



# The DEI Compact



## INGO Commitments toward Greater Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

---

The “DEI Compact: INGO Commitments toward Greater Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” represents a pledge by the InterAction community, the largest U.S.-based alliance of international NGOs, to urgently work to improve INGO programming, operations, and advocacy with regard to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Consistent with calls across many institutions and industries across the U.S. and around the world to do more to address systemic and systematic issues of racism, sexism, tribalism, inequality, and inequity, this compact is our promise to do better in concrete ways. The purpose of this codified set of commitments is to make a clear, collective statement about leading DEI realities in the sector and the direction we need to go to address them in several key areas: 1) Operations, 2) Programs, 3) Engagement and Advocacy, 4) Learning, and 5) Communications. This DEI Compact is intended to serve as a set of shared principles and commitments, as well as a support mechanism to build off of existing InterAction standards and concretely develop a culture across organizations in which diversity, equity and inclusion are further championed and exhibited through actions, incentives, and accountability.

Signatory organizations will naturally follow different paths to meet the commitments articulated in this Compact, and we will collectively support each other as organizations chart their own course. This approach allows for flexible, phased implementation at the organizational level—taking local contexts and operational realities into consideration—while also benefiting from peer-networked learning and the collective insights and power of the coalition.

There are numerous InterAction members and partners already committed to leading this work, while some in the coalition are just beginning to truly focus on DEI internally or externally. No matter where an organization is on this journey, we can all benefit from strategies and best practices to accelerate operational and cultural change collectively.

## We acknowledge the following DEI realities:

- ▶ Fundamentally, around the world, the experience of oppression and privilege is historically inherent in the power structures of society and replicated within our organizations. Oppression harms women, men, gender nonconforming individuals, children, and disabled people across intersecting identities of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, and ability. The lack of genuine efforts to relinquish privilege unjustly or unfairly held by the dominant culture within any environment continues to be a barrier to realized equity of opportunities, compensation, and services from our organizations, both internally and externally.
- ▶ Racism continues to be a prominent global phenomenon and has a harmful impact on our colleagues working within the sector as well as those we work with across our various missions. Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination. Racism historically involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.
- ▶ Anti-Blackness voids Blackness of value, while systematically marginalizing Black people and their issues. The first form of anti-Blackness is overt racism. The second form of anti-Blackness stems from individuals' indifference toward institutions and policies that dehumanize Black people. Both forms of anti-Blackness create toxic environments impacting equality, equity, and the right to live and work free from discrimination or abuse.
- ▶ Inclusion of people with disabilities is important for all communities and organizations, but it is especially critical to the mission of humanitarian and development organizations. While disability is part of the human condition—almost everyone will be temporarily or permanently compromised at some point in their lives—disability disproportionately affects the poorest populations. Children with disabilities are less likely to start school, stay in school, and be promoted in school. People with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed and get paid less than their non-disabled counterparts when they are employed. People with disabilities experience worse health outcomes and restricted participation in the public arena. Despite legal frameworks and policies designed to support participation of people with disabilities, actual actions are lacking and insufficient.



**We will invest in the following values through policy and action to see R.E.A.L. transformation in the international NGO sector:**

### **REPRESENTATION**

Eliminating the barriers for individuals from diverse, historically excluded groups to enter, thrive, and truly lead within the sector and across their societies.

### **EMPATHY**

Providing the intentional space to understand and utilize diverse perspectives as a tool to disrupt unconscious bias and inherited systems of oppression.

### **ACCESS**

Operationalizing standards and accountable systems that promote fairness and enhance the experience of diversity, equity, belonging, and inclusion for all.

### **LEARNING**

Fostering a culture with a willingness to learn challenging concepts and seek out robust training on DEI-related topics.



- ▶ For LGBTQIA+ individuals, the enforcement of strict gender and relationship norms has historically been and continues to be a cause of violence and exclusion from social, economic, and civic participation. Prejudicial legal and social structures related to gender identity and sexual orientation or expression prevent equal access to safety, health, justice, and other critical outcomes sought by development and humanitarian organizations serving vulnerable people in the U.S. and around the world.
- ▶ People’s identities are multifaceted. Race, class, gender, religious beliefs, age, ability, tribe or ethnic group, political affiliation, and so many other individual characteristics intersect with one another in ways that factor into advantage and disadvantage. INGOs work across cultures and we have a responsibility to recognize the intersectionality of identities and to use our voices, resources, and programs to help people and communities particularly vulnerable to discrimination and oppression.
- ▶ After generations of foreign assistance too-often reflecting colonial-era power dynamics, the sector must now fulfill its long awaited promise to shift power to countries and local stakeholders to allow the people who are impacted by INGO programming to control their own outcomes. Part of working toward just and prosperous societies through DEI requires partnering with underrepresented and marginalized groups who have historically held less power but are leading important shifts. Not only does this require decentralizing power and resources from the Global North, it also means strengthening the capacity of local actors, acknowledging where local actors already have strong capacities, and supporting local solutions.

