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GENERATION NEXT
HUMANITARIAN FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM



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BASELINE REPORT





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Baseline Report

I. INTRODUCTION

United States government agencies along with U.S.-based non-profit organizations play a major role in providing funding, human resources, and technical support for humanitarian assistance initiatives that work at the front lines, delivering emerging and lifesaving assistance to address needs and challenges globally. The U.S. humanitarian assistance sector is one, among many, that exhibit a lack of diversity. This is a missed opportunity to create a racially and ethnically diverse workforce, drawing from varying perspectives and experiences that could be beneficial to interventions, innovations, and solutions in the humanitarian assistance field.

In order to be most effective, the humanitarian assistance sector needs a sustained diverse pipeline of humanitarian assistance professionals at all stages of their careers. However, racial and ethnic diversity in the humanitarian workforce is lacking, especially at leadership levels. Recent 2021 surveys conducted by the BRIDGE Initiative¹ show that the sector also lacks transparency on diversity data and is plagued by a history of structural racism and a gap between what is, and what should be, when it comes to diversity, equity, and inclusion practices.

Creating sustained diversity in the humanitarian assistance workforce requires more than recruitment. Success includes an approach grounded in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles that address structural racism in the industry and are ultimately reflected in the retention and inclusion of a diverse workforce that feels a sense of belonging. This effort should be supported by training and individual learning opportunities, professional development, mentor support, and organizational development to create an environment where employees can flourish and succeed.

This report will delve into some of these issues to establish a baseline as a starting point from which the Generation Next Humanitarian Fellowship Program (GenNext Fellowship) is starting. Over the course of the next three years, GenNext Fellowship will work hard to positively move the needle on diversity in the humanitarian work force and to develop solid relationships and career pathways for diverse candidates to thrive in this sector.

II. BACKGROUND

a. Why Diversity in the Workforce is Beneficial

Scholars have outlined two prominent arguments for bringing diversity to the workforce. The first argument is the business case, which suggests that diversification leads to enhanced organizational performance and effectiveness. The second argument is the moral case, which posits that a commitment to diversity in the workplace is a moral imperative.

¹ "BRIDGE: Benchmarking Race, Inclusion, and Diversity in Global Engagement, 2021 Survey Results," Social Impact.



The business case suggests that it makes practical sense for organizations to diversify their leaders and employees. By hiring more people from underserved and underrepresented groups, or by recruiting and retaining more staff and board members who mirror the demographics of the community, the business case posits that an organization gains a business advantage².

There are several ways organizations might find a diverse workforce advantageous. For example, increased diversity could translate to increased funding. Organizations that demonstrate a commitment to diversity are often viewed more favorably by funders and donors who want to see their resources allocated equitably. Moreover, a diversity of lived experiences and perspectives is believed to lead to more creativity and innovation, improving an organization's performance overall³. This belief is backed by research, as McLeod, Lobel, and Cox (1996) found that ethnically diverse groups produced higher quality creative outcomes than homogeneous groups⁴. Additionally, scholars have observed a strong relationship between diversity management and job satisfaction, as well as perceptions of work group performance⁵. Finally, commitment to diversity within organizations has furthered individual managerial advancement. Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly (2006) found that organizations that prioritize diversity often demonstrate better outcomes in promoting women and African Americans to managerial positions⁶. This finding suggests that diversification can also lead to increased opportunities for professional growth and advancement for underrepresented groups.

Findings from the Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG)'s Diverse Leadership Research Project⁷ further support the business case for diversifying the humanitarian assistance workforce. Through nearly 1500 surveys and 24 key informant interviews (with respondents from 115 countries), one of the project's findings is that humanitarian leadership teams that are perceived to be diverse and inclusive perform better. Refer to the graphic below for areas of leadership team performance.

² Weisinger, "Diversity and Diversity Management in Nonprofit Organizations," 326-328.

