may include setting deadlines for yourself and asking your boss, colleagues, or staff to hold you to account; blocking off time in your calendar to focus on your gender-equality-related actions; and setting monthly meetings with your gender advisor. Link this to formal accountability mechanisms by making sure you have included your gender equality priorities and targets in your own performance management tool and ask your superior to request progress reports.
- **Check on gender analysis.** Most organizations have approved policies on gender mainstreaming, requiring staff to do a basic gender analysis of all their activities. Some leaders say this is prioritized, but very few check whether it is being done. If done at all, it tends to fall on the gender experts to perform this kind of quality assurance. This can be legitimate, but just as you check other aspects of your team's work, you should also check that their activities are based on gender analysis and consider women's full and equal participation. If not, you must ask that this be done (see Box 23: Common signs of inadequate gender analysis/gender mainstreaming).

#### BOX 23

#### COMMON SIGNS OF INADEQUATE GENDER ANALYSIS/GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Be on the lookout in policy, reports, communication, and documents for the following bad practices:

- Gender equality is mentioned as one of the very last points.  
**Action: move it forward.**
- Statistics and information are only given for women but similar information is not provided for men.  
**Action: request comparable data.**
- Women are stereotyped as victims and lumped together with children  
**Action: ask to see information on women as actors and men as victims and separate out analyses and information on women from that on children (girls and boys).**
- Generalizing statements about all women  
**Action: request data and information on diverse women.**
- Information on women and gender only included in the analysis section but not in activities, budgets or monitoring and evaluation frameworks.  
**Action: Request that gender equality is included throughout.**

- **Create opportunities for follow up and reflection.** Encourage staff to take responsibility for both the positive and negative consequences of their results. In one-on-one meetings with staff, ask how the work to meet their gender equality performance objectives is going and problem-solve together. Also, hold collective follow up sessions to reflect on how things are going regarding gender equality. Allow staff to ‘fail upward’.<sup>199</sup> This means allowing yourself and your team to share their mistakes so that you can all learn from them and move forward to enhanced success and impact.<sup>200</sup> You can jointly reflect on questions such as:
  - How are we doing in meeting our gender equality and women’s rights targets?
  - What is going well and why? How can we build on what is going well?  
How can we learn from each other?
  - What is going less well and why? How can we learn from our failure?  
How can we address our performance gaps? Who else might we need to work/network with to improve results? What else do we need to do/or what managerial support might be needed to succeed?
- **Giving and receiving unbiased feedback on gender equality performance:** Providing accurate, timely, and specific feedback that is free from gender biases is an important way to drive results and lead by example. Providing both reinforcing (positive) and redirecting (critical) feedback is a cornerstone of a feedback culture.<sup>201</sup> It builds trust, openness, and can improve your results. There is a strong correlation between frequent and skilfully delivered feedback and high levels of employee engagement, which correlates with the overall performance of the individual, the team, and the organization.<sup>202</sup>

BOX 24

**MASCULINE NORMS MAY MAKE IT HARDER FOR MEN TO ADMIT FAILURE**

As a leader seeking to promote a learning and accountability culture, you need to show that you are ready to admit your mistakes and learn from them. Masculine stereotypes and norms favour men who are a) successful, and who b) demonstrate individual over collective success. A study by Deloitte shows that this can lead to men placing enormous pressure on themselves to handle responsibilities alone and be afraid of failure. This can be counterproductive, as it leads to competitive behaviour that masks insecurities and prioritizes individualism over collectivism. This makes it challenging to develop an accountability culture where responsibilities, openness, and trust are more equally shared.

Research suggests that for feedback to be fully implemented in an organization, leaders need to be comfortable giving and receiving feedback themselves. Make it a habit to ask your team and/or trusted colleagues for feedback, both in terms of what you do well and what you need to improve regarding gender bias and gender equality. It is often easier for people to give you honest feedback if you are in a small group or one-on-one.

It takes courage to ask for redirecting feedback. Try to ensure you receive it well. Remember that knowing your weak points enables you to improve your leadership and performance. Make it a routine to share feedback after completion of key activities through an after-action review.

Box 25 below highlights three specific areas you need to consider as a gender-responsive leader.

