



GENDER IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Afghanistan



Photo: UNWomen/ Olguta Alexandra Anghel

Tip Sheet for HR practitioners:

INCREASING THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF AFGHAN WOMEN HUMANITARIAN WORKERS

This document is a secondary product of a recent qualitative study conducted by the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA WG) to identify barriers and challenges to recruitment and retention of Afghan women humanitarian workers in Afghanistan. It puts together a list of recommendations from HR personnel, and gender and program officers from various national and international NGOs, based on opinions and views shared by a diverse group of respondents, including HR practitioners and women humanitarian workers. This tip sheet offers a list of practical tips that can help the UN, INGOs and NGOs across the recruitment cycle.

Step 1:

Announcing and Advertising Positions to Reach Women Candidates

- 1 Consider different entry level modalities when creating positions, such as internships and UN Volunteers positions which enable more women to apply to induct women who have freshly graduated from university, so that may gain hands-on work experience
- 2 When advertising positions, use different means to ensure women are reached: this can include not only digital job sites but also personal and professional networks, internal circulation of vacancy announcements, posting in commonly visited public places such as universities, clinics, private coaching institutes etc. and over local radio and TV networks
- 3 In case of field worker positions, consider announcing jobs in local languages
- 4 Announce ‘women only’ positions, or announcements encouraging women candidates to apply
- 5 Advertise benefits and perks such as safe transport, maternity leave, childcare support, professional development support, flexible work hours and modalities, mahram allowances where applicable, to attract women to apply, and to reassure families about the safety and well-being of women
- 6 Eliminate excessive requirements and qualifications expected from applicants, such as advanced English, communication skills and computer knowledge, which may deter women from applying
- 7 Announce positions for couples (male and female members of the same family), in particular for field positions

Step 2:

Ensuring a Gender Inclusive Recruitment Process

- 1 Set organizational targets for gender parity in recruitment at all levels, and track progress periodically to ensure targets are met
- 2 Exercise positive discrimination during shortlisting and selection processes, focusing on aptitude and drive, more than on past relevant experience or qualifications, for women to compete with men candidates
- 3 Adapt the selection test and interview questions to focus on specific skills in order to improve chances of success for women applicants
- 4 Include women staff in interview panels, with a mandated minimum of at least one woman on the panel

- 5 Ensure the transparency and responsiveness in recruitment process
- 6 Ensure safety of personal data of women candidates
- 7 In case of applicants from other provinces, provide travel costs for attending selection tests or interviews, or consider mobile/online recruitment procedures at their own site
- 8 Provide taxi fare to candidates as some cannot afford to commute to attend the interview

Step 3:

Retaining Women Staff Within Organizations

- 1 Create women staff associations within organizations, that represent and support women staff including through raising gender specific issues with management
- 2 Define gender equity policies and professional codes of conduct that guarantee safe and respectful work environment for women, and provide awareness sessions to all old and new staff.
- 3 Institute appropriate and responsive complaint mechanisms
- 4 Consider including the retention of women staff and creation of a positive environment for them as part of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the organization’s management
- 5 Provide adequate and reasonable facilities and protection to female staff, to enable them to continue on their jobs such as safe transport, maternity leave, childcare allowances and day care centers, and breast feeding timeouts and facilitate flexible schedule as well as work from home options for women employees where feasible
- 6 Where feasible and necessary, provide gender segregated workspaces (in case of NGOs and INGOs)
- 7 For work-related travel, provide generous ‘mahram’ allowances and accommodation suitable for couples and for children and ensure these are budgeted for in all proposals
- 8 Offer online leadership and decision making, and even higher education courses to qualified senior women staff
- 9 Provide work mentorship, on-job professional capacity development, and education opportunities for women employees. The possibility of connecting women employees with senior women leaders, including those who have migrated to other countries, as their mentors, could be explored
- 10 Include women in succession planning by promoting women employees to senior deputy positions so that they can be groomed to take on leadership roles