



ISG: Diversity, One Step at a Time

The World Bank Group's Information Solutions Group is making solid progress on diversity and inclusion (D&I).

"Especially in the past three years, there has been a strong management commitment," said Elisa Liberatori-Prati, the World Bank Group's Chief Architect, and ISG's co-D&I Coordinator. "Our efforts are yielding some progress."

First, the statistics. ISG's overall diversity index saw a 10% improvement during the past two years, double Bank-wide figures. Its share of women managers is now on par with the institution as a whole.

However, it still lags behind in the percentage of

women staff, and staff who hail from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean.

"We've tried to combine a couple of things," said Lee Grassley, HR Client Liaison. "First, we needed to gain some new skills into the VPU, but we also wanted to achieve diversity in the process."

Traditionally, ISG was limited to local appointment hires. Recently, ISG management took the significant step of opening up new opportunities for international recruitment.

And it doesn't look as if they're going to let the opportunity get away. "We hired a French firm that is known for filling positions with qualified Sub-Saharan

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Q & A with Fayez Choudhury

Vice President, Corporate Finance and Risk Management

Fayez Choudhury recently transitioned from his post as VP of CSR, where he served for nine years, to the newly-created CFRVP position.

Q: Describe your VPU's experience with Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) issues.

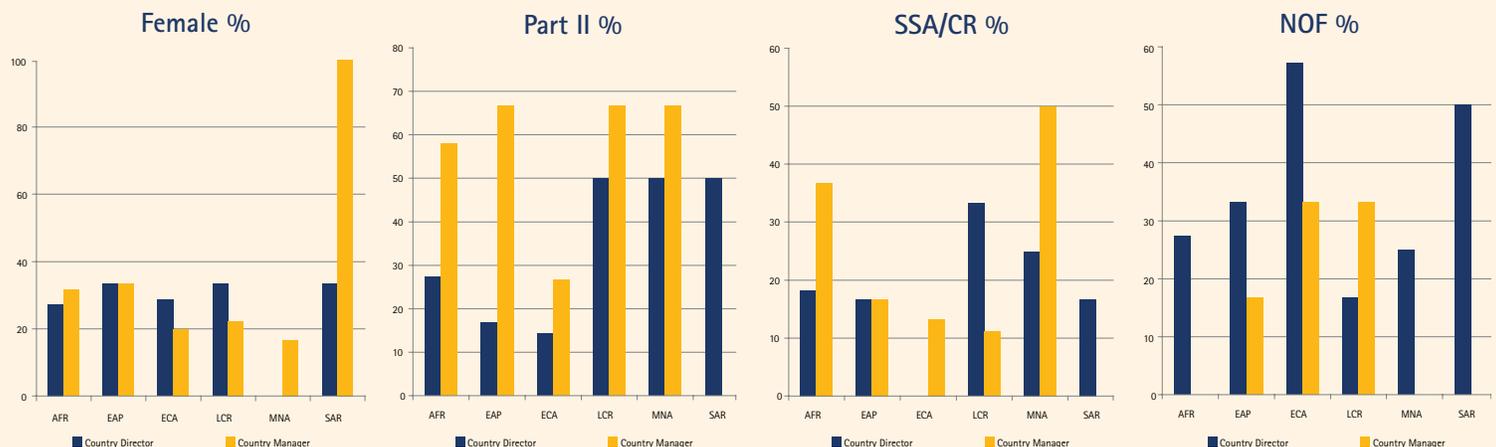
A: Over the last decade, the awareness of and response to D&I have been marked. We initially focused on D&I in its most basic form—racial, ethnic, and gender—then we wanted to look at the issues more broadly. Our program has evolved to a "Building a Respectful Workplace" theme. The root of issues of diversity and inclusion is really respect. Respect for other cultures, traditions, religions, and diverse human value systems certainly, but moving beyond that to respecting diverse opinions. The focus now is on tapping these diverse opinions to add value to the business process. How do we ensure that we are equipped to listen to diverse opinions and not just give lip service?

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IBRD Diversity Indicators - Country Directors & Country Managers

Data represent staff with the official titles of Country Director or Country Manager only (status as of April 30, 2009).



External Good Practice Corner

Q&A with Tiane Mitchel-Gordon, AOL



Tiane Mitchel-Gordon is the Senior Vice President and Officer of Diversity and Inclusion at AOL. The Dulles, Virginia-based company is a leading global ad-supported Web company and social media network. It has about 7,000 employees in the US, the UK, and India.