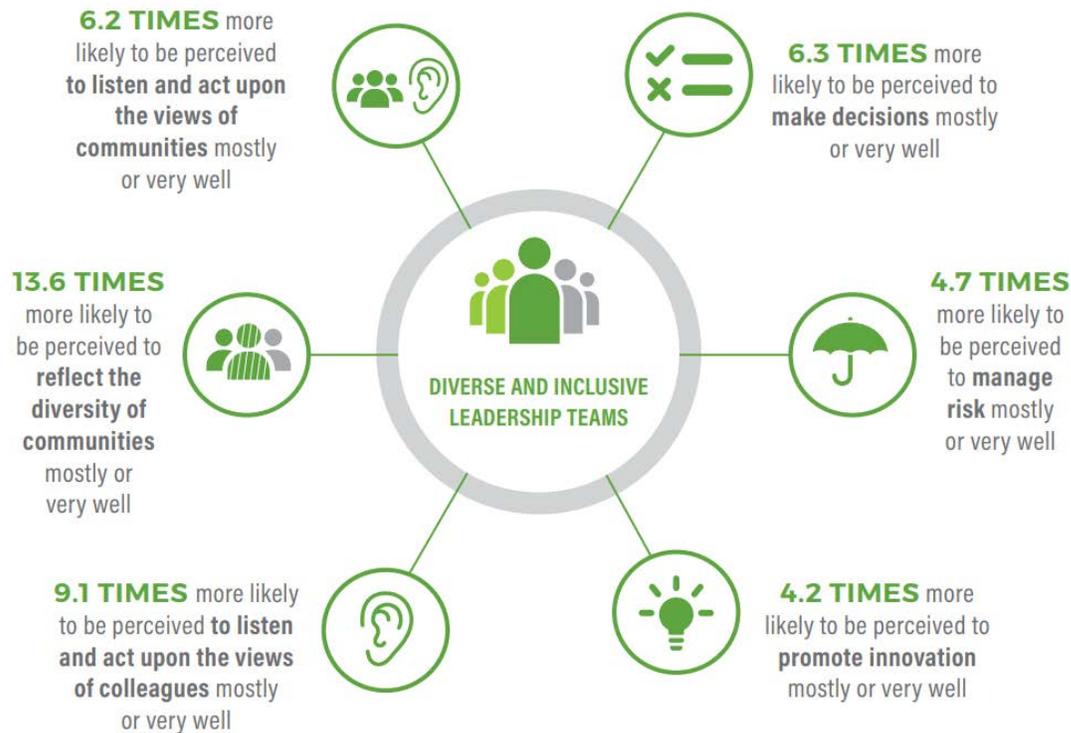
³ Cox, "The multicultural organization," 34-47.

⁴ McLeod, "Ethnic diversity and creativity in small groups," 248-264.

⁵ Pitts, "Diversity Management, Job Satisfaction, and Performance: Evidence from U.S. Federal Agencies."

⁶ Kalev, "Best practices or best guesses? Assessing the efficacy of corporate affirmative action and diversity policies," 589-617.

⁷ Blackney, "Data on Diversity: Humanitarian Leadership Under the Spotlight," Humanitarian Advisory Group.



Blackney, "Data on Diversity: Humanitarian Leadership Under the Spotlight," Humanitarian Advisory Group.

While the business case is widely accepted by the for-profit sector, it is not a widespread operating principle in the non-profit realm. The social justice or human benefit perspective case focuses on uplifting and empowering marginalized groups, redistributing power, and reducing exclusion and marginalization in the workplace. The social justice paradigm considers group and intergroup differences, explicitly addresses power differentials, including differences in resource access and distribution, with the goal of working toward reducing exclusion and marginalization of disadvantaged groups⁸.

