WHAT WOMEN OF COLOR IN GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT WOULD LIKE YOU TO KNOW

MAY 2019

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Background

The WILD Network organized the first Forum to Advance Women’s Leadership in the Global Development Sector almost a year ago, in June 2018. We received feedback that the Forum had done a good job of inviting a diverse group of presenters -- people of different ethnicities, age groups and so on. And, what was missing was speakers addressing the question of intersectionality. That is to say, how different forms of discrimination, against, for instance, women and people of color, overlap and reinforce each other, and how that plays out in the experience of a woman of color working in global development.

In response, the WILD Network partnered with the generous and committed individuals acknowledged on slide 15, as well as Black Women in Development, to host a Women of Color Discussion Forum on March 13, 2019 in Washington DC. An open invitation was extended to anyone identifying as a woman of color working in global development who was interested in discussing strategies for creating inclusive environments in our sector. 50 women responded and then participated in small group discussions structured around these questions:

• Q1: What is your experience working for the global development sector as a woman of color, in terms of challenges and unique value brought to the table?
• Q2: What is your experience working for the global development sector as an international woman of color, in terms of challenges and unique value brought to the table?
• Q3: What does inclusion look like for women of color working in the global development sector?
• Q4: What actions would you have your colleagues, your organization and our sector take for the global development sector to be more inclusive for women of color?
• Q5: What resources do you recommend that our colleagues in global development take a look at?

The ideas generated in these discussions - in the form of this deck - are being shared with 70 WILD speakers who are preparing key-notes, workshops and roundtable sessions for the 2019 Forum to Advance Women’s Leadership in the Global Development Sector which takes place May 14, 2019 in Washington D.C. The content will also be presented in a dedicated session taking place at 8:15 – 8:45am titled “Creating Inclusive Environments for Women of Color: Where Do We Go From Here?”

The observations in this deck align with a number of other studies looking at the experiences of women of color in the workplace. But because the deck speaks specifically to the global development sector, and the realities that we and our colleagues deal with every day, we at WILD believe it will be especially impactful.

By sharing this information ahead of time, it is WILD’s intention that it will guide and enrich all the presentations and conversations at the Forum. While we have a breakfast to kick off the Forum, dedicated to the theme of women of color in our sector, the entire day-long event is built around the idea of diversity: “Greater Diversity = Greater Impact.”
Q1. What is your experience working for the global development sector as a woman of color, in terms of challenges and unique value brought to the table?
Q1. FINDINGS

Challenges

• Tokenism
• Lack of transparency in recruiting and promotion
• Unconscious bias
• Confidence misinterpreted as aggression
• Seniority not recognized
• Emotional tax

Value

• Unique experience which creates a connection to the beneficiaries of projects and a deeper understanding
• Different perspective
• Understanding the different privileges/biases
Q1. DIRECT QUOTES

“Lack of transparency in recruiting and promotion. Often find that women of color are hired to fill a quota, but afterwards don’t have the support to grow within the organization.”

“Confidence can be misinterpreted as aggression. I have to think twice about everything that is expressed, as certain expectations and biases might lead others to misinterpret intention.”

“There is an assumption that the woman of color in the room is there to learn and not to teach.”

“If [a black female] does something well, it’s individual to them. If she does something poor, it is seen as applying to all black females.”

“One big issue is ‘Tokenism’: naming one woman of color in the executive team (usually in a human resources role) and thinking this covers diversity, rather than valuing skills and abilities to fulfill leadership roles.”

“Most of the time, I am the only (or one of the very few) woman of color in the room, especially in leadership.”

“People get surprised when they realize it is me that is chairing the meeting.”

“Colleagues think my white male intern is more senior than me.”
Q2: What is your experience working for the global development sector as an international woman of color, in terms of challenges and unique value brought to the table?
Q2. FINDINGS

Challenges

• Limited promotion opportunities
• Confidence valued over expertise
• Feelings of isolation

Value

• Language skills
• Local knowledge
• Diversity of opinion
• Understanding of local needs and realities
Q2. DIRECT QUOTES

“I have the language skills to communicate with beneficiaries of my projects and understand their needs.”

“Confidence is valued more than expertise. This is a big problem that all women face, but especially challenging for women of color and international women.”

“I have experience from living in the country but someone who read a book and has visited the country knows more than me”

“There is an additional burden from being a foreigner in terms of language and culture.”

“Our cultures taught us not to speak up, especially when a man is speaking.”
Q3: What does inclusion look like for women of color working in the global development sector?
Q3: FINDINGS

• Reflective of the populations that organizations are working with.
• Safe space to exist without censorship, bringing your whole self to work.
• A space where all people are empowered and biases are acknowledged.
• Organizations being clear on metrics for promotion and advancement.
• People at all levels representing diversity.
Q3: DIRECT QUOTES

“It is not acceptable to say: “I don’t see color”. Take responsibility for the differences in people’s experiences, know the disaggregated data by gender and race in your own organization (in terms of representation in the executive teams and promotions).”

