

International Development Committee Sub-Inquiry: Racism in the Aid Sector United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) Submission

The United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK)

The United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) is one of 33 UNICEF National Committees around the world. We were established in 1956 as an independent charitable organisation and have since worked tirelessly to raise vital funds for UNICEF - from the private sector and the general public - and to promote and defend children's rights worldwide, including here in the UK.

UNICEF UK is submitting evidence to the International Development Committee as part of our commitment to achieving diversity and inclusion through challenging institutional racism and other discriminations that are inherent in established systems, processes, and cultures.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. All of our work is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC sets out the fundamental rights that all children should have, regardless of their background or circumstances, to enable them to develop to their full potential.
- 1.2. Diversity and Inclusion is fundamental to achieving UNICEF UK's vision of a world fit for every child. In line with the UNCRC, we are here for every child without discrimination – whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities, or any other status; whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.
- 1.3. We believe in representing this vision in our own organisation, to help accomplish our mission for every child. We want to create a diverse and inclusive working culture that empowers and enables all our people to deliver their best work for children. For that reason, we have been reflecting on and reviewing our approach to what we can meaningfully do as an organisation to actively and genuinely be inclusive of all.
- 1.4. Last year, we launched the first UNICEF UK Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, [available here](#). It sets out our aims and objectives from 2020 – 2023 and our commitment to achieve our vision of a more inclusive and diverse workforce. It was a key moment for us in establishing how we needed to change and improve. To support this this, we put in place a wide-reaching action plan and monitoring, evaluation and governance to track progress.
- 1.5. Since then, we have delivered a significant amount. We have put in place multiple learning interventions for leaders and colleagues, formalised employee networks, and had multiple initiatives to celebrate diversity. We have developed tools, processes and resources for all staff, such as an Equality Impact Assessment, Diversity and Inclusion Resource Pack and Anti-Racism Resource Pack, as well as having made significant changes to our recruitment process. These changes include updating the language in job descriptions, advertising in new places, removing educational requirements and having diverse interview panels. We have also updated our Diversity and Inclusion policy, and each Directorate has put commitments in place detailing specific actions they will deliver each year.
- 1.6. We are committed to achieving our vision for diversity and inclusion. We recognise the systemic change this will require, and therefore how challenging it will be. As such we are not clear how long it will take us to fully deliver our ambition. But we are actively challenging ourselves, have clear milestones on our journey, and will be transparent about our progress.

2. Why do we need to have a discussion about racism in the aid sector?

- 2.1. We need to have a discussion about racism in the aid sector for the same reason that we need to have a discussion about racism in wider society and how all our institutions have a part to play in upholding or dismantling racism. As an organisation, our duties to remove barriers to access and participation and ensure that no one is discriminated due to their identity are also underpinned by the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.2. The aid sector is predominately white and therefore is not reflective of the communities we serve, nor the wider society in which many UK development organisation charities are based. There is particularly poor representation of minoritised ethnicities within the aid sector, especially in higher positions. This highlights the structural barriers in terms of recruitment and retention and we have a social and moral duty to dismantle those barriers.
- 2.3. International aid organisations seek to alleviate people from poverty, ensure people have rights and can live with dignity. It is therefore essential that anti-racism is built into our programming as well as within in our institutional culture, as one cannot be done authentically or effectively without the other.

3. What are the practical implications of racism in the aid sector?

- 3.1. Racism in the aid sector, like racism anywhere, upholds a structure of oppression which discriminates against minoritised ethnicities. The practical implications are that those from minoritised ethnicities are not given an equitable opportunity to participate and contribute to the aid sector and the aid sector can reinforce the very systems of oppression it seeks to dismantle. At UNICEF UK we recognise this means that excellent talent and diverse perspectives and experiences will be overlooked and therefore our aims, objectives and outcomes are hindered.
- 3.2. Aside from the moral duty for diversity and inclusion, it is well researched that diverse and inclusive organisations achieve greater outcomes. Without having a diverse makeup of colleagues internally and an inclusive culture, decisions that are made will not be representative of the communities that we exist to serve and therefore may continue to perpetuate a negative power imbalance and narrative of white savioursism.
- 3.3. When combined together, the factors listed in the bullet points above are likely to be contributing to a range of impacts for organisations including:
 - Attrition of institutional knowledge, due to the negative impact on turnover caused through colleagues leaving the organisation as an unspoken first option for achieving their desired career progression.
 - Higher turnover may also contribute to challenges at team level in relation to delivering business continuity, and balancing work allocation across remaining team members whilst vacant posts are recruited. If an external candidate is hired as opposed to an internal candidate, there is likely to be a longer wait period for the post to be filled than with an internal hire.
 - Limited hiring and promotion of people from under-represented groups, in particular non-white candidates and disabled candidates will in turn limit organizational problem-solving and innovation as a result of the limitations in diversity of perspective and experience that the organisation has access to.
 - Increased spend on expensive external recruitment channels used to acquire external applicants.