b. Lack of Diversity in the U.S. Humanitarian Assistance Sector

Racial Inequity is Pervasive

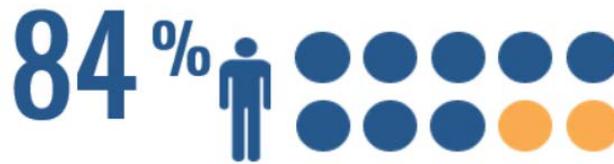
There is strong evidence to suggest that diversity in the workforce is not only positive, but also strategically advantageous. Diversity, equity, and inclusion have come to the forefront of discussions across various industries and sectors in recent years. Nonetheless, the humanitarian assistance sector in the United States has a long way to go in developing a diverse labor force. According to the BRIDGE Survey, racial inequity is pervasive at non-profit organizations.

⁸ Weisinger, 327-328.



Although the racial makeup of staff in non-profit organizations, specifically the proportion of white and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color), reflects that of the overall population in the United States, this balance does not carry into the higher and more influential levels of these organizations. The proportion of White individuals represented at these levels increases from 63% of staff to 67% of boards, 73% of leadership teams, and 84% of organization heads⁹.

Percentage of White Individuals as Organization Heads, Leadership & Boards



Organization Heads are White

73% of leadership teams are White

67% of Board members are White

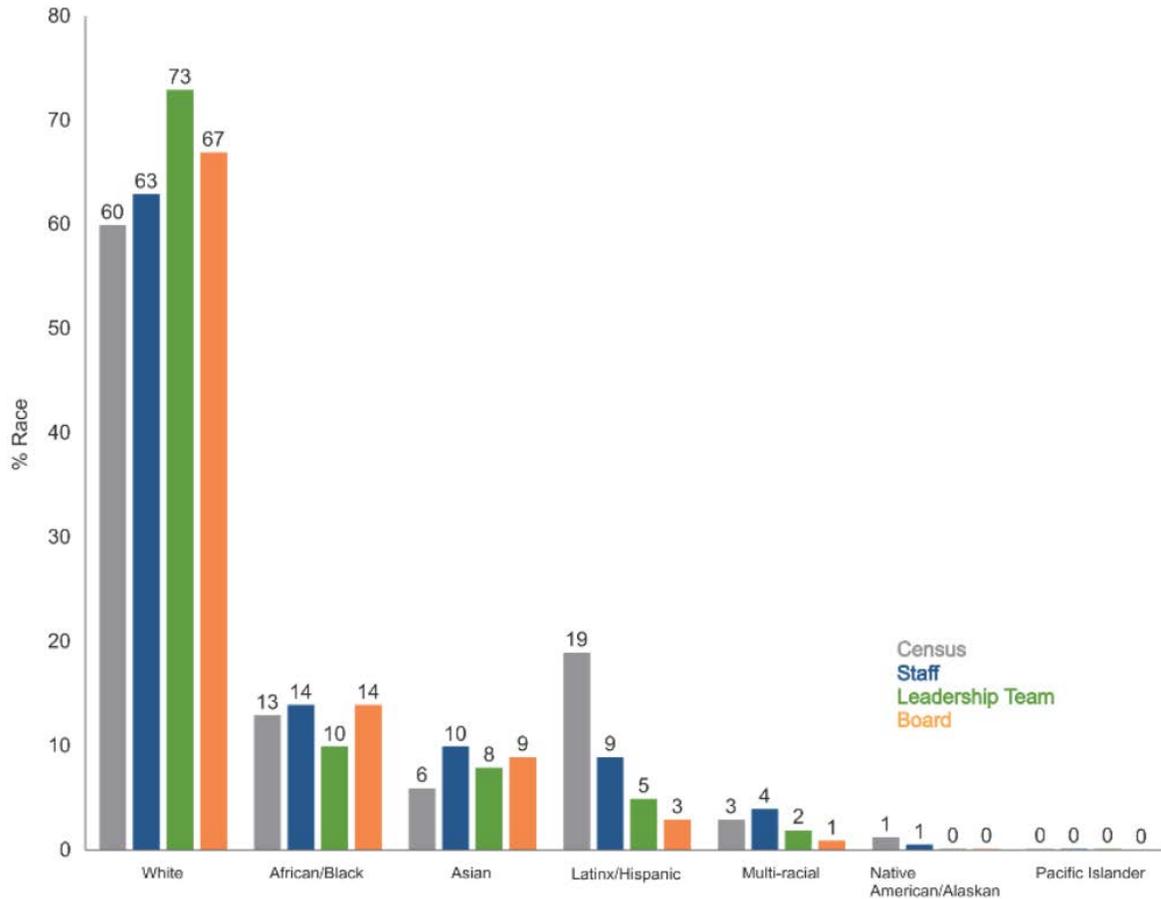
BRIDGE 2021 Survey Results, Social Impact.

