

## Case Study

# Norwegian Refugee Council tackles gender equality

Roger Parry, Director of Agenda Consulting interviewed Gyda Bugge, HR Director of Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). The discussion explored how NRC used a survey to develop an impactful, long-term strategy to tackle gender equality.

### What were your goals in relation to gender equality?

“Gender equality has always been important to NRC and we decided to set a goal of 40-60% for the percentage of females in each grade and location. We did this for two reasons. Firstly, we know that greater diversity in our leadership fosters a more inclusive culture and a stronger organisation. Secondly, it contributes to our effectiveness on the ground as many of our beneficiaries are women.”

### Why did you conduct a survey?

“There were lots of ideas and opinions about how NRC should improve gender equality. But before deciding on the way forward I wanted to reach a deeper understanding and listen to the views of all female managers and leaders, wherever they were based.”

### What topics did the survey cover?

“We looked at it broadly and asked about work-life balance, safety and security, discrimination, gender dynamics, career ambitions, recruitment, views on NRC’s current approaches to gender equality, barriers to and enablers of career advancement.”

### What were the main things that you learned from the survey?

“Our biggest takeaway was that the issues were about gender dynamics, culture and leadership rather than specific policies or benefits, for example insurance or space for breastfeeding.

Another issue was a lack of a professional network. Most of the social events that take place were difficult for women to be involved in.

We also discovered that there was a great deal of consistency between the responses from females in different grades and in different locations.”

“The survey allowed us get the facts about the key issues and helped us focus on strategies that would make a difference.” – Gyda Bugge



Gyda Bugge  
HR Director  
NRC



Roger Parry  
Director, Agenda  
Consulting

### About NRC

NRC is an independent humanitarian organisation helping people forced to flee. NRC works in crises in more than 30 countries, where they help save lives and rebuild futures.

Around 14,000 staff work with the NRC. Most are hired locally to work in the field, and a small number are based at the head office in Oslo. Many of the NRC’s staff were once themselves fleeing their homes.

[www.nrc.no](http://www.nrc.no)

### Goals

- Know exactly how the female managers in our workforce felt about the NRC’s approach to gender equality.
- Find out the most impactful and meaningful solutions to tackling the gender imbalance.
- Develop a long-term strategy to attracting and keeping women in our workforce.
- Create a culture of inclusivity and equality that empowers women to progress in their careers.

## What strategies have you pursued how is it making a difference?

“At a global level we confirmed the 40-60% target and:

- reviewed our leadership programme;
- updated our recruitment standards and induction programme to make sure we are conveying the message of equality at all stages of our staff’s journey at NRC;
- developed our employer branding, including editing our online presence and publicity to ensure the way we are communicating with current and future employees presents an inclusive and empowering culture for all genders;
- are developing a global female future leaders programme which encompasses mentoring and training.

At country level we have:

- given each country its own 40-60% target;
- asked each country to develop its own action plan to achieve the target.

Our Afghanistan programme has been particularly engaged and has undertaken work on culture and recruitment, including the use of quotas for some roles. This has been very impressive given the context for our work there.”

“We aren’t a success story yet, but we are taking it seriously and making significant changes, with a long-term strategic approach.” – Gyda Bugge

## Are the changes you are making sustainable?

“It’s early days, but we are pleased with how things are progressing. We will be asking countries to share their progress at an upcoming global HR workshop.

The key is to keep going on gender equality: share experiences, set targets, measure progress and hold managers to account. That’s the way that we will make gender equality an established part of the way we work at NRC.

Going forward, we will conduct a global survey across the whole of NRC to measure the impact of these initiatives and to gather the views of the whole organisation on these issues.”

To find out more, get in touch with Gyda on [gyda.bugge@nrc.no](mailto:gyda.bugge@nrc.no) or Roger on [roger.parry@agendaconsulting.co.uk](mailto:roger.parry@agendaconsulting.co.uk).



NORWEGIAN  
REFUGEE COUNCIL



## Approach

- Employee survey, targeted at female managers and leaders in the organisation, provided by Agenda Consulting.
- Exploring topics including discrimination, gender dynamics and views on NRC’s current approaches to gender equality.

## Results

- New global and regional targets for gender equality.
- Developing a female future leadership programme.
- Open discussions amongst leadership on the issue of equality.

## About Agenda Consulting

Agenda offers employee and volunteer engagements surveys for INGOs and International Organisations.

We are catalysts in providing leaders with compelling evidence and deep insight, giving them the confidence to craft the right strategies to deliver their vision.

[www.agendaconsulting.co.uk](http://www.agendaconsulting.co.uk)