“Inclusion happens in a place where there is recognition that not everyone’s experience is the same.”

“When a meeting is going on, look around and think: who is missing in this table? Include as much as possible people of diverse backgrounds and experiences.”

“Being invited to the party, being asked to dance and then feeling safe to dance exactly how you want to.”

“Being able to see intersectional lenses so that everyone feels open to voice their opinions with feeling repercussion.”
Q4: What actions would you have your colleagues, your organization and our sector take for the global development sector to be more inclusive for women of color?
Q4: FINDINGS

Individual level

• Research and acquire language to talk about diversity.
• Take training to identify unconscious bias.

Organizational level

• Analyze data on recruiting and promotion disaggregated by gender and race.
• Promote mentorship and championship programs for women of color.

Sectoral level

• Sector-wide initiatives where that promote equality of opportunities and success of inclusion strategies.
Q4: DIRECT QUOTES

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<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Organizational</th>
<th>Sectoral</th>
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<tr>
<td>“I am not responsible for educating my colleagues about diversity. I’d like them to educate themselves.”</td>
<td>“Create an inclusive work environment: analyzing promotions by data and creating metrics to understand promotions/ratios.”</td>
<td>“Pay interns: unpaid internships are burdensome to those who do not come from privileged backgrounds and cannot afford to be working without pay.”</td>
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<td>“Stop using language that is patronizing and be aware of microaggressions.”</td>
<td>“When incorporating an inclusion strategy, make sure you have the budget and the staff to make it successful.”</td>
<td>“Sector-wide initiatives that put diversity and inclusion at the forefront.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Take responsibility for biases (i.e. take unconscious bias training).”</td>
<td>“Not all women of color want to work in diversity and inclusion.”</td>
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Q5: What resources do you recommend that our colleagues in global development take a look at?
These short videos are a great resource on language to use when talking about race issues: Seattle Times: “Under Our Skin”

This report examines the Emotional Tax levied on Asian, Black, Latinx, and multiracial professionals in the United States as they aspire to advance and contribute to their organizations: Catalyst: “Day-to-Day Experiences of Emotional Tax Among Women and Men of Color in the Workplace”

This study pertains to gender equality in the workplace: McKinsey & Company: “Women in the Workplace”

Continued on following slides...
Additional resource: “12 Ways to be a White Ally”
by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

1. **Educate yourself** about systemic racism – work to understand and acknowledge how to participate in and benefit from oppressive systems.
2. Do not expect people of color to teach you how to be an ally – take responsibility for your own learning.
3. **Understand impact versus intent.** You can have both a good intent and a negative impact – listen without jumping to defend your intentions.
4. **Expect to make mistakes.** Ask for feedback. Respond with humility, take accountability, and apply it going forward.
5. Examine ways in which racial inequity is manifested in foundation policies and practices. **Be an active voice** for a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace.
6. **Hold foundation leadership accountable** for progress.
7. **Listen more, talk less.** Be mindful of how you are taking up space and avoid trying to position yourself as an expert.
8. Advocate for and support people of color as leaders and active voices at the foundation – **speak up for people of color**, but do not speak for them.
9. **Show up and show support** for Employee Resource Groups and Diversity and Inclusion events. Prioritize your participation as an important and essential part of your work.
10. **Talk to other white colleagues about race.** Speak up in uncomfortable situations; don’t leave it to your colleagues of color to call out racism.
11. **Reach out to colleagues of color**, build authentic relationships, and be willing to be vulnerable.
12. Take advantage of the foundation’s 3:1 match and **donate to organizations** that are working for racial justice.
1. **Be mindful.** Slow down. Check your thinking and assumptions.

2. Take the Implicit Association Test developed by Harvard University (implicit.harvard.edu). **Find out where your ‘blind spots’ are.**

3. Purposefully develop friendships with **people who are different from you** in visible and invisible ways. **Spend time with them.** Listen to their stories.

4. **Read books and watch documentaries** about groups to which you do not belong.

5. Join an **Employee Resource Group** with which you do not share an identity.

6. **Invite colleagues – of all identities and backgrounds –** to events and activities put on by your Employee Resource Group(s).

7. Look at the **groups, systems, processes, and policies** around you. Are they inclusive? Share your thoughts with the D&I team.

8. **Enlist allies, and be one yourself.** When someone gets ‘talked over’ in a meeting say, **Can we return to Susan’s point? I think it’s a good one.**

9. Assume that the person showing bias is acting out of ignorance, not bias. **Respectfully as permission** to share feedback on what you noticed.

10. **Talk about difficult topics with your colleagues, like race or gender inequity.** Attend a workshop on unconscious bias and/or ask your manager to arrange one for your team.
Acknowledgements

Women of Color in Global Development Discussion Forum Co-Chairs

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Thank you. We welcome your comments and questions.

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