Only 27% of leadership teams and 10% of heads of organizations in the non-profit sector identify as BIPOC. Organization boards have slightly better BIPOC representation: approximately 33%. However, this is also less than the general population. Only 4% of heads of organizations are BIPOC women, though they represent 20% of the general population, and Latinx individuals are underrepresented at all levels of organizations. Refer to the chart on the next page for more detail.

⁹ BRIDGE 2021 Survey Results, Social Impact.



Racial Composition by Organizational Hierarchy



BRIDGE 2021 Survey Results, Social Impact.

The BRIDGE Survey showed an inverse association between racial diversity and employment seniority. Staff composition was generally shown to align with the racial/ethnic makeup of the U.S. population. However, the higher up the employment ladder, the more disproportionate the segment of White employees, resulting in an industry dominated by White executives.

Most Organizations Lack DEI Policies

As of 2021, one year after the protests following the murder of George Floyd, according to the BRIDGE Survey, 40% of organizations that responded had issued a DEI statement. Additionally, while 85% of responding organizations reported to have taken some action with respect to DEI, only 26% had DEI policies in place; 16% reported being in the process of drafting one. The majority (58%) of organizations reported no DEI policy nor tangible plans to create one. Moreover, more than 80% of responding organizations had no formal accountability mechanism to squarely address the reality of insufficient diversity at all leadership levels.

c. Reasons Diversity is Lacking and Barrier to Entry

There are a host of reasons the U.S. humanitarian workforce lacks diversity. Some causes are at the organization level, involving priorities and cultures within humanitarian organizations as well as systematic racism and power dynamics in the U.S. and within organizational structures. Other causes concern a lack of exposure to, or interest in, humanitarian work among diverse populations.

Low Socioeconomic Status

Low socioeconomic status is often a critical barrier to seeking and obtaining employment in the humanitarian assistance sector. One of our partner organizations noted that “Many Humanitarian professionals...agree that certain opportunities early in their careers were deeply beneficial to launching their careers. Early career opportunities in the humanitarian sector can be very low paying and become cost prohibitive.”

This barrier is likely higher for graduating students of color compared to their white counterparts. Many students who attend Minority-Serving Institutions (MSI) come from lower-income families and may have a greater need for financial aid and support. According to an American Council on Education (ACE) report released in 2018, one in five students enrolled at four-year Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and nearly one in four students enrolled at four-year Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were from families in the lowest income quintile. These figures are more than three times higher than those of non-MSIs¹⁰.

Additionally, the same report indicates that four-year MSIs’ enrollment comprised between 30 and 53 percent first-generation college students. Among two-year MSIs, this figure was even more striking, with between 50 and 60 percent of their students being first-generation college students¹¹. First-generation students often face additional challenges in navigating the college experience, including financial barriers, as they are significantly more likely to use federal student loans, private student loans, income from a job, scholarships/grants, and credit cards to fund their education than their continuing-generation student counterparts¹².

