WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Women and Global Development Forum Roundtable on Diversity, Inclusion, and Culture

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Gender equality is no longer peripheral, but integral, to corporate social responsibility at the world's leading organizations. And as people increasingly realize the need to advocate for, and be inclusive of, marginalized populations more broadly, diversity and inclusion have become common buzzwords motivating new programs and policies. There is compelling evidence that diversity and inclusion (D&I) help generate "better strategy, better risk management, better debates, [and] better outcomes."[1] As a result, schools, corporations, and intergovernmental organizations alike have created programs and policies under the banner of diversity and inclusion, but progress is slow and these programs often fail.[2]

Despite increased attention to D&I programs, what diversity and inclusion mean, as well as what metrics best evaluate the effectiveness of diversity and inclusion policies, often remain unclear. This makes it difficult to create and implement transformative policies. It also makes it challenging to translate goals across local and global levels at a time when stakeholders are concerned more than ever before with supporting women, LGBTQIA* people, people of color, and other marginalized populations. Organizations need specific concepts and strategies to successfully foster diverse and inclusive spaces that nurture innovative thinking, technology, and policies.

Recognizing the critical importance of addressing D&I across sectors, a group of leaders—including lawyers, corporate executives, editors, engineers, members of the military, and development experts—gathered in a private roundtable at the Chicago

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[1] Juliet Bourke and Bernadette Dillon, "The diversity and inclusion revolution: Eight powerful truths," *Review, Issue 22,* 22 January 2018.

[2] Stefanie K. Johnson, "What 11 CEOs Have Learned about Championing Diversity," *Harvard Business Review,* 29 August 2017.

Council on Global Affairs' 2018 Global Health and Development Symposium. A summary of the roundtable's guiding questions, key discussion points, as well as conclusions and participants' forward-looking recommendations, follow.

Guiding Questions

1. How do you define and measure diversity? Inclusion? How do you understand the two to be relevant to employees? Consumers? Populations in developing countries? How has social media played a role, for better or worse, in shaping your organization's diversity and inclusion programs?
2. There is ample evidence that programmatic and compliance-oriented approaches to addressing workplace inequalities are ineffective. What has your organization done to cultivate *cultural* change to make the environment more diverse and inclusive? How have you accounted for myriad, and potentially competing, cultural norms across your organization? What did you learn from these efforts?
3. What practices have you seen, or been a part of, that best mitigate the emotional labor/non-promotable work burden that women often bear? Based on your experiences, what else could be done to help distribute labor more fairly?
4. How can your experiences related to diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts translate to those who work in different fields? What can you take away from people's experiences in other industries?
5. What cross-sector partnerships have you built that embrace ideas of diversity and inclusion? How have they been (in)effective? What partnerships do you think would be fruitful to build going forward?

Key Discussion Points

Defining Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) in Practice

Definitions of diversity vary by organization, depending on the industry and the stakeholders involved. Diversity can be understood as the mix of characteristics/identities individuals are born with and/or acquired throughout life, or more even more broadly as human variability. Participants noted that in the contemporary socio-political context, diversity is often simplified, being understood primarily in terms of one axis of identity[3]: gender. This simplification makes it easier to determine and assess metrics related to diversity, but it ultimately results in institutions and policies failing to represent and address the broad population.

This is not to say that addressing gender diversity is unimportant. Examples of policies that have contributed to better gender representation include girls' rights groups that work to hire people who have backgrounds and world views comparable to the

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[3] For more on axes of identity, see: Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics." *U. Chi. Legal Forum* (1989): pp. 139-67; Cho, Sumi, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall. "Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis." Signs 38.4 (2013): pp.785-810.

students with whom they work. This thoughtful hiring ensures the organization reflects continually on who participates in the organization's decision-making and how more people can be included in these processes. Another example is development organizations' efforts to have services offered along the Turkish/Syria border primarily run by women who approximately represent the populations they are supporting. These policies cultivate more inclusive environments insofar as they help people feel acknowledged, represented, and comfortable sharing their experiences and needs.

Metrics and D&I

Conventional D&I metrics are not always helpful. Organizations have been adjusting metrics and talking about D&I for three decades, and there is still much more to be done. Strategists who work with established companies to build D&I initiatives suggested that the metrics that show how D&I increases value, speaking directly to shareholders and investors, are the most persuasive and impactful. Other participants advocated for eliminating quantitative metrics entirely, explaining that counting is particularly inadequate because it depends on the assignment of individuals' traits and consequential prioritizing of categories. In counting, individuals are not allowed to share and determine their own identities, meaning that counting ultimately subjects individuals to institutional and social powers that restrict their expressions.

Cultural Change and D&I

Culture is the main site at which to address issues of diversity and inclusion. Although cultural change may seem daunting, multiple participants noted that it is easier to effect in the context of a specific organization than it is to address in society broadly. And, in fact, many argued that making cultural changes within organizations can ultimately have a broader impact, encouraging more general social shifts. Strong leadership and communication are key as an organization adjusts to, and communicates, change. Several participants noted that social change within an organization begins with the leader and upper management, which often means that leaders must take a stance and act to commit to meaningful change to cultivate a more vibrant and diverse workspace.

The first step in cultivating cultural change is to define what the current culture is, which can be challenging. Climate surveys can help identify the culture and values of organizations, as can extensive conversations with employees about their experiences. Through such efforts, it is possible to determine implicit and explicit workplace norms and traditions, assess their implications, and examine how in/exclusive they are. In addition to making policy changes, organizations must be transparent about survey results, even if the findings are uncomfortable. Based on feedback from climate surveys and stakeholders' responses to these results, companies can then adjust accordingly.

For instance, through climate surveys, companies have found that early staff meetings are often difficult for individuals with young children. Similarly, only hosting networking events in the evening hours marginalizes employees with limited availability after work. Individuals who are late to, or unable to attend meetings regularly, or unable to network at evening events, can experience notable difficulties along the promotional path. An effective way of shifting these norms would be to hold meetings later in the morning and to host networking coffees mid-afternoon.

After climate surveys, it is important to continue to monitor the effectiveness of changes implemented. Some companies, for example, monitor retention rates to assess effectiveness. It is also important to collect feedback from longer term employees there pre-change, as well as those introduced post-change, to have a broader and more inclusive perspective on institutional culture.

Conclusions and Forward-Looking Recommendations

All organizations, for-profit and non-profit alike, are increasingly concerned with D&I. But these programs have yet to have a significant impact, despite decades of working on these issues.[4] To ensure that D&I policies effect meaningful change, organizations must understand diversity beyond gender, reconsider metrics to assess D&I, focus on cultural change, and encourage storytelling among stakeholders. Organizations that address these areas effectively will transform diversity and inclusion from buzzwords to key values that inform everything they do, yielding increased innovation and improved financial performance.

The roundtable concluded with the following forward-looking recommendations:

1) Organizations need to **address diversity specifically as intersectional** going forward. They must pay attention to multiple and intersecting axes of identity (gender, race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, etc.).

2) Organizations need to work to **address diversity even before hiring, especially through implementing programs to encourage a more diverse applicant pool**. For example, STEM fields tend to have less diversity among staff— organizations in STEM could work to make more diverse and inclusive environments by developing and supporting programs that peak interest among groups that are underrepresented historically. Cultivating this interest early on can enhance/diversify the hiring pool.

3) Cultural change is key, and organizations need **to focus on cultivating meaningful cultural shifts by using climate surveys**. Leaders need to take a stand to make these changes happen. Unilever is great example of an organization whose leadership cultivated cultural change. Unilever committed the corporation to zero-carbon practices, and beyond requiring headquarters to meet these standards, Polman mandated that the entire Unilever supply chain make the same commitment. Organizations could make and require similar commitments regarding D&I efforts.

4) Organizations can, have, and should **find creative ways to nurture environments of open storytelling**. Creating space for difficult conversations and collectively creating guidelines for such conversations is essential. One

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[4] Stefanie K. Johnson, "What 11 CEOs Have Learned about Championing Diversity," *Harvard Business Review,* 29 August 2017.

participant recommended that HR processes could adjust to focus on individuals' stories rather than quantitative demographic information.