- High levels of dissatisfaction in relation to career progression. This issue may contribute to remaining colleagues forming limiting beliefs about what is possible for their future career progression as a result of their interactions with exiting colleagues and prior negative experiences being shared

4. How can aid actors be actively anti-racist?

- 4.1. We believe that organisations like UNICEF UK have a profound responsibility in terms of acknowledging the historical context within which they work and taking steps to ensure that negative power dynamics and white saviourism/supremacy are not perpetuated within their organisation or in the external work that they do. Leaders from international aid organisations should take a collaborative stance on their efforts to tackle systems of oppression and the ways they may be reinforcing harmful narratives both within their organisation and in the work that they do externally.
- 4.2. We believe that sustained focus is crucial in tackling systemic changes, hence our leaders have each made personal commitments as well as corporate commitments that are directly relevant to their areas of work. Specifically, UNICEF UK has made commitments to:
 - Ensure that our communications are respectful of the communities in which UNICEF works and whom UNICEF supports, and that UNICEF UK takes seriously its commitments to stand against hate and harassment across all our platforms and the channels which we use for our communications to supporters;
 - Increase diversity and champion inclusion across the images we use, the stories we tell, the voices we amplify and with those who represent us across all our areas of activity;
 - Actively procure services from suppliers who demonstrate a commitment to both diversity and inclusion;
 - Publish and share meaningful data and reporting to ensure that UNICEF UK is transparent about areas in which we are making good progress in relation to diversity and inclusion and areas in which we need to work harder to improve;
 - Ensure that UNICEF UK works with our partners and donors in a culturally sensitive way. To achieve this, we will continue to upskill our cultural competence to enable us to represent the children and communities UNICEF UK exists to serve. We will do this by placing Diversity and Inclusion at the heart of our existing relationships and when attracting new partners.
- 4.3. UNICEF UK acknowledges that it is not enough for us to say we're not racist, each of us has an obligation in both our professional and personal lives to actively call out injustices and work to become meaningful allies to those from minoritised ethnicities.
- 4.4. At UNICEF UK, we believe that there are three commitments we can make to dismantling systems of inequality in both our personal and professional lives:
 - We will listen to voices of colour and we will actively learn about racism;
 - We will actively learn about racism, structural oppression and privilege;
 - We will live an anti-racist lifestyle
- 4.5. We have created a Resource Pack for staff which unpacks these commitments, providing education and learning for our colleagues.

5. How does the language used by aid actors relate to discussions around racism and power dynamics?

- 5.1. Language and imagery denote concepts about people, and are therefore crucial in terms of how we talk to and about people in a way that is anti-oppressive. Language around race has changed over time to reflect the change in social constructs of race and ethnicity. Within the aid sector, language must move away from a perspective of conscious or unconscious ethnocentrism which 'others' people in relation to those in power, or perpetuates oppressive power dynamics between those who hold power and those who are minoritised. Words such as 'beneficiary' frame an individual in a 'tragedy' model and places a dynamic in which the person is merely the receiver of aid and has no agency. Concepts of 'accountability' must refer to those with/for whom the aid sector works, as well as those who fund it.
- 5.2. In terms of our external work at UNICEF UK, we have re-written our imagery guidance to ensure that all our imagery has the dignity of the child at centre of our work and is not exploitative. We also have language and terminology guidance which provides information on the terminology which is appropriate and which conceptualises identity from a place of dignity and equality. We endeavour to accurately represent the situation for children around the world, including in crisis situations, and to balance vulnerability with empowerment in our tone.

6. How diverse is staffing within UNICEF UK? Does this change at different levels of seniority?

- 6.1. In order to understand our progress towards significantly greater representation in our workforce, we have identified data that we think is particularly relevant to consider. Our data from 2020 – 2021 tell us that at UNICEF UK that there is a lack of representation across the organisation for specific identities, including those who are BAME, LGBT+ and disabled.
- 6.2. At UNICEF UK we want to ensure that our workforce is representative of the London population in which we predominantly work and that there is no difference in terms of colleague experiences of inclusion based on identity. As such, we have set aspirational staffing targets which are; 40% representation of minoritised ethnic communities, 19% disabled people; 8% LGBT+ (this latter figure is based on comparison with similar organisations).
- 6.3. Our goals for a diverse workforce have not yet been realised. Our current figures are; 22% of our colleagues are from minoritised ethnic communities, 6% are LGBT+ and 3% are disabled. We currently have very little representation of minoritised communities in our senior leadership and Executive team. In terms of ethnicity, we have majority of Black, Asian and other minoritised ethnicities in the lower band levels, and none are currently represented in our Senior Leadership or Executive Teams.
- 6.4. Whilst demographic data is important to understand the challenges that exist, for whom and where in the organisation, at UNICEF UK we know that for this work to be meaningful, effective and sustainable, the key drivers must be inclusion and equity. We believe that developing an inclusive culture, with equitable practices and processes, this will lead to a diverse and representative workforce with higher retention rates and positive work outcomes.
- 6.5. The data from our monitoring and reporting shows that there has been an improvement in terms of colleagues feeling included, valued and treated with fairness and dignity. However there remain significant challenges, especially for those from minoritised ethnic communities who experience less feelings of inclusion than their colleagues and who are over-represented in lower

job levels. This includes feeling less valued, feeling that there is inequality in terms of progression opportunities, feeling less safe to contribute, speak out or challenge others and less respected and treated equally by others.