Moreover, a significant proportion of students of MSIs receive Pell Grants, which are federal need-based grants awarded to low-income undergraduate and post-baccalaureate students. Nationwide today, 34 percent of undergraduate students receive Pell Grants.¹³ According to the MSI Data Project, in 2021, the average percentage of students at MSIs who received Pell Grants, disaggregated by type of MSI, was 36 percent (Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions) at the lowest and 71 percent (Historically Black Colleges and Universities Masters Institutions) at the highest¹⁴. Comparing these figures to each other and to the national average highlights the varying degrees of student financial support needed within the MSI sphere.

¹⁰ Espinosa, “Minority Serving Institutions as Engines of Upward Mobility,” Table 3.

¹¹ Espinosa, Tables 3 and 5.

¹² Rehr, “Financial wellness of first-generation college students.”

¹³ Hanson, “Pell Grant Statistics.”

¹⁴ MSI Data Project.



Respondents of the HAG Survey reflected on the fact that socioeconomic background is one of the most prominent features of the employment pipeline in the humanitarian assistance sector. One survey respondent stated that, “As the sector has become more competitive, it has zeroed in on a group of people with specific educational backgrounds.” Among HAG Survey respondents, 69% across all positions in the sector had a Master’s degree, and 21% had an undergraduate degree – as their highest levels of education¹⁵.

Russell, Mook, Handy (2017) indicate that there is a pervasive, enduring tradition of volunteerism in the nonprofit sector. In fact, volunteerism is one of the most defining characteristics of the sector, with nonprofit organizations recruiting and depending on volunteers alongside paid staff¹⁶. However, for students from MSIs with low socioeconomic status, it is unlikely they can afford to take on unpaid work or experiential learning opportunities.

Necessity to Pursue More Lucrative Career Paths

Understandably, students who come from financially constrained backgrounds often feel pressured to pursue more lucrative employment sectors. Belyavina and Bhandari (2011) explain that “Many students who come from financially constrained backgrounds and are burdened with heavy student loans also face family pressure to go into well-known and lucrative fields, which are seen as the best return on investment.”

There is an abundance of data on student loan debt by race and ethnicity. Researchers frequently observe that, compared to their counterparts from other racial/ethnic groups, Black and African American students fare the worst^{17,18,19,20}. Upon completing of their bachelor’s degrees, Black and African American college graduates on average owe over \$52,000 in student loan debt, roughly \$25,000 more than white college graduates^{21,22}.

Student loan debt can affect borrowers’ financial decisions and life choices. In the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics²³, many student borrowers surveyed four years after graduation reported that they had delayed pursuing life goals and milestones because of their student debt. For instance, 46% of Black student borrower respondents indicated that they would likely put off buying a home. Stress induced by educational debt may also hinder personal timelines. Researchers found that this is most prominent among Hispanic and Latino borrowers, who were the most likely to delay marriage and having children due to student loan debt. (33% of Hispanic student borrowers would put off getting married, and 37% would delay childbearing)²⁴.

¹⁵ Blackney, Humanitarian Advisory Group.

¹⁶ Russell, "Interchangeability of Labor: Managing a Mixed Paid and Volunteer Workforce," 272.

¹⁷ Wright, “How Student Loan Forgiveness Can Help Close the Racial Wealth Gap and Advance Economic Justice.”

¹⁸ Baum, “Student Debt: The Unique Circumstances of African American Students.”

¹⁹ Jones, “The Racial Wealth Gap: How African-Americans Have Been Shortchanged out of the Materials to Build Wealth.”

²⁰ McKernan, “Nine Charts About Wealth Inequality in America (Updated).”

²¹ Hanson, “Student Loan Debt by Race.”

²² “Fact Sheet: Black College Graduates and the Student Debt Gap.” White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans.

²³ Digest of Education Statistics, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

²⁴ “Web Tables -- Debt After College: Employment, Enrollment, and Student-Reported Stress and Outcomes,” NCES.

