

INCLUSION AND EQUITY: HOLDING THE MIRROR UP TO OURSELVES

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GENDER AT WORK

INTRODUCTION

Civil society organisations (CSOs) around the world are seen as playing a pivotal role in spotlighting inequities and systemic disadvantage on the basis of multiple and intersecting dimensions, in addressing discrimination in policies and access to services, and in building the awareness and capacities of people to claim their rights, both in public spheres such as law courts, markets and schools, and in private institutions such as households. CSOs are seen as flexible and adaptive to new ideas and learning, important actors in holding power holders to account and effective advocates. Feminist mobilisation in civil society, for example, according to an oft cited global survey of 70 countries, was found to be the most important factor in achieving policy change regarding violence against women, which has now become seen as a global pandemic destroying lives everywhere.¹ Yet passionately fighting for human rights on the outside does not necessarily mean that these same organisations practise inclusion and equity on the inside.

The jarring fact is that when we look inside CSOs, ranging from trade unions, to national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), we often see the same exclusions and inequities play out, in the way CSOs are structured, the way decisions are made and resources are allocated, and the ways in which silences around abuses of power are maintained and harassment against women is condoned.

While known widely to civil society insiders, this is a not a picture that is often made public. A rare exception occurred in 2015 in India, when a 29 year-old female research analyst with the Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) accused its Nobel Prize winning head and chair of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Rajendra Pachauri, of sexual harassment, a charge held up by an internal investigation.² Despite ample evidence also collected by the Delhi police of stalking, sexual harassment and criminal intimidation, the board of TERI removed him from his post as Director General only to appoint him as the think tank's executive vice-chairman. This case, which was splashed all over the Indian news media, garnered heavy criticism from external and internal observers for the way it was handled and its brazen impropriety. Ultimately, while proven guilty, the high profile harasser still holds his position of influence.³ The way in which sexual harassment against women in organisations is

1 'The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975-2005', Mala Htun and S Laurel Weldon, *American Political Science Review*, vol. 106, no. 3, August 2012, pp. 548-469, <http://bit.ly/1TdOsYd>.

2 See for example 'Rajendra Pachauri', *The Guardian*, updated May 2016, <http://bit.ly/201ooOX>.

3 At the time of writing, he has been on leave since February 2016, but has still not been removed from his post. See 'RK Pachauri Goes On Leave, Won't Attend TERI University Convocation', *The Huffington Post*, 11 February 2016, <http://huff.to/1NwD5bR>.

overlooked is a little like the ‘boys will be boys’ explanation for widespread sexual violence in times of war and conflict: it is so widespread and normalised. And it is usually the woman who complains who is ridiculed and told to shut up, and who loses her job.

Sexual harassment is an especially pernicious manifestation of a culture of domination. There are many others. We are now more aware that such cultures operate not only out there in families and communities, but also inside formal systems and organisations, including CSOs, many of which are mandated to address inequity and inclusion. What do we see when we hold the mirror up to ourselves? What are the implications of inequitable structures, gender power dynamics and discriminatory cultures within CSOs for women and men inside the organisation? How does this affect their ability to challenge and change marginality, inequality and exclusion successfully, in the communities they work in? This contribution to the 2016 CIVICUS State of Civil Society Report discusses these questions and draws on recent data from India to make the case that to change systems of power that hold inequality in place, relationships between people, institutions and organisations have to shift. This needs to happen both inside and outside organisations to promote social justice and gender equality.

BARRIERS WITHIN CIVIL SOCIETY

Despite the calls frequently made by CSOs for transparency by governments and corporations, when it comes to ourselves, we can be quite non-transparent. Unlike corporations, which are heavily surveyed on issues of gender breakdowns in leadership positions, adherence with labour laws and voluntary social and environmental standards, there is little data on the make-up and performance of CSOs, particularly those in the global south. For instance, the role that the ‘glass ceiling’ plays in civil society has not been scrutinised in comparison to studies conducted on the subject in governments and corporates.⁴ There is an underlying assumption that since the sector propagates values such as human rights and well-being, non-discrimination and affirmative action measures are inherently part of the system.⁵ Moreover, civil society has been viewed traditionally as providing women with professional and paid roles.⁶

The little data that exists tells us that women constitute a significant portion of the labour force in CSOs. For example, a 2015 survey of 328 CSOs carried out in India by Dasra, a philanthropic foundation, suggests that women constitute close to 53 per cent of CSO employees. However, their proportion drops dramatically when it comes to managerial positions, in which women make up only 34 per cent. In CSOs led by women this representation jumps to 75 per cent, but in CSOs led by men, it falls to a mere 15 per cent.⁷ The survey found that as CSOs become larger, “the chances that they will be led by a man double.” This data is congruent with Guide Star’s 2015 Nonprofit Compensation Report, which surveyed over 1,000 CSOs globally: the share of women CEOs is 43 per cent among CSOs, with inequality rising in number and compensation the larger and wealthier the

4 ‘Glass ceiling’ refers to transparent but real barriers, based on discriminatory attitudes or organisational bias, that impede or prevent qualified individuals from advancing into management positions, including, but not limited to, women, racial and ethnic minorities, and disabled persons. See ‘The nonprofit sector and gender discrimination’, Margaret Gibelman, *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2000, pp. 251-269.

5 Ibid.

6 ‘Nonprofit management practices and work processes to promote gender diversity’, Sharon H Mastracci and Cedric Herring, *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2010, pp. 155-175.

7 ‘Even in the non-profit sector, women are getting left behind’, Live Mint, 18 March 2016, <http://bit.ly/201qw9c>.

organisation.⁸ In comparison, women constitute 11 per cent of CEOs in the largest 250 Indian companies and 12 per cent of Brazil's largest companies.⁹ While CSOs outperform corporations, we would expect to see a much higher figure if CSOs are to be effective advocates for women in leadership. In 2014, the World Economic Forum predicted that this global gender gap will close only in 2095, which is not impressive for CSOs that are supposedly leading the fight against inequality.

In her 2014 in-depth study of gender discrimination and sexual harassment in four CSOs in India, Martha Farrell points out that, although CSOs are generally compliant with legal requirements, such as providing necessary facilities for women in the workplace, and paying attention to working hours and maternity leave, and the safety and security concerns of their staff, she concludes that, "CSO workplaces are generally patriarchal institutions, established on the premise that men are the dominant part of the workforce."¹⁰ CSO women leaders agree that the biggest barrier to women's advancement in these organisations is not external challenges but internal belief systems. Pheareak Ly, a former garment worker who is now a leader of an international CSO in Cambodia, says that "...women face so many social norms and gender stereotypes," and that this has to be taken into account when promoting women.¹¹ Similarly, Barbara Stockton, the former executive director of Oxfam GB, says that the uneven playing field is the biggest challenge that women face in reaching leadership.¹² The challenge is in what Gender at Work refers to as the "deep structure" of organisations.

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THE DEEP STRUCTURE AND ENTRENCHED DISCRIMINATION

Gender at Work has developed an analytical framework that elucidates aspects of this deep structure.¹³ Our approach is based on an analysis of the role of social institutions, both formal and informal, in maintaining and reproducing women's unequal position in society. An organisation working to bring about gender equality must address changes in four interrelated domains, as depicted in Figure 1 below. In the Gender at Work Framework, the top two quadrants are individual. On the right are changes in measurable individual conditions, such as increased resources, space and time to address gender issues. On the left are individual consciousness and capability, including knowledge, skills, political consciousness and commitment to change towards equality. The bottom two clusters are systemic. The cluster on the right refers to formal rules as laid down in policies and accountability mechanisms. The cluster on the left is the set of informal norms and practices, including those that maintain inequality in everyday practices. Of course, this analysis is deeply contextual.

8 'Nonprofit Compensation Report', GuideStar, 15th edition, September 2015, <http://bit.ly/1Xixyau>.

9 'Are women in the West being left behind on leadership?', The Guardian, 23 October 2013, <http://bit.ly/25aBU9I>.

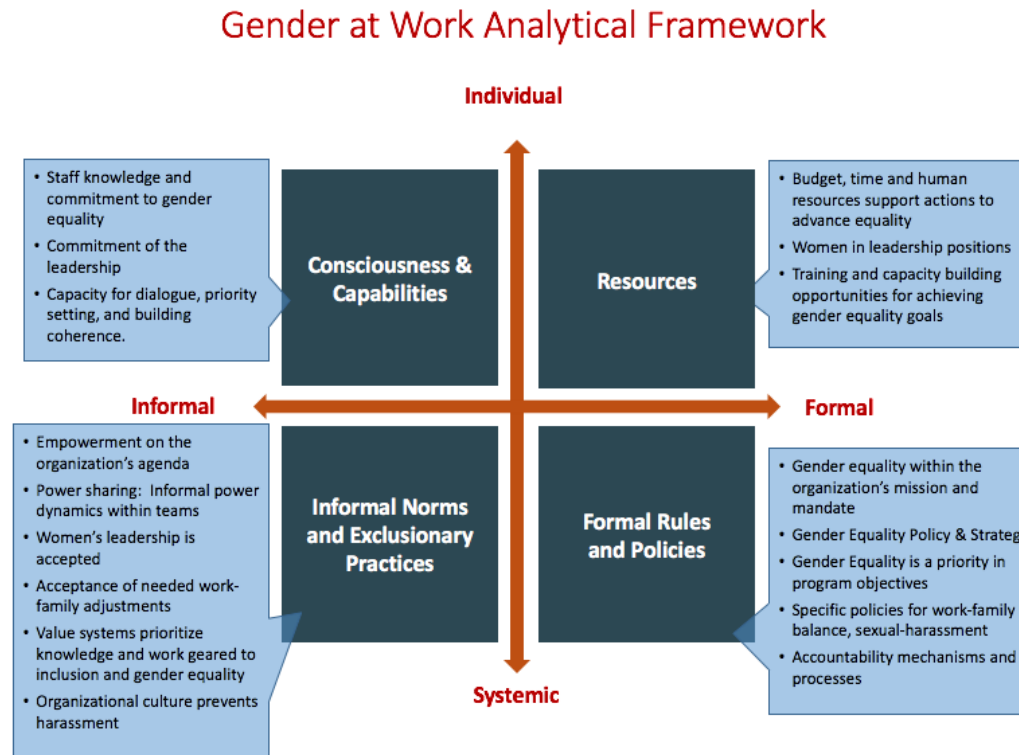
10 'Gender Discrimination and Prevention of Sexual Harassment in Organisations', Martha Farrell, Uppal Publishing House, 2014.

11 'Women in leadership: 'It's not going to work the way we're doing it'', The Guardian, 1 August 2013, <http://bit.ly/1gChJSy>.

12 Ibid.

13 'Is there Life After Mainstreaming?', Aruna Rao and David Kelleher, in 'Mainstreaming Gender in Development: a Critical Review', Oxfam, 2005, <http://bit.ly/1TVixpG>.

Figure 1. Gender at Work Analytical Framework



Change in one domain is related to change in the others, and in order for an organisation to be an effective agent of change in one or more of the above domains it must have certain capabilities and cultural attributes that have both individual and systemic and formal and informal dimensions. Our initial work on the framework was to understand gender inequality and the power relationships between women and men in communities, and we have also used the framework to analyse and strategise for change in gender relations within organisations.

More recently, in 'Gender at Work: Theory and Practice for 21st Century Organizations', the "deep structure" of organisations is examined further, based on Gender at Work's work over the past 15 years with more than 100 organisations, including small community based organisations, large bilateral and multilateral organisations, international NGOs, trade unions, government programmes, private philanthropic foundations and the private sector.¹⁴ The authors believe that while discriminatory social norms and deep structures of inequality manifest in different ways in different settings, they share five common qualities:

¹⁴ 'Gender at Work: Theory and Practice for 21st Century Organizations', Aruna Rao, Joanne Sandler, David Kelleher and Carol Miller, Routledge, 2016.

Gender power hierarchies are the “sticky stuff” that constrain gender equality everywhere in the world.

1. They are often invisible, so ‘normal’ and taken for granted by organisational insiders, that they are unquestioned. For example, in many organisations, working long hours is viewed as a sign of commitment and is often necessary for promotion. But this often unstated requirement is difficult for women to fulfil, as they are still disproportionately responsible for home and child care. A recent survey carried out in India by Gender at Work on gender equality issues in the workplace found that this dual work burden of women was cited as the greatest challenge facing women in organisations.¹⁵ Unsurprisingly, new figures compiled by the World Economic Forum on the gender chore gap, which measures the difference between the amount of housework done by women and men, show that India ranks at the bottom in terms of how many minutes men spend on housework each day.¹⁶
2. They are layered and mutually reinforcing. Hierarchical power, for example, is so deeply entrenched in organisations that it reinforces discriminatory norms. Women and men “...continue to be slotted into stereotypical gender roles on the assumption that women may be unable to perform in the workplace due to their responsibilities as mothers and wives,” which not only “...impedes the growth of their careers, but also lessens the extent to which diversity is embraced by organisations.”¹⁷
3. They are constantly being reproduced in every conversation, every process and every decision. Power works in a way to produce and reproduce discriminatory norms and structure unequal gender power relations. This is what Fiona Mackay calls the “daily enactment of institutions.”¹⁸
4. They are highly resilient and often come back in new forms to quash what seemed like a victory. For example, just as we become more aware of sexual harassment in organisations, we are faced with cyber bullying.
5. They are both unchanging and can change. Gender power hierarchies are the “sticky stuff”¹⁹ that constrain gender equality everywhere in the world, yet Gender at Work’s experience of working with many organisations around the world suggests that change can happen in organisations, big and small, to challenge and change social norms and values that perpetuate exclusion and inequality, through action learning processes, political strategising, reframing and the tireless work of feminist change agents inside and outside organisations.

CSOs have made some progress but face a long road ahead.²⁰ In India, with the universalisation of maternity benefits, and growing awareness and implementation of measures against sexual harassment in the workplace, steps are being taken towards creating a more gender equal workplace. Currently, many CSOs appear to be focusing on issues of equal opportunity, diversity, inclusion and representation at various levels. They are making attempts to broaden the roles that women play in the workplace and give women opportunities to move up the ladder. Some organisations have adopted affirmative action

15 ‘Gender Equality Issues in the Workplace’, Sudarsana Kundu and Swaha Ramnath, Gender at Work India, unpublished paper, 2016.

16 ‘Global Gender Chore Gap Report 2014’, World Economic Forum, 2014.

17 Sudarsana Kundu and Swaha Ramnath, op. cit., page 3.

18 ‘Towards a Feminist Institutionalism’, Fiona Mackay, in Mona Lena Krook and Fiona Mackay, ‘Gender Politics and Institutions’, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

19 ‘World Development Report 2012, Gender Equality and Development’, World Bank, 2012.

20 This section draws heavily on Sudarsana Kundu and Swaha Ramnath, op. cit.

policies: ActionAid, for example, actively hires women and gives them a 10 per cent weightage when they apply for promotions. Similarly, Amnesty International India makes a conscious effort to reach out to all genders and has hired people of different genders.

LEADERSHIP AND PRACTICE GAPS

Women leaders are important role models; feminist leaders are even better. But as the data reviewed earlier shows, women are missing when it comes to the leadership of CSOs. While there are several initiatives that are focused on building women's leaderships in various arenas, including in local governance, politics, the private sector and even within the police, there are very few initiatives for women leaders in the CSO space. A 2014 Gender at Work study, which surveyed 75 rural CSOs run by women in India, found that "...the investment in building women-led local institutions is under resourced and the required support for them in leadership and institutional development is mostly non-existent."²¹ Moreover, mentorship programmes are still rare in civil society, although they abound in the corporate sector around the world. In India, only 23 per cent of organisations surveyed had a mentorship programme for women. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that, while capacity building for women's leadership is important to advance inclusion and equity, there is a need to go beyond such initiatives and address the "deep structures" of an organisation. To achieve a culture that embraces diversity and inclusion requires a multi-year transformation, which necessitates a multi-pronged approach.

Gender at Work's experience over the years has shown that it is crucial to create opportunities and space for reflection in order to advance gender equity and inclusion among CSOs. As one CSO participant from one of our workshops noted, "The space for interactions with my peers and discussions that help further my conceptual knowledge is extremely valuable. This space has allowed us an opportunity for experiential learning, which has motivated me to push my organisation to include people from the lowest castes among our staff." And yet this space has been steadily shrinking, with donors increasingly willing to only fund project activities.

The culture of having a work-life balance has not seeped in deep enough. This finding is common elsewhere. Care work or unpaid work, as many analysts, particularly Diane Elson, have pointed out, is a deeply devalued and unchallenged responsibility that women carry for the care of children and older people; this is the case in most places of the world.²² The care economy subsidises capitalist production and perpetuates "...the corporate practice, on national and global levels, of claiming non-responsibility for the reproduction of human life and the reproduction of the natural environment."²³ At the Gender and Economic Policy Discussion Forum, held in September 2015 in New Delhi, Kalyani Menon-Sen pointed out that despite technologically progressive aspects of working, such as telecommuting, there is very little uptake on work-life policies. If there are negative implications associated with taking up such provisions, and where they are not universally supported, they are unlikely to work. In large CSOs surveyed in Gender at Work India's study, a number of women reported that they had decided to resign from their jobs, despite the presence of work-life balance policies, as they continued to be unable to balance

21 Dipta Bhog and Malini Ghose, Gender at Work India, unpublished paper, 2015.

22 'The Economic, the Political and the Domestic: Business, States and Households in the Organization of Production', Diane Elson, New Political Economy, vol. 3, no. 2, 2005, pp. 189-208.

23 'Gendered Institutions: From Sex Roles to Gendered Institutions', Joan Acker, Contemporary Sociology, vol. 21, no. 5, 2003, pp. 565-69

commitments to their organisations and families. This is a serious issue that CSOs have to address. India's female labour force participation rate is well below the global average of about 50 per cent, and in contrast to most other regions has been declining since 2004.²⁴

THE NEED TO MONITOR

An important finding of the Gender at Work India survey is that there are insufficient mechanisms and processes to monitor the impact of gender equality initiatives within an organisation. Little data is available at the organisational level and there is very little accountability on these issues. Who is holding CSOs' feet to the fire when it comes to gender equality and inclusion? Gender audits are useful, but they are few and far between, and tend to be one-off events. And certainly, shifts in organisational culture and transformations in power relations are difficult to detect, because both are complex, multi-dimensional, dynamic and context specific. From recent discussions with other gender activists and organisational development practitioners, it is clear that others are struggling with this challenge as well. Yet these practitioners also express the conviction that the more effective measurement of progress and results can help to identify leverage points, bring to the surface hidden mechanisms of change and inform more strategic decisions. To become more successful, we both need to improve our monitoring and learning practices.

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Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems that are built around the assessment of linear longitudinal change in individual programmatic indicators, such as the number of women receiving a particular set of services, poorly serve strategies that seek to address underlying structures and patterns of interaction between individuals, organisations, institutions and governing bodies. Oversimplified measurement approaches and indicators that are interpreted from a distance, with no real understanding of context, can result in incorrect conclusions about an organisation's effectiveness. As a result, traditional, non-participatory M&E processes can create pressure on practitioners to stick to and measure activities and outcomes that are no longer relevant. Additionally, traditional M&E approaches rarely provide practitioners with actionable feedback in a timely way so that they can learn and adapt as they go.

We believe that a far more useful approach would be a participatory and flexible index, based on the Gender at Work Analytical Framework, which would enable organisations to measure and visualise changes in the four quadrants, in both organisational effectiveness and gender equality outcomes, and to examine connections. While a comparison of the snapshots produced by the indexing tool would be an important way to track and communicate progress internally and to funders, the process of collecting the data and of collective interpretation and reflection would be an equally or even more important part of the tool. The Gender at Work Analytical Framework is already in use by several organisations for programme design, monitoring and learning. However, it has not yet been developed into an evaluative tool that users can revisit on regular basis to measure progress over time and facilitate dialogue about organisational effectiveness and gender equality outcomes.

Some key principles should inform the design of the indexing tool. It should be designed so that practitioners, such as an organisation's staff and key stakeholders, can collect data for all or most of the indicators comprising the index at a minimal

²⁴ 'Women Workers in India: Why So Few Among So Many?', Sonali Das, Sonali Jain-Chandra, Kalpana Kochhar and Naresh Kumar, International Monetary Fund Working Paper, March 2015, <http://bit.ly/1HWJIN8>.

cost. Because organisations have different capacities and levels of resources for data collection, the tool should offer tiers of indicators, based on the four quadrants, so that an organisation can choose how much depth and detail it needs, with appropriate guidance and cautions about the relationship between methodological rigour, triangulation and the level of certainty one can reach about the validity of conclusions. Organisations should be able to ‘start small’ with their use of the index and scale up to increase the number of indicators that inform their snapshot as they discover where they need to deepen their understanding of what is changing. For example, organisations could choose to further deepen their analysis along other categories, such as minorities, ethnicities, socio-economic status and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) status.

Organisations using the index may be anxious about how funders and other external stakeholders will interpret the results, make conclusions about an organisation’s effectiveness, or make inappropriate comparisons between organisations working in different contexts. But just as CIVICUS’ indexes have enabled participants within an organisation to discuss organisational health, and then to share that discussion more broadly amongst civil society as a whole, the gender equality index could guide users to do the same, as well as consider how best to report the findings of the indexing process to outside audiences in order to minimise the misinterpretation of results.

CONCLUSION

We started this contribution to the 2016 CIVICUS State of Civil Society Report bemoaning the lack of data and transparency on gender equality issues within CSOs and ended with ideas on how to address this problem. We fully recognise that structural inequalities are deeply entrenched and resilient, but we believe they are not immutable. Many organisations have built pathways to chip away at those entrenched structures and challenge the norms that perpetuate them. Making the picture we are working with more transparent is a first step in this direction.

Shifts in power dynamics can be made, but like most social change dynamics, they are not fixed. For example, BRAC, a large development CSO, today faces some of the same contradictions and inequities around gender equality that it faced in the early 1990s, because the race for expansion has trumped the need for quality oversight, and the hard slog of airing and re-airing gender inequities within the organisation and its deep structure have fallen by the wayside with shifts in people, priorities and the attention of its leadership. The rise of individual women leaders that we see now in many organisations is a welcome change, but individual stories of triumph over patriarchal cultures don’t change the culture for everyone; they simply show that in given circumstances, for a mix of reasons, individuals can rise above the quagmire. ‘Leaning in’ as Cheryl Sandberg exhorts, is not enough; we need to transform cultures and systems that discriminate, to support women, men and all genders.