



## THREE INSIGHTS

# HOW CAN WE THINK GLOBALLY AND ACT LOCALLY IN ORDER TO BUILD EFFECTIVE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI) STRATEGIES?

GLOBAL GOALS SUMMIT / EQUITY / WEBINAR / 21 SEPT 2022

We would like to thank the following lead discussants and members of the Business Fights Poverty community for their participation:

**Mahmoud Bah**, Deputy CEO, Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC); **Rani Pooran**, Program Lead, DEI, International Finance Corporation (IFC), World Bank Group; **Richard Stallings**, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Manager, Novozymes North America; **Beatriz Tumoine**, Global Social Impact Director, CEMEX; **Deepika Omprakash Yadav**, Project Manager and Gender Equality Lead, DEI, IFC, World Bank Group (Moderator)

***In this webinar, panellists presented strategies on how large global organisations can advance diverse, equitable, and inclusive (DEI) workplaces. The session highlighted the need to uncover and unravel unconscious bias within individuals and corporate structures, and it underscored the idea that DEI is an evolving journey where data—and examining data bias—can support companies in moving forward.***

Panellists made it clear that context is key and that taking the time to understand the cultural and political nuances of the areas where a multinational organisation works is essential for DEI plans to be representative and effective.

### **INSIGHT 1: TACKLE SYSTEMIC AND UNCONSCIOUS BIAS**

The first step of any DEI journey is to examine the hidden biases that act as barriers to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace. Richard Stallings emphasised the importance of mandatory DEI training at all levels, but he noted that it needs to begin with leadership “because change starts at the top.” He highlighted that hiring managers often hold the keys to unlocking fresh, diverse talent “because [hiring managers] are the gate openers, or the gate closers, to an inclusive environment.”

Mahmoud Bah spoke to the unique challenges of being a global company when addressing issues like the gender

pay gap. He explained how programmes designed by people in the Global North might not get to the core of *why* gender pay disparities exist in the Global South, and that these programmes could unintentionally “structurally eliminate or exclude a group.”

He gave the example of finance initiatives that require some sort of collateral—often related to land and real estate—in exchange for loans and grants. As he pointed out, “in [some] countries, land titling is not given to women. Until you remove that structural

***The idea that DEI is a “zero sum” game, doesn’t make any business sense because inclusion is about growing and expanding your pool of thinking and even your revenue.***

**Mahmoud Bah, Deputy CEO, Millennium Challenge Corporation**

***The global footprint of the IFC makes us diverse and inclusive on paper—4,200 people and more than 150 nationalities. But in reality, we know that we need to look deeper—how does the caste system affect our Indian recruits, how are we reaching marginalised Afro Latinos in Latin America?***

**Rani Pooran, Program Lead, DEI,  
International Finance Corporation**

bias or structural problem—which is a [governmental] policy issue—you will not get financing to women in some of those regions.”

Beatriz Tumoine elaborated on this point of structural bias and gave the example of how CEMEX is addressing health insurance issues to “get access to the same quality of health care that developed economies have in emerging markets.”

### **INSIGHT 2: VIEW DEI AS A JOURNEY AND USE DATA ANALYTICS TO TRACK PROGRESS**

DEI is an ever-changing journey that goes far beyond participating in a handful of training sessions. DEI is a “behavioural transformation of how we think,” said Richard Stallings. “We didn’t get to this place of exclusion overnight, and we are definitely not going to get to inclusion the next day.”

Panellists agreed that grappling with unconscious and systemic bias cannot happen without first engaging in difficult—sometimes uncomfortable—conversations. As Richard Stallings expressed, “communication is going to be absolutely key because we don’t know what we don’t know.” Moderator Deepika Omprakash Yadav drove home the point, stating that “[communication] is how we are able to create that ripple effect and be agents of change.”

Data is one tool that can both help and hinder the DEI journey. Early in the discussion, Mahmoud Bah talked about the importance of analytics in achieving his company’s mission of reducing poverty and encouraging inclusive

economic growth, but he also stressed the need to continuously question analytic models to ensure relevancy and representation. Part of the DEI journey is “not assuming that what you do today, even if it’s good today, is going to be good tomorrow. [You need to be] constantly collecting data [and] looking at results to make sure that what you had as a hypothesis is actually what translates in [your findings].”

Rani Pooran echoed this sentiment, stating that “we’ve been [developing] DEI now for many years, and some things don’t work and we still try them.” She went on to talk about the evolution of data and analytics in DEI at the IFC and how they are attempting to “move beyond just reporting and tracking to really understand the cultural determinants of representation.”

### **INSIGHT 3: LISTEN LOCALLY, THINK GLOBALLY**

There was consensus on the panel that DEI is fundamentally about understanding the different regional and local contexts across the geographies where a company operates. Richard Stallings stated that one big challenge for a global company implementing corporate-wide DEI initiatives is that DEI, by necessity, looks different depending on the region.

When discussing gender pay disparities in emerging markets, Mahmoud Bah expressed that thinking globally and acting locally is only one side of the equation, and the flipside is to “think and listen locally, and act globally.” He went on to say, “you have to think locally, address the policy issue at the local level, then lay your program on top of it. Then you are really letting the local data and the local policy inform your program.”

Beatriz Tumoine expanded on this idea and explained that as a company with a diverse international footprint, CEMEX makes sure to “grow local talent and develop pathways so that they can actually come into positions of leadership in the company.”

Rani agreed and mentioned how IFC considers a range of local stakeholders and looks at local contexts to “understand the market within which we operate and what the drivers will be for what our DEI program looks like.” She goes on to say that by listening locally, companies can also identify “cross-learning opportunities across our regions.”

**RESOURCES SHARED:**

- **REPORT:** [International Labour Organisation, Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work](#)
- **REPORT:** [Novozymes, The Novozymes Report, 2021](#)
- **INITIATIVE:** [CEMEX, One Cemex Model](#)
- **INITIATIVE:** [International Finance Corporation, Edge Action Plan](#)
- **WEBSITE:** [The Millennium Challenge Corporation](#)
- **ARTICLES:** [Black Lives Matter Series, Views from the Business Fights Poverty Community](#)