BOX 25

### **GIVING AND RECEIVING UNBIASED FEEDBACK ON GENDER EQUALITY PERFORMANCE**

Ongoing feedback can reinforce existing strengths, keep goal-directed behaviour on course, clarify the effects of behaviour, and increase recipients' abilities to detect and remedy errors on their own. It also improves job satisfaction. When it comes to gender equality and feedback, we need to consider three things:

- 1) **Giving feedback on gender equality performance:** gender equality is an area where we all need to learn and improve in order to implement our mandate and create an inclusive work environment. Knowing how to give good feedback on gender equality performance is therefore essential.
- 2) **Giving unbiased feedback:** research has shown that feedback is easily influenced by gender biases—both in terms of how we give it and how we receive it. While both women and men give gender-biased feedback, the negative impacts of biased feedback play out most in how female staff members are able to develop and how the organization sees and values their contributions. It is therefore important to be aware of this, critically reflect on it, and try to give and receive feedback in an unbiased manner.
- 3) **Who we are receiving feedback from:** if we are truly to understand the impact of our work and whether we are reducing or perpetuating sex and gender-based discrimination, we will need to solicit feedback from our stakeholders and not just our colleagues. As a gender-responsive leader, you will be interested in building on and developing external feedback from the women, men, girls, and boys in whose name you work.

EXERCISE

#### **REFLECT AND ACT EXERCISE**



- Which of the above informal accountability measures do you already use? Which would you like to try out?
- Think about what makes you prioritize one task over others on your busy to-do list. Can you leverage both existing accountability measures and what you know works best for you in terms of prioritization to ensure that gender equality work also gets done?

## Holding yourself and others to account: self-assessment



Now that we have come to the end of this section, think about what we have covered. What would you like to prioritize moving forward? What are you already doing?

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### Action 1 and 2: Using formal and informal accountability measures

- What actions are you currently taking to hold yourself and staff to account on gender equality and women's rights? What formal accountability mechanisms are you using?  
What informal accountability mechanisms are you using?
- Which actions and steps will you prioritize moving forward? How will you implement these?
- What tips can you apply from the Handbook?

# *Final thoughts*

We hope that you have enjoyed working through this Handbook and that you are taking away with you:

- Stimulating reflections about your own work and that of your team and organization.
- New and impactful skills for leading for gender equality and women's rights.
- Motivation to create sustainable institutional change on gender equality for the benefit of all.

We know that the journey of the gender-responsive leader is not always a simple one. But it is both fulfilling and necessary. As you lead by example and take visible, concrete actions to address gender inequality, you raise the bar for your fellow leaders and leave a legacy of change for others to follow.



# Annex 1: Glossary

**Benevolent sexism** can be defined as “an affectionate but patronising attitude” that assumes all women are caring, communicative, fragile, and in need of the protection and assistance of men. Benevolent sexism is based on gender stereotypes, such as the woman as homemaker, provider of warmth and comfort, or as good multitaskers. It can manifest through ‘mansplaining’, whereby a man explains something to a woman assuming she does not understand something or has less experience/expertise. Benevolent sexism limits women’s roles and opportunities. For example, a woman is not given a field assignment in a conflict zone for ‘her own protection’. It might seem harmless, but it is damaging.

**Feminism/s** is a commitment to change the social, economic, and political position of women to ensure equality of the sexes, based on the thesis that women are subjugated because of their sex and gender roles.<sup>215</sup>

**Gender** is a social and cultural construction of what it means to be male and female in a given society or culture. It distinguishes differences in male and female behaviour and defines the roles and responsibilities accorded to them. It is learned behaviour—we are taught from the earliest ages in our families, through the media, and at school to behave in certain ways if we are boys and other ways if we are girls. These gender-based behaviours and roles change over time and vary between and within different cultural contexts. They also generate inequality. Gender is therefore also an analytical tool in seeing and understanding gender inequality.

Since gender includes prescriptions and expectations about the characteristics and likely behaviours of women and men (femininity and masculinity), people who do not comply with these societal expectations—including gay, lesbian, and transgender people, people who identify beyond the gender binary, and women/girls and men/boys who simply defy traditional gender roles—are likely to face bias and discrimination. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context, as are other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis including class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, sexual orientation, age, etc.<sup>204</sup>

**Gender bias** is an inclination toward, or prejudice against a gender, based on gender stereotypes. For example, one reason I may choose a man for a leadership role over an equally qualified woman is because I think men are natural leaders (positive gender bias) AND that women are not natural leaders (negative gender bias). Negative gender biases can also be called sexism.

**Gender-biased language** ranges from words linking one sex with certain characteristics (strong, aggressive, emotional, caring) and roles (chairman, policeman, guys, mankind, or cleaning lady) to words, phrases, jokes, and remarks that are explicitly sexist and discriminatory.