6.6. At UNICEF UK we are transparent about the challenges that exist and we know that this is not good enough. Our Action Plan (Paragraph 7.4) identifies the actions we are taking to improve representation and colleague experience. We are serious about our commitments to inclusion and to creating a workplace which is representative and inclusive, where all are able to participate, contribute and thrive. Only then can we truly live our values and ensure the maximum and most positive impact for the communities whom we serve.

7. What actions has UNICEF UK taken to promote diversity and inclusion and what impact have these had?

7.1. A UNICEF UK Diversity and Inclusion Lead was appointed in November 2019. As a result, our 2020 – 2023 Diversity and Inclusion Strategy was developed to respond to the diversity and inclusion challenges that exist in the organisation. Using quantitative data we were able to understand the representation of colleagues across the organisation which has been detailed above. We also used surveys and feedback to analyse the experiences of colleagues in terms of feeling included, as well as assessing the knowledge and confidence levels of the organisation about Diversity and Inclusion related issues. Our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy sets out our Strategic Goals from 2020 – 2023:

- Create a safe and open working culture by ensuring there is no statistically significant difference engagement scores across race, disability or sexual orientation by the end of 2023;
- Achieve significantly more diverse representation across each job level in our workforce to better reflect the UK population and other organisations within our sector by the end of 2025.

7.2. The Strategy's Strategic Goals will be achieved through three identified Enabling Goals: developing inclusive leadership, embedding inclusion into our reporting, planning and decision making, and through developing the learning and understanding of Diversity and Inclusion across the organisation.

7.3. Our vision is to deliver an effective and sustainable diversity & inclusion infrastructure that addresses these core areas: leadership and decision making, systems and processes, and culture and community. This is supported by our governance and structure:

- Diversity Action Group: To provide strategic direction and oversight of the Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, hold areas of the business accountable to delivering on diversity and inclusion objectives, and make recommendations and decisions relating to the inclusive journey of UNICEF UK.
- Inclusive UNICEF Committee: To build and sustain inclusive communities, advocate for the rights and improvement of marginalised groups, provide feedback and consultation on business priorities and major decisions, bring to life a visibly diverse culture and act as a critical and strategic friend to UNICEF UK.
- Diversity and Inclusion Lead and People Team: To drive Networks to actively contribute to UNICEF UK's strategic commitment to diversity and inclusion by raising awareness, building meaningful communities and holding the organisation to account.
- Wellbeing Champions: To create a safe environment in the workplace for people to be open and honest about their mental wellbeing and influence our mental wellbeing strategy.

- Working Groups: Can be set up in response to specialised/major projects or actions requiring expertise.
- Colleague Communities: For colleagues who share a protected characteristic or other mutual special interest but are not part of an established network group. For example, faith or disability.

7.4. A detailed Action Plan accompanying the Strategy produced by the Diversity and Inclusion Lead in collaboration with the Diversity Action Group also defines a number of activities to achieve these goals over a three-year period. Since 2020 UNICEF UK have implemented the following outputs:

- An evidence-based and participatory strategy with identified aims and objectives
- An action plan identifying key projects and timeframes
- A monitoring and reporting system, and an established a baseline
- Establishing and reporting against the diversity dashboard
- A governance structure, including the formation of the Diversity Action Group
- A programme of formal and informal learning and reflections opportunities including a 6-hour bespoke 'inclusive behaviours' training and a 3 hour 'inclusive leadership' training as well as informal lunch and learns
- Formalised colleagues' networks with identified co-chairs for the LGBT+ network, gender network, disability network and Racial Justice Network
- Designing equality impact assessments
- Identified inclusive directorate commitments owned by each directorate
- Enhanced screening processes
- Visible celebrations of history months and faith-based holidays
- A Diversity and Inclusion resource handbook for colleagues
- Events and activities to raise awareness of social justice issues (e.g Anti-racism)

7.5. Whilst there is still a long journey to go on, the outcomes of our 2020-21 Diversity and Inclusion survey convey that for much of the organisation the impact has been positive and experiences of inclusion have increased. However, for the majority of colleagues from minoritised ethnic communities, this is not the case which conveys that there is much more work and focus for this area.

8. Conclusion

8.1. We are committed to continuing to strengthen our efforