



INTERNATIONAL  
**RESCUE**  
COMMITTEE

# DIVERSITY, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

PROGRESS REPORT 2021 | JUNE 2021

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# Diversity, Equality and Inclusion at IRC

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) is a key component of IRC's strategy and vision, and has been identified as a core global priority for our new strategic plan, Strategy100, that will guide our work as we approach the 100th anniversary of IRC's founding in 1933. Over the past year, the IRC has made significant investments in DEI, and taken concrete actions to deliver on our DEI commitments. More remains to be done, but the IRC is committed to reporting on our progress towards our overarching DEI Vision and the pillars articulated below that underpin this vision.

## VISION

**At the IRC, our diverse clients, partners, and staff have the power, voice, and agency to shape programs and operations. Within the IRC, we actively work to end all forms of systemic discrimination and foster an inclusive working environment where everyone feels respected, heard, valued, and supported. Our programs seek to reduce disparities in outcomes which are driven by systemic inequality.**

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**Client centered  
Intersectionality  
Decoloniality  
Accountability  
Engagement**

### DEI Structures

- **Developed staff-led Diversity, Equality and Inclusion priorities** to be incorporated in IRC's Gender Equality Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) Action Plan.
- **Launched IRC DEI Unit** and currently recruiting Chief Gender, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer.
- **Launched the DEI Council of the International Rescue Committee** to provide diverse constituencies of IRC colleagues a meaningful opportunity to deliberate the best ways to address the issues they believe require the attention of IRC leadership, in order to make IRC more diverse, equitable and inclusive.

### Goal 1: "Who We Are"

- **Committed to leadership diversity goals** related to gender identity, race/ethnicity and nationality, including that 50% of our global and regional senior leaders identify as races/ethnicities under-represented in global power structures.
- **Improved recruitment practices** to attract more diverse talent and hired a recruiter to focus on interns, early career, and diversity efforts.
- **Audited HR policies and practices (including pay practices) and developed a global DEI demographic all-employee survey** (to be launched by September).
- **Launched self-identification campaign** in Workday to include race/ethnicity, citizenship, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability status.

### Goal 2: "What We Do"

- **Reiterated our commitment to channeling 25% of our funding to local and national responders (by 2024) and made new commitments**, such as increasing our resources to local partners by half in 2021 (compared to 2020) and continuing to build partnerships with local actors, half of whom will be women-led/focused.
- **Set an ambitious target** that each IRC office identify local civil society organization with whom to prioritize building long term strategic relationship. This will amount to at least 150 organizations.
- **Piloting client engagement models** across ~60% of our Resettlement, Asylum and Integration (RAI) offices including but not limited to participatory design, client advisory bodies, focus groups, and office panels.
- **Embedded GEDI in the IRC's program quality standards** and committed to documenting plans for including GEDI in Country Program work with clients and partners as part of their strategic planning processes.

### Goal 3: "What We Say and How We Engage"

- **Began closing gaps in access to information** by increasing investment in translation resources internally including live-translation resources for critical announcements.
- **Created internal RescueNet page dedicated to "Equality"** for global staff updates and links to Employee Resource Groups.
- **Strengthened our messaging and imagery guidelines** to ensure our narratives and imagery depict people with dignity and agency. To-date, 28 trainings have been completed for 364 staff and consultants, with more scheduled in the coming weeks.

# Detailed Appendix

## PROGRESS ON DEI ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

The IRC Leadership Board allocated the highest discretionary investment budget for FY21 to items related to DEI. About half of this investment was allocated directly to office and country programs. Another significant portion was allocated to hiring an internal, experienced DEI Interim Lead, Cica Dadjo and a team of nine experienced and highly-skilled IRC staff chosen from across the IRC regions and teams to form an IRC DEI Interim Team. The team gathered information using insights from:

- Over 110 listening sessions across the organization with more than 2000 participants
- 90 key informant interviews
- Eight Regional Dialogues where feedback was collected from staff, including frontline staff
- Internal IRC documents
- Statements/reports from peer organizations.
- ERG and DEI Council reconsiderations, GARD network demands, and DLG commitment

The interim DEI team then proposed a series of recommendations based on the findings of their six month long research and learning phase. These recommendations were widely disseminated across the organization, in the format of learning reports, and feedback was received from hundreds of colleagues to inform the priorities using participatory approaches. This formed the basis for defining a DEI strategy document, including staff-led DEI goals and objectives.

In addition to setting up the DEI Team and developing the DEI Strategy document, the IRC has also set up the DEI Council of the International Rescue Committee. The Council is an important forum for focal points from across the organization to come together to identify shared issues of concern. The Council will provide diverse constituencies of IRC colleagues a meaningful opportunity to deliberate the best ways to address the issues they believe require the attention of IRC leadership, in order to make IRC more diverse, equitable and inclusive.

Finally, the IRC has committed to developing a permanent Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) Unit, which will finalize and drive progress on an organization-wide GEDI Action Plan, currently in development. On March 26, we posted the Chief GEDI officer role and began a highly inclusive hiring process, which will include sharing the blind resume files and blind written assignments with a group of diverse volunteers representing Crisis Response, Recovery, & Development staff, Resettlement, Asylum, & Integration staff, the DEI Council, and headquarters staff. The IRC Board of Directors has also begun creation of a new "People Committee," to be chaired by Mona K. Sutphen.

Below, please find the IRC's progress toward achieving the DEI Strategy's three goals and corresponding objectives.

## **PROGRESS AGAINST GOAL 1: "WHO WE ARE"**

*Diversity is important to the IRC, as is evident in the communities we serve and the people who are dedicated to this service. The IRC commits to have an inclusive organizational culture where diversity will be championed and represented at all leadership levels. We will have zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment, bullying, and retaliation in any form.*

### **Objective 1.1: The IRC has a compensation and benefits program that ensures the entire workforce is categorized and compensated equitably.**

- **The IRC has launched a policy and practices equity review, as well as an international/national pay practices review.** The review will be finalized this fiscal year. Implementation will begin next fiscal year. The resulting recommendations will inform specific IRC policy and practice changes that need to happen in the coming years to fulfill our objective to ensure all staff are treated and compensated equitably. In the interim, the IRC launched Standard Operating Procedures on terms and conditions for staff hired by HQ units to be based in countries where we have full country programs, where those staff are nationals of that country. This is intended to establish a consistent approach to minimize inequity in compensation for these roles, but still remain internationally competitive.
- **The IRC aggregated all existing DEI-related HR policies into a new Anti-Discrimination policy and updated the Standards and Guidelines.** This includes the Health and Safety for IRC Worksites and Living Quarters policy to ensure all IRC employees receive support in promoting work/life balance, health, hygiene, and well-being for themselves as individuals and for their team environment. This may include the provision of benefits and allowances, as well as appropriate facilities for the safety and wellbeing of employees while they are at work or accommodated in an IRC facility, irrespective of the workplace location and length of employment.
- **The Resettlement, Asylum and Integration (RAI) US organization launched the Pathways to Careers in RAI Scholarship Opportunity, as a new resource to diversify and enhance the talent pipeline, specifically targeting RAI-US internships.** The scholarship's main objective is to promote career paths in humanitarian work for BIPOC and/or immigrant populations and further our commitment to a diverse and inclusive internship experience. After receiving 35 applications from RAI-US interns, eight interns have been selected to receive a \$5,000 scholarship.

**Objective 1.2: The IRC has diverse leadership that reflects the places we work and people we serve and key roles in all our departments are based closer to the regions where we work.**

▪ **The IRC has committed to the following leadership diversity goals by the end of FY26:**

- Global and regional senior leaders: We aspire for 50% of our leaders to identify as Black, Indigenous, or Native Peoples, Hispanic/Latinx, Middle Eastern, or North African, or Asian/Pacific Islander. We also aspire for at least 30% of these leaders to come from countries in our CRRD regions.
- Senior leaders in CRRD country programs: We aspire for the clear majority to be from the country or community they serve (60% to 80%). We recognize the expertise that international staff bring—we will aspire for the clear majority of our international staff (75%) to be from countries in our CRRD regions.
- Senior leaders in our RAI offices: We aspire for at least 30% to identify as Black, Indigenous or Native Peoples, Hispanic/Latinx, Middle Eastern or North African, or Asian/Pacific Islander.
- In all leadership groups, we want to reach or maintain 50% who identify as women, both for the group as a whole and within the targeted nationalities or races/ethnicities.
- Next steps to achieve these goals include setting subgoals, improving recruitment and talent management, and fostering inclusive leadership practices.

▪ **The IRC has committed to improving our recruiting strategy to meet our leadership diversity goals.**

The IRC has

- Developed diversity recruitment guidelines, signed contracts with diversity job boards and invested in additional tools to enable recruiters to proactively source more diverse candidates. Hired a full-time recruiter to focus on interns, early career and diversity efforts.
- Edited our job description templates to make degree requirements flexible and added requirements that language skills such as English, French, Arabic, and Spanish are bona fide requirements for the role.
- Initiated the expansion of on-campus sourcing efforts, in the US, with an eye towards diversity recruiting—particularly at City University of New York (CUNY), and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

▪ **The IRC updated the Permanent Resident (Green Card) Sponsorship Policy.**

In order to expand our hiring scope worldwide, and build talented, diverse, high-performing teams, the IRC has updated the policy ending the employee cost sharing requirement for applications and instead the IRC will pay in full and require employee repayment only if they leave the organization in less than two years.

- **The IRC worked with an external specialist to undertake a comprehensive talent management review to assess strengths and gaps in our training and coaching programs and make improvements.** As a result, the IRC has developed a plan to invest in our high-potential staff who share identities that are under-represented in senior leadership levels. This includes completing a pilot “Talent Dialogues” initiative aimed at creating professional development opportunities for identified staff and continuing to regionalize the country program Regional VP role.

***Objective 1.3: IRC leadership and management take responsibility for creating an inclusive organizational culture in which every staff member feels safe, respected, valued, supported, and encouraged to bring their full authentic selves to work.***

- **The IRC launched voluntary listening sessions to ensure our DEI work was grounded in real staff concerns, ideas and experiences.** This included: several Leadership Board and Senior Leadership Group listening sessions, language-specific leadership sessions in Spanish, French and Arabic and RAI-office and Country-specific listening sessions. The IRC provided leaders with a listening session toolkit, translated into French, Arabic and Spanish to enable leaders to host these sessions as effectively as possible, and identified a roster of internal staff who could either support leaders to conduct listening sessions or do it in their place, as needed.
- **The IRC's program departments created additional formal pathways for two-way communications with leaders on DEI topics.** IRC's Resettlement, Asylum and Integration (RAI) departments established DEI focal points to lead on departmental DEI efforts, connect with offices and act as two-way communication and sounding boards for staff and leaders. Members of IRC's Crisis Response, Recovery & Development departments formed a Diverse Leaders Group to support senior leaders in discussions on DEI needs and priorities. Offices are encouraged and supported in executing context-relevant initiatives that nurture a culture of service to clients. For example, the RAI office in Boise created a Humanitarian in Racial Justice Series where, on a monthly basis, colleagues can study systemic racism, history, and the lived experiences of new arrivals to the U.S. Each region in CRRD have formed a regional DEI task force chaired by the RVP leading on DEI discussion and identification of regional priorities. Many HQ unit departments have formed their DEI working group and action plan including External Relations and Technical Excellence teams.
- **The IRC has invested in DEI Learning and Leadership Standards.** The IRC has established Leadership Standards, which recently underwent an external audit, resulting in a change from "Creating a Collaborative Environment" to "Creating an Inclusive Environment". The IRC continues to expand its library of DEI learning content and encourage groups to support context-relevant DEI trainings and discussion groups. To date, 100 staff have completed Equality in the Workplace training, and 72 staff have completed or enrolled in the eCornell DEI Certificate program. IRC-wide content will be developed in late FY21 and into FY22 regarding how to create and foster an inclusive environment. IRC created a translated, online DEI module and a Manager's Toolkit containing materials, information and scenarios that can be adapted to local context and situations.
- **The IRC has made significant investment in developing an IRC-wide Employee Demographic Survey.** The survey will help us to better understand the diversity of our global employees and provide valuable insights into how employees feel about inclusion and engagement across the organization. The data will help inform our priorities to improve diversity, equality, and inclusion in different contexts. It will help us to plan for the implementation of our GEDI Action Plan, and can be used by leaders around the world to support local DEI efforts with their teams.

## PROGRESS AGAINST GOAL 2: “WHAT WE DO”

*At the IRC, our program design and delivery approach maximize power for the communities we serve through effective collaboration with clients, partners, and staff. We strive for equal outcomes for diverse populations by using our deep understanding of local power imbalances to ensure equitable access to services.*

### **Objective 2.1: Building on our GE tools, IRC mainstreams DEI in our program design and delivery tools, processes, and accountability mechanisms.**

- **The IRC is drafting a Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) Conceptual Framework to mainstream DEI in program design and delivery.** The Framework will soon undergo an inclusive workshop process to ensure that we are setting clear expectations for programs to embed GEDI in programming. The IRC has committed to developing GEDI markers that are intended to ensure that programs are designed with the intent to be transformative. We will also work closely with the Governance Unit to ensure that our context analysis tools adopt an intersectional lens.
- **The IRC has invested in new DEI programmatic tools.** To grow the influence and decision-making of clients in program design and delivery, strategy, and development, RAI has invested in piloting a spectrum of client engagement models across ~60% of our offices including but not limited to participatory design, client advisory bodies, focus groups, and office panels.
- **The IRC’s program departments have committed to including concrete DEI action in their Strategy Action Plans (SAP) and program quality standards that govern program delivery.** SAPs are required to make commitments on how they will further Gender Equality and DEI in their Country Program across client, programming, partner and workforce goals. The IRC’s new program quality standards includes specific guidance and tools on pursuing inclusive programs and transforming gender and other systemic inequalities.