**Gender equality** is the equal distribution of resources and power between women and men resulting in equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities.<sup>205</sup> Gender equality implies that the interests, needs, and priorities of men and women are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men.<sup>206</sup>

**Gender identity** refers to the individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person’s biological sex. Gender identity may relate to the personal sense of the body and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech, and mannerisms.<sup>214</sup>

**Gender inequality** is the result of the unequal distribution of resources and power between women and men, resulting in men being routinely socially privileged or prioritized over women in terms of rights, responsibilities, and opportunities.

**Gender mainstreaming** means that a gender equality perspective is integrated into everyday work with the aim to ensure that whatever we do is done in a 'gender equal way'. Gender mainstreaming came out of the realisation that years of separate projects with an exclusive focus on women had been necessary and important, but insufficient. This is because everything that we do is likely to affect/benefit women and men differently, while specific projects for women's rights remain marginal in comparison. For example, mainstream government budgets account for over 99% of government expenditure and impact women and men directly and differentially, whereas gender equality targeted expenditure will account for under 1%. Mainstreaming a gender lens across all expenditure will therefore be far more impactful than only focusing on targeted actions

**Gender-neutral language**, such as 'chairperson', 'police officer', 'people', 'humankind', or 'cleaning staff' removes the link to sex.

**Gender-responsive language** is free from gender bias, includes gender-neutral language when relevant and makes gender inequality visible through naming and addressing discrimination and unequal access to rights of diverse women, men, boys, and girls.

**Gender stereotypes** are over-generalised and binary beliefs about women and men. For example, 'men are natural leaders', 'women are emotional', etc.

**Gender transformative** approaches seek to challenge gender inequality by transforming harmful gender norms, roles and relations, while working towards redistributing power, resources and services more equally.<sup>216</sup> They foster a critical examination of inequalities and aim to transform underlying social structures, policies and norms that perpetuate inequalities.

**Hostile sexism** is more openly misogynistic. It involves seeing women who act differently to traditional gender stereotypes in a negative light, judging those women as angry, hysterical, bitter, and manipulative or as seeking to control men. Women are viewed as incompetent and overly emotional, and gender equality is often framed as an attack on masculinity or traditional values. Men can also experience hostile sexism where they do not conform to stereotypes. For example, refusing to engage in violence or being seen as 'effeminate'. Sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment fall under hostile sexism.

**Internalised sexism** refers to the gender stereotypes and biases as well as sexist attitudes and behaviours that women direct to themselves or to other women. Women have been socialised in the same way as men, so they internalise the same norms. For instance, it can manifest in lower self-esteem in women as a result of their undervaluing their own competence based on negative gender stereotypes or imposter syndrome. Since internalized sexism differs from directly visible sexism, it often remains unnoticed and hinders effective fights against gender inequality.<sup>210</sup>

**Intersectionality** is an analytical tool. Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term, defines it as "a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other".<sup>207</sup>

**Privilege** refers to the advantages and preferential treatment that some people are afforded by virtue of belonging to a particular group<sup>208</sup>. For example, being heterosexual, male, and middle class will most likely open up opportunities that will not be available to those who are homosexual, female, and of the working class.

**Sex** refers to physical and biological characteristics such as reproductive functions and chromosomes. It is most often divided into the two categories of female and male. A proportion of the population is intersex.<sup>205</sup> Sex is a fundamental organizing principle of most, if not all, societies that determines people's needs, opportunities, and rights. People's biological characteristics can impact key elements of life experience and opportunities. For example, menstruation requires the availability of sanitary materials to be able to access schooling. Similarly, breastfeeding requires access to a private space to pump or breastfeed in the workplace. Male and female cancers require health systems based on sex-disaggregated research, scanning facilities, and treatment.

**Sexism** refers to the beliefs, behaviours, and institutional practices that support male privilege, contribute to the oppression of women and therefore protect existing gender inequality in society. It includes the beliefs that women are less intelligent, able, skillful, etc., than men, for example.<sup>209</sup> The example given above of negative gender bias is also an example of sexism.

**Sexual abuse** is the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. It should cover sexual assault (attempted rape, kissing/ touching, forcing someone to perform oral sex/touching) as well as rape. Under UN regulations, all sexual activity with someone under the age of 18 is sexual abuse.<sup>212</sup>

**Sexual exploitation** is any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes— it includes profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from sexual exploitation of another. Under UN regulations it includes transactional sex, solicitation of transactional sex, and exploitative relationship.<sup>211</sup>

**Sexual harassment** is a continuum of unacceptable and unwelcome behaviours and practices of a sexual nature that may include, but are not limited to, sexual suggestions or demands, requests for sexual favours and sexual, and verbal or physical conduct or gestures, that are or might reasonably be perceived as offensive or humiliating.<sup>213</sup>

**Targeted actions** for women's empowerment focus on a specific gender inequality problem that needs extra resources and strategies in order to be addressed. Targeted actions are implemented as a complement to gender mainstreaming.

# End notes

1. Practising these skills is essential to using the lessons learned from this handbook. A meta-evaluation of 40 years of research on diversity training shows that to have impact learning initiatives must be targeted to both awareness and skills development, and conducted over a significant period of time. See Bezrukova, Katerina, Chester Spell, Jamie Perry, and Karen Jehn. 2016. "A Meta-Analytical Integration of Over 40 Years of Research on Diversity Training Evaluation." *Psychological Bulletin* 142 (September). <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000067>. See also Nathoo, Zulekha. n.d. "Why Ineffective Diversity Training Won't Go Away." <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20210614-why-ineffective-diversity-training-wont-go-away>.
2. This Handbook recognizes that there are a plethora of leadership theories and that different leaders have different leadership training, different leadership styles, and different audiences. Some leaders may follow feminist leadership principles, others transformational or transactional leadership models, and others may prefer servant leadership or complexity leadership. We incorporate different elements from different models in order to define what 'good leadership' for gender equality and women's rights looks like in multilateral organizations. For an outline of some different leadership models, see Benmira, Sihame, and Moyosolu Agboola. 2021. "Evolution of Leadership Theory." *BMJ Leader* 5 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1136/leader-2020-000296>.
3. These multilateral organizations are based on a bureaucratic model. There are many arguments for overhauling these organizations completely. This Handbook, however, takes a 'nudge' approach to transformation.
4. <https://www.genderindex.org/>
5. UN Women. 2020 "From insights to action: Gender equality in the wake of COVID-19".
6. United Nations, 2023. 2023 Gender Social Norms Index (GSNI). Human Development Reports. United Nations.
7. Jones, Adam. 2004. *Gendercide and Genocide*. Vanderbilt University Press.
8. There are communities and societies and indeed nations who traditionally acknowledge multiple genders. For example, Samoa, India, South Africa, North American Navajo, Nepal, Indonesia, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.
9. Men and LGBTQIA+ groups are also vulnerable to male violence. Gender stereotypes and biases have led to men being subjected to man-on-man violence, including young men being more likely to experience forced military conscription and exposed to gender-selective mass killings. Men are also more likely to be perpetrators of crime and are overrepresented in criminal justice proceedings across the world. According to the 2022 UNODC Homicide Report, about 90% of all homicides recorded worldwide were perpetrated by men, and men make up almost 80% of all homicide victims recorded worldwide. Trans men, trans women, and non-binary people experience high rates of abuse from people they live with at home. One national survey of LGBTQIA+ people revealed that, over a 12-month period, trans respondents reported much higher rates of most incident types (48%) than cisgender respondents (26%). This included high rates of verbal harassment (27%), coercive or controlling behaviour (19%), physical harassment or violence (5%), and sexual harassment or violence (2%). Rates of experiencing an incident were high across subgroups, with 58% of trans men, 40% of trans women, and 47% of non-binary respondents reporting an incident.
10. "Facts and Figures: Ending Violence against Women." n.d. UN Women – Headquarters. Accessed March 8, 2022. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles-facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-ending-violence-against-women>.
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12. CBM. 2019. "Disability and Gender Analysis Toolkit," [https://www.cbm.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/CBM\\_disability\\_and\\_gender\\_analysis\\_toolkit\\_accessible.pdf](https://www.cbm.org/fileadmin/user_upload/CBM_disability_and_gender_analysis_toolkit_accessible.pdf)
13. Analysis of the 2017 National Crime Victimization Survey in the United States of America showed that the odds of violent victimization are five times higher for sexual and gender minority females than for non-sexual and gender minority males and two times higher for sexual and gender minority males than non-sexual and gender minority males. Flores, Andrew R., Lynn Langton, Ilan H. Meyer, and Adam P. Romero. 2020. "Victimization Rates and Traits of Sexual and Gender Minorities in the United States: Results from the National Crime Victimization Survey, 2017." *Science Advances* 6 (40): eaba6910. <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aba6910>.
14. UNHCR "Violence against refugee women surged in 2020, but grassroots solutions can help tackle scourge". UN News 25 November 2021
15. COFEM. Undated. "Reframing the Language of 'GBV' Away from Feminist Underpinnings." <https://cofemsocialchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Paper-2-Reframing-language-of-%E2%80%98GBV%E2%80%99-away-from-feminist-underpinnings.pdf>.
16. European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). "Gender-Based Violence Costs the EU €366 Billion a Year." <https://eige.europa.eu/news/gender-based-violence-costs-eu-eu366-billion-year>.
17. For example, women and girls are more likely to be poor and less likely to own land. See "Poverty Deepens for Women and Girls, According to Latest Projections." n.d. UN Women Data Hub. Accessed June 23, 2022 <https://data.unwomen.org/features/poverty-deepens-women-and-girls-according-latest-projections> and Green, Duncan. 2014. "Killer Factcheck: 'Women Own 2% of Land' = Not True. What Do We Really Know about Women and Land?" From Poverty to Power. March 21, 2014. <https://oxfamapps.org/fp2p/killer-factcheck-women-own-2-of-land-not-true-what-do-we-really-know-about-women-and-land/>.
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31. Gender at Work provides a holistic framework that addresses attention to the four main areas where change has to happen to sustain gender equality. These are: formal rules, individual consciousness and capabilities, resources, and informal discriminatory norms and deep structures. See Chapter 1, *Gender at Work: Theory and Practice for 21st Century Organizations* (Routledge, 2016)

32. Those who have transitioned from woman to man often recount how shocked they are at how their career is facilitated when they transition (no longer being interrupted, being given the benefit of the doubt), whereas those who have transitioned from man to woman are shocked at the negative impact this has on their careers (having to justify themselves constantly, having their ideas taken by men, etc.) For many examples, not just about gender but also about race, see Nordell, Jessica. 2021. *The End of Bias*. London: Granta.
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44. This study is cited in Nordell, Jessica. 2021. *The End of Bias*. London: Granta. Page 80. Unfortunately, it is not specified which minorities are being referenced.
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91. Within your own organization you may find that there are some engaging 'Insider–Outsider Strategies'. This is where women's rights advocates in institutions work with women's rights advocates outside institutions, with the outsiders pushing for change from the outside while the insiders advocate with formal channels. Eyben, Rosalind, and Laura Turquet, eds. 2013. *Feminists in Development Organisations: Change from the Margins*. Rugby: Practical Action Publishing.
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94. In situations that are ambiguous, where there is a group present, where there is a perceived lack of authority, lack of skill, lack of connection with the person experiencing sexism, or a perceived cost to intervene there is a high risk that we or our colleagues will not intervene: this is the bystander effect. See Sanderson, Catherine. 2020. *The Bystander Effect*. Harper Collins.
95. Gervais, Sarah J., and Amy L. Hillard. 2014. "Confronting Sexism as Persuasion: Effects of a Confrontation's Recipient, Source, Message, and Context." *Journal of Social Issues* 70 (4): 653–67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12084>. See also Nordell, Jessica. 2021. *The End of Bias*. London: Granta, who refers to the common phenomenon of women being disliked if they violate a gender stereotype and how this leads to a stereotype moving from being descriptive to prescriptive. The cost of violating this stereotype, of being seen as unpleasant or unlikeable, and the associated backlash when speaking out, for example, may be too high for some women. Nordell also highlights how Asian women in particular face more punishment for assertiveness than Black, Latina, or White women and how this can have a direct impact on promotion opportunities (page 81).
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# The Gender-Responsive Leader's Handbook

This Handbook is a practical guide for leaders and managers in peace, security, humanitarian, and development organizations who want to upskill to effectively lead progress on gender equality and women's rights within their given area of responsibility.





The Handbook is designed to be a go-to resource. Jump to the specific skill or action that you want to focus on today and try out one of the practical tips. Come back later and delve into another topic. Use the Handbook for support in daily problem-solving.

The Handbook includes one chapter on each of the five core gender-responsive leadership skills. In each chapter you will find:

- **Gender-responsive leadership actions:** guidance on what actions to take, including links to additional resources.
- **Real-life examples:** leaders share how they are taking action on gender equality.
- **Facts and figures:** summaries of up-to-date research.
- **Reflect and act exercises:** trigger your own thinking and use for discussion with your team.
- **Self-assessment:** identify which gender-responsive leadership actions you are already taking and which you want to prioritize going forward.

The Gender-Responsive Leader's Handbook is part of FBA's initiative on gender-responsive leadership. It is designed to be used alongside other FBA resources on gender-responsive leadership, including a Trainer's Manual, Participant Workbook, short films, and other capacity-building material. These can be found at [www.fba.se/grl](http://www.fba.se/grl)

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