Q: How does a focus on diversity and inclusion (D&I) help AOL's bottom line?

A: There is an urban vibe to a lot of marketing in the US—a cool factor that resonates across demographic groups. Influencers from a niche market may have applications for the mainstream. So our discussion of D&I is not just about doing the right thing, but we also think there is a tremendous upside to being open and

inclusive and ultimately reaching more people.

Q: How does this inform AOL's approach to D&I?

A: We feel there are three legs. It's about workforce, workplace, and marketplace. The latter is a largely untapped opportunity to engage with our consumers better. If you don't create content that your consumers can connect with, then they go elsewhere. So it's a challenge and an opportunity.

Q: Tell me about the first two legs: workforce and workplace.

A: We're asking different questions to come up with different solutions. It's a new cognitive diversity. When we have a fully inclusive workforce, we are more vibrant, innovative, and engaged.

It's an environment where people bring the totality of who they are to bear on problems that the company needs solved.

Q: What have been your main challenges?

A: It's a process. Anytime you ask for change of mindset, you encounter resistance. We've seen both personal and organizational resistance, but we're willing to have this dialogue on how difference is important. And we're seeing progress. But culture change takes time.

Q: Do you have any personal thoughts that guide your work?

A: Never underestimate the power of the individual to make a difference. That's why modeling inclusion is so important—both from leadership and from everybody in the team.

Q & A with Fayez Choudhury (continued from page 1)

Q: How has your VPU progressed?

A: To the extent that the Staff Survey gives us feedback, it has functioned pretty well. We have good indicators. I think more importantly, people do have a deeper understanding of the issue.

Q: What's the business case for D&I?

A: We are the World Bank, and we operate across the world. We should be a reflection of that. That's the reality. We do things that not many people do: we work in countries across the world, and we bring global knowledge to bear in local situations. You have to find a way of harnessing the incredibly rich store of experiences and perspectives for effective interventions in those diverse and complex environments. If you can't do that, then you're not meeting your business objectives.

Q: What are some of the challenges to operationalizing D&I?

A: One challenge is getting people

to transform hearing into listening. If views are being expressed that don't fit the conventional template, how do you make sure those views get a real hearing? The challenge is doing that appropriately. And the starting point is respect. Another challenge is that, at the end of the day, we are still running a business. One wants to encourage people to consider diverse ways of thinking, but not all diverse views contain good insights—sometimes they are just wrong. Drawing the line between being respectful of diverse opinions but at the same time needing to make a decision and move on is sometimes difficult to balance.

Q: Is there anything related to D&I that you would improve?

A: I think on the nationality issue, we need to fine tune our metrics. There, we are at risk of becoming slaves of statistics. Many people have

changed their nationality. Many people have dual nationality. And so when you look at the statistics, it's often not at all reflective of the genuine diversity that we have. It's ironic that we get trapped by hard indicators that don't reveal the full breadth of our diversity.

Q: Any thoughts about this issue from a long-term perspective?

A: We should be optimistic about our ability to face the challenges of achieving a truly D&I environment and acknowledge the good things about who we are. I'm reminded of this when someone from outside the Bank comes here. The palpable discovery of such a diversity of languages, dress, nationalities, accents, etc. makes a deep impression on those visiting. We have something very different and special. Let's pause and feel good about that but let's not become complacent because there are always more challenges to overcome.

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Africans,” Grassley said. “Also, we’ve advertised in targeted international publications, where we emphasized our desire for female and diverse candidates.”

The business rationale for these extra steps is well established across the Bank Group. “It is more than just the right thing to do,” said Liberatori-Prati. “We need to absolutely interact well with all of our clients within the Bank. We can achieve that best by mirroring the diversity we see around us.”

And there are other forces at play: “It goes beyond management,” stressed Jasmine Mason-Anderson, HR Officer for ISG. “You see it bubbling up from staff. Normally, we put the onus all on management, but now staff are taking accountability to make sure our environment is conducive to respect. It’s a very good thing.”

Information Officer and D&I Coordinator Ryan Jones said its just about keeping it simple: “Now, staff are more empowered to contribute to



ISG Diversity Coordinators Ryan Jones and Elisa Liberatore-Prati

Manager for Sourcing and Program Management. “First is simply the issue of raising awareness. Second, we’re explicitly ensuring that recruiting works aggressively with HR to target NOF or SSA/CR. Third, in our

Indian vendors. “Once you build this in to the communication, there’s an awareness,” said Kaveeshwar, who cited the inclusion of diversity provisions in recent RFPs. “And now that it has become part of the contract management discussion, we’re seeing progress.”