According to Nicholas Bassey, Director of the Institute for International Public Policy (IIPP) at the United Negro College Fund Special Programs Corporation, upon entering college, minority students frequently have a clear goal in mind for their studies, with aspirations for careers in well-established fields such as law, medicine, and education. Some students from minority backgrounds may view building a humanitarian career as a luxury, focusing instead on securing a job immediately following graduation²⁵.

As a result, many students with limited resources from family, school, and potential employers never have a genuine opportunity to pursue a career in the humanitarian field.

Lack of Industry Exposure

In addition to students from MSIs frequently lacking the financial means to pursue work in the humanitarian sector, many of these students are not offered opportunities to learn and explore career possibilities in the humanitarian sector in the first place. There are many possible reasons for this. First, MSIs may not have sufficient resources to provide their students with affordable opportunities that could enhance future careers in humanitarian assistance, like study abroad or industry immersive internships. As a result, students who have not had these types of experiences are considered less competitive than their counterparts who have had these opportunities. As Janes (1991) highlights, "Participation in international education programs, particularly undergraduate study abroad as well as graduate fellowships such as the Fulbright, Rhodes, and Marshall programs, remain key access points to careers in the international field"²⁶.

Minority students comprise only 20% of U.S. students who study abroad, even though they make up more than one third of students in U.S. higher education. (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). In the 2009-2010 academic year, of the total U.S. students who participated in study abroad programs for credit, only 5% were Black, 6% were Hispanic, 8% were Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 2% were multiracial²⁷. Moreover, many minority students do not have international travel experience prior to college. Since traveling abroad can have a profound impact on one's choices of study and career path, this leaves minority students further disadvantaged²⁸.

Another factor that contributes to MSI students not being exposed to the humanitarian sector is the dearth of connections and partnerships between MSIs and humanitarian assistance organizations. These types of institutional connections often lead to highly beneficial networking and mentoring opportunities for students. Thus, MSI students may be limited by a deficit in access to alumni and/or industry mentors who traditionally introduce and encourage them to broaden their horizons in fields they might not have previously considered.

Low Enrollment

Perhaps due to lack of interest, globally focused degree programs at MSIs often have low enrollment compared with similar programs at other institutions. Though the percentage of minority students in higher education has steadily been increasing and continues to do so, the percentage of minority students in international affairs programs has not changed over the past decade²⁹.

²⁵ Belyavina, "One in 7,000,000,000!"

²⁶ Janes, "Priming the Pump: The Making of Foreign Area Experts."

²⁷ Farrugia, "Open Doors 2011 Report on International Educational Exchange."

²⁸ Bhandari, "Evaluating and measuring the impact of citizen diplomacy: Current status and future directions."

²⁹ Aud, "Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups," National Center for Education Statistics.



Reduced Funding for Engaging Minority Students

Funding not only fuels programs and initiatives in clear tangible ways, but it also signals commitment to a cause. With more minority students entering higher education than ever before and comprising one third of the total students in U.S. higher education, more programs are needed to prepare diverse candidates for careers in public service. Programs that have successfully guided hundreds of minority students into international affairs and international development careers each year are still not sufficient in overcoming gaps in the participation by underrepresented groups³⁰.

Lack of Funding for and Commitment to DEI Initiatives

Another way in which funding is a barrier to creating more diversity in the sector is in the context of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives within humanitarian assistance organizations. Current DEI programming is often not funded, unsustainably funded, and/or the responsibility of an external consultant or volunteer staff member.

In 2019-2020, the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative³¹ conducted in-depth interviews and a workshop to learn about key challenges those who are tasked with designing and implementing DEI efforts in the humanitarian assistance space are facing. A roundtable workshop titled “Opportunities for Increasing Diversity and Inclusion in the Humanitarian Sector,” that took place in May 2020, provided valuable insight on the matter. The majority of roundtable participants indicated that they had been tasked with leading DEI efforts at their respective organizations. They voiced frustration over receiving insufficient funding and resources required to scale their interventions and programming to the necessary extent.

Additionally, participants explained that many of the roles created to address DEI programming are underfunded, short-term, and/or consultancy positions. As a result, participants expressed that this sense of instability often leads to a lack of coherence across programs. This is largely due to the fact that individuals who assume these roles are frequently not conferred sufficient authority to make impactful decisions that can be sustained over the long-term. Some respondents shared that their organizations rely on only one person to lead their DEI work instead of developing systems for shared responsibility. They expressed that this was a serious hindrance with the potential to undermine the work that has already been done.

Bias and Racism

Key informant interview participants from HAG’s Diverse Leadership research project³² cited bias as a reason for the lack of diversity in the humanitarian assistance sector. Two chief forms of bias were discussed: unconscious bias and familiarity bias. Unconscious bias occurs when one’s decision-making is unintentionally influenced by factors such as education, social background, and gender³³. When there is no conscious, intentional effort to recruit and create diverse teams, managers tend to recruit people from cultures or backgrounds similar to their own. When this occurs, familiarity bias is also at play. Several interviewees mentioned witnessing or personally experiencing familiarity bias in their organization’s recruitment processes.

³⁰ Belyavina, "One in 7,000,000,000!"

³¹ "Discussing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Humanitarian Sector," Harvard University.

³² Blackney, Humanitarian Advisory Group.

³³ Banaji, *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People*.

Furthermore, racism is a form of bias. More than half of humanitarian aid workers interviewed for Global Interagency Security Forum (GISF)'s research cited experiences of structural or institutional racism. Some interviewees felt there was an implicit hierarchy of humanitarian staff, leading to white staff being prioritized over staff of color³⁴.

Lack of Organizational Transparency

A major finding from the BRIDGE survey was that the humanitarian sector lacks transparency around workforce diversity. With only 40% of surveyed organizations indicating that they share information on race or sex internally, the majority of organizations did not share any workforce composition data with their staff. Even fewer (20%) reported sharing data on racial and gender identity externally. Moreover, only 10% of responding organizations reported sharing any data internally on how compensation compares across dimensions of employee diversity.

The ability to address problems begins with our ability to identify them. Capturing and sharing data on the diversity of an organization's makeup allows the organization and the larger humanitarian community to be held accountable. Therefore, the fact that many organizations do not even capture this data, is a barrier to the sector's ability to measure progress towards increasing diversity.

Overestimation of Diversity Outcomes

Another consequence of failing to collect data and track trends on diversity is that organizations often have inflated views of how they are performing on these measures. Non-profit organizations tend to assume that diversity is baked into their mission, and thus, consciously or unconsciously overestimate their diversity outcomes. One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that many non-profit organizations are inherently involved in social justice work, and so the concept of social justice is an implicit construct in their mission.

Another factor that likely contributes to this blind spot is a lack of research. Frameworks for addressing the oppression of marginalized groups, reducing exclusion and marginalization, and redistributing power are prevalent in research on diversity in the education sector. However, they are rarely addressed in nonprofit management diversity research³⁵.

³⁴ Arthur, "Toward inclusive security risk management: The impact of 'race', ethnicity and nationality on aid workers' security." Global Interagency Security Forum (GISF).

³⁵ Weisinger, 331-332.



III. PERSPECTIVES FROM OUR PARTNERS

It is evident that the humanitarian assistance workforce needs more diversity, as examined above. Fortunately, many organizations are earnestly committed to this goal. Insight from our partnering humanitarian assistance organizations highlights this point.

Desire and Commitment to Increasing Diversity

INSIGHT FROM OUR PARTNERING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE ORGANIZATIONS

“We believe that a diverse workforce in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or other differences adds richness, experiences, and expertise to our organization.”

“We are committed to strengthening the diversity of our workforce and promoting equity and inclusion in everything we do.”

“We strive to foster an environment where our staff are able to bring their whole, authentic self to the workplace, and where staff feel safe, respected, valued, and treated fairly with opportunities for growth.”

“We are committed to maintaining diversity in our leadership team and board to ensure strong representation of the children, families and communities we work with.”

Existing DEI Initiatives

Unsurprisingly, the commitment and enthusiasm from all of our consortium partners means that the promotion of DEI practices has been underway prior to the creation of this project. These organizations are already engaging in important work regarding Human Resources and hiring practices, greater transparency surrounding internal opportunities and pay, as well as various efforts to promote open conversation and build community among colleagues.



1
one

HIRING

- A review and assessment of HR/hiring policies and the talent management process through a DEI lens, to address artificial and actual barriers
- A paid internship program that recruits individuals from MSIs and diaspora groups
- An effort in HR to increase and diversify the platforms on which job listings are posted, including platforms that engage MSIs and Indigenous groups
- Utilization of the Handshake portal to engage HBCUs and raise awareness for open positions at every level

TRANSPARENCY

- Internal processes to promote pay transparency
- A comprehensive internal opportunities board, which promotes acting assignments, task force/working groups, and speaker/training opportunities
- An internal dashboard to track, monitor, and report workforce demographics

2
two

DIALOGUE

- Creation of a Social Justice Language guide to examine language choices, to encourage respectful, non-discriminatory language, and to recognize a broad range of identities and perspectives
- Employee Affinity Groups that offer spaces for employees with shared characteristics, interests, or life experiences to meet with others and form deeper connections in a welcoming and inclusive space.
- "Brave Spaces" for dialogue at all levels that encourage staff to think about their work through a DEI lens and advocate for diverse perspectives to be represented in planning, strategy setting, and decision-making

3
three

IV. HOW THE GENNEXT FELLOWSHIP MIGHT BE LEVERAGED TO MOVE THE NEEDLE

There is evidence to support the strategies that the GenNext Fellowship plans to carry out:

a. Strategic Partnerships

The GenNext Fellowship's second objective is to foster linkages between MSIs and international NGOs. Forming strategic partnerships with humanitarian assistance organizations will not only provide employment opportunities for students of MSIs, these partnerships will also enhance institutions' long-term capacity to support students pursuing careers in humanitarian assistance. From the perspective of humanitarian organizations, these partnerships will be beneficial in augmenting diversity among their labor force, by creating clear pathways to recruiting and hiring diverse employees associated with MSIs.

b. Targeted Outreach, Recruitment and Funding

Research has shown that targeted funding programs can greatly enhance the likelihood of minority students participating in study abroad programs. For example, the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program aims to assist financially disadvantaged and underrepresented undergraduates in pursuing study abroad programs. Through targeted outreach, recruitment, and financial support, this initiative has significantly increased minority involvement in study abroad activities. Over the last decade, the Gilman Program has awarded more than 8,800 scholarships, with 52% of recipients identifying as minority students³⁶.

c. Mentorship

Individuals who pursue less conventional career paths often benefit from mentors who proactively introduce them to international or humanitarian career opportunities and assist them in gaining access to resources and networking opportunities. Several experts attest to the essential role of mentors throughout an individual's educational and professional careers. More formal and informal mentoring programs are needed to support students and help them navigate this sector³⁷.

The Generation Next Humanitarian Fellowship Program will use these strategies to increase and sustain interest in humanitarian careers by students and recent graduates from MSIs. We will work closely with humanitarian partner organizations to help them continue their work towards creating safe and brave spaces for diverse employees to work and thrive. We will also provide professional support by professional mentors who will guide, enhance skills building, and help to solve problems both for and with new Fellows. The approach is based on the evidence provided in this document, to help to break down barriers and fill gaps towards a more socially just, organization performance enhancing, diverse workforce that will be able to attain greater results in the humanitarian sector.

³⁶ Belyavina, "One in 7,000,000,000!"

³⁷ Berrett, "Study Finds Minority Students Benefit From Minority Instructors."

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