### **Objective 2.2: The IRC’s program design is rooted in rigorous intersectional context analysis by engaging clients, partners, and staff to drive decision-making about the type of programming we do.**

- **The IRC reiterated our commitment to channeling 25% of our funding to local and national responders (by 2024) and made new commitments, such as increasing our resources to local partners by half in 2021 (compared to 2020) and continuing to build partnerships with local actors, half of whom will be women-led/focused.** Additionally, the IRC has launched an Equality Review of our Partnership Guidelines and Handbook (PEERS) and has identified an external consultant to lead this work.
- **The IRC has included in our IRC S100 implementation plans to ensure that our context analysis tools have an intersectional lens.**

## PROGRESS AGAINST GOAL 3: “WHAT WE SAY AND HOW WE ENGAGE”

*We aspire to build an organizational culture that encourages open and honest conversations by ensuring all staff have equal access to internal communications. Our external communications will illustrate the resilience of the diverse people we serve, ensuring that IRC’s client, staff, and partner voices and experiences inform the organization’s priorities.*

### **Objective 3.1: Staff at the IRC have equal access to information, and our internal communication is inclusive and reflective of diverse languages, contexts, lived experiences, and voices.**

- **The IRC “began closing significant gaps in access to information.** We have increased investment in translation resources internally, translating IRC-wide communications and investing in live-translation resources for critical announcements.
- **The IRC created internal resources to update staff on DEI progress.** This includes:
  - **RescueNet page dedicated to “Equality” for global staff updates.** This page includes the latest news and updates, links to Employee Resource Groups and external resources.
  - **“IRC Equality –Inbox” designed for all global colleagues to share questions, comments, suggestions, ideas and advice** as we take short, medium, and long-term actions on the state of equality at the IRC.
  - **Global Questions & Comments document** collected over the last year has been posted and answered on our RescueNet Equality page. All comments and questions have been posted as submitted, unedited.
  - **Monthly DEI Digest** launched and five Digests developed to date.

### **Objective 3.2: The IRC’s external communications reflect our DEI vision and commitment to promoting and ensuring the resilience and lived experiences of the diverse people we work with are accurately illustrated while preserving their dignity and agency.**

- **The IRC strengthened our brand guidelines around the use of imagery and language as it portrays our clients.** The Brand team continues to roll-out training for External Relations teams on messaging and imagery guidelines to ensure our narratives and imagery depict people with dignity and agency. To-date, 28 trainings have been completed for 364 staff and consultants, with more scheduled in the coming weeks.
- **Closely partnering with Refugee Voices on upcoming external campaigns (e.g., IRC’s World Refugee Day campaign)** to ensure that we are accurately representing the stories and the experiences of refugees.



**Objective 3.3: The IRC's external engagement (Communications, Marketing, Fundraising, and Advocacy) decision-making and prioritization processes center the needs of our clients, staff, and partners.**

- **The IRC has published articles, op-eds, and papers that center on DEI and the needs of our clients, staff, and partners. Some examples include:**
  - Our commitment to local partnerships featured in IRC's paper on the Grand Bargain, which calls for a more equitable distribution of power with our clients and local actors.
  - The IRC submitted a response to the House of Commons' International Development Committee inquiry into: 'The philosophy and culture of aid: racism in the aid sector'. The submission builds on various internal policies and strategies on diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI), and incorporates feedback from IRC's staff-led Black Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) Network.
  - With support from the IRC, Wale Osofisan published an op-ed in the *Council on Foreign Relations* on power-sharing.
  - The IRC has reinforced our commitment to DEI by externally publishing a number of articles related to DEI on our rescue.org website including **The story of Bayard Rustin, DEI 100 day progress at IRC, A refugee leader shares his thoughts on the Black Lives Matter movement**
  
- **The IRC has committed to make more space for regional, country program and national staff voices to speak directly to policymakers and influencers in global capitals on key advocacy priorities.** The IRC continues to look for every opportunity to give Country Program and national staff platforms to represent our work and our clients in global capitals.
  
- **The IRC Board of Directors has committed to supporting global DEI work at IRC** in the following ways:
  - Through data collection and recruitment processes, ensure the IRC's Board is comprised of people from diverse backgrounds, experiences, and cultures.
  - Through the appropriate committee structures, champion the IRC's DEI work.
  - Through engagement with IRC's DEI leaders, remain informed of ongoing DEI efforts at IRC and promote DEI efforts as appropriate.