Since Diversity Month last March, ISG held itself to a number of 100-day commitments, including fast-tracking three developmental assignments (DAIS) for SSA/CR staff. “We brought IT officers from country offices to learn how HQ operates,” said Mason-Anderson. “It’s all about knowledge sharing and career development.”

Anybody who attended the ISN Forum in May—which assembled the entire network from around the world—could not help but notice the diversity of staff and rich cultural exchange.

It was a vivid reminder that the Bank’s IT staff may be among the most diverse in the world.

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finding solutions. There’s this sense that ideas can come from new places, from different thought processes. That really opens up the door for diverse ideas.”

There are a number of clear priorities said Sudhakar Kaveeshwar,

reviews and promotions, we are very conscious of where we fall short and what progress we need to make.”

Because ISG works so heavily with contractors—about 50% percent of all staff—it has taken the push for more diversity to both its US and

Beyond Diversity to Inclusion and Human Equity

Diversity speaker Trevor Wilson animated a thought-provoking session during the ISN Forum last month that challenged participants to value individual differences in their day-to-day work.

Why would the Information Solutions Network (ISN) host a session on diversity and inclusion (D&I)? After all, this cluster of about 1,000 staff across the Bank Group is tasked with managing the institution's information and technology—no small task.

"IT at its best is a business enabler, not a commodity," said Elisa Liberatori-Prati, the Bank Group's Chief Archivist, and along with Ryan Jones, ISN's D&I coordinator. "Along these lines, D&I has this same potential to breathe life into our operations in a way that vastly improves what we do."

Just like a fickle network connection or ineffective firewall, a poor approach to D&I issues can leave staff stymied and compromise an organization's capacity to achieve its goals.

"You can have tolerance without respect," said Wilson, who has been a professional diversity consultant for more than 20 years and worked with thousands of companies. "We need to value people because of their differences, and move way beyond mere tolerance."

Likewise, an organization can have diversity without inclusion. Inclusion is about creating a climate where diversity is valued. In an inclusive environment each person is recognized and developed, and their talents are routinely tapped into.

The World Bank Group is poised at a threshold. Will the institution continue to make progress integrating D&I issues, or revert to past practices?

In the past, assimilation meant that differences were ignored, and organizations tended to treat employees the same. The focus was on fitting in: "Equality means sameness. When we treat people equally, we ignore differences," emphasized Wilson.

"On the other hand, equity is fairness. When we treat people equitably, we recognize differences."

These days, organizations tend to require that staff tolerate diversity. The focus is likely to be on righting historical wrongs, but the approach is still group-focused.

In the future, Wilson suggested, reaching human equity—in which organizations value the breadth of talents of all staff—will require true inclusion. Individual differences are not only recognized, but also systematically valued, and therefore become fundamentally important.

Wilson outlined an "equity continuum," which provided historical perspective: "Affirmative action moved organizations from denial to compliance. And corporate social responsibility has moved us beyond compliance."

"More recently, a focus on diversity has moved us to acknowledge the business case. And as we continue to integrate diversity and make it part of our DNA, we make valuable progress."

The end goal is to become an "inclusive and equitable organization," which hires the right person for the job every time, and com-



pletely leverages the full talents of every employee.

Are any organizations there yet? "Well, there might be a few one-person companies that are doing the job," he joked.

Wilson recounted personal vignettes that were both insightful and comic. Born in England to a Jamaican father and Indian mother, he became a Canadian citizen as a schoolboy. As a result, negotiating the precarious fault lines of identity and belonging has proved a lifelong challenge—and opportunity.

The session turned interactive as Wilson opened up the floor: "Do we create a climate of inclusiveness within ISN? Is ISN a place where talented people choose to work because they feel they have 'a place at the organizational table' that matters?"

The packed Preston Auditorium hummed with the distinctive din of a hundred vigorous, hushed conversations. Here, the keepers of World Bank IT were reflecting, evaluating, reinventing.

"I don't care if diversity, inclusion, respect, and dignity are on every wall of this place," concluded Wilson, slowly gesturing to the four winds. "I want you to live it."