**We, the undersigned, also commit to begin or improve upon the following actions:**

**Operations**

- ▶ Establish targets, including for diversity at leadership levels, with organizational data on diversity and staff perceptions of inclusion and belonging to accurately inform metrics and identify gaps.
- ▶ Explore and unpack how implicit bias, white dominant cultural norms, and saviorism complex show up in recruitment, hiring, and operational practices.
- ▶ Help teams understand why diversity is core to achieving their goals and identify what diverse representation means for them, integrating DEI as a factor in performance evaluation at all levels.
- ▶ Reform recruitment and hiring practices by consciously tracking associated demographic data systematically and by taking concrete steps such as expanding networks and sources for recruitment, reinforcing DEI values in job descriptions, posting salary range information, redacting applications to reduce bias, representing diversity through interview panels, reducing bias in interviews, and ensuring recruitment practices incorporate meaningful accommodations for people with disabilities.
- ▶ Support retention of diverse staff through proper onboarding, continuous reinforcement of an inclusive workplace (including through mentorship programs and employee resource groups, as appropriate), and equitable and transparent performance evaluation and compensation policies (including regular pay equity reviews).

- ▶ Support efforts across the sector to accelerate the advancement of young professionals and emerging INGO leaders from underrepresented groups (for example, through leadership fellowships and paying interns to ensure greater equity and diversity across the talent pipeline).
- ▶ Apply a DEI lens to organizational governance structures and approaches, as well as to partnerships, vendor relationships, and associated policies and procedures.

## **Programs**

- ▶ Prioritize mainstreaming and institutionalizing DEI principles and commitments into all stages of programming. For example, including diverse local community stakeholder input, influence, and ideally leadership in project design, implementation, and subsequent monitoring, evaluation, and assessment of projects.
- ▶ Ensure that the voices from communities we serve, especially women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups, are informing and leading our programs.
- ▶ Apply an intersectional, inclusive lens to the existing approaches, tools, and processes our organizations use to develop and deliver programs from conception to funding to implementation.
- ▶ Implement new standards and processes to help center local partners in policy and funding discussions.

## **Engagement and Advocacy**

- ▶ Improve understanding among our constituents, donors, governing bodies, vendors, corporate partners, and staff of the challenges of global inequities and persistent injustices, including how they connect to the effective delivery of international development and humanitarian aid.
- ▶ Strategically work to make DEI-focused recommendations relevant to public policy priorities within our organizations' relevant areas of influence locally, nationally, and internationally.
- ▶ Ensure that the voices of impacted communities and the local institutions that serve them are represented in advocacy and policy decisions.

## **Cross-Cutting Essentials:**

### **LEARNING**

- ▶ Learn about and create new decolonial approaches, tools, and processes in international development and humanitarian work to better examine practices, lessons learned, and experiences of harm associated with our work and enable us to more equitably and inclusively deliver on our missions.
- ▶ Work collectively through InterAction at multiple levels across our coalition of organizations to better advance DEI issues throughout organizations' programming, operational management, and advocacy.

- ▶ Engage in networked learning, information sharing, capacity building, and training opportunities while also participating in and benefiting from shared resources such as a resource library, peer-to-peer engagement and working groups associated with implementation of this Compact.
- ▶ Participate in annual collective progress-monitoring surveys to measure coalition-wide advances across the set of commitments.
- ▶ Review our set of DEI Compact commitments in 2027 (after five years) to continue to advance the agenda and ensure strategic renewal of our approaches since the nature of the DEI realities we are operating under do evolve over time.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

- ▶ Speak credibly and openly about DEI goals, progress, and outcomes internally and externally.
- ▶ Ensure DEI is explicitly incorporated into internal and external communications responsibilities, enabling consistent and aligned inclusive communications.
- ▶ Establish venue(s) for ongoing internal dialogue with employees around DEI questions and issues.
- ▶ Help the people we serve tell their authentic stories, centering our storytelling in their voices whenever possible, so they can be seen and heard for their aspirations and contributions instead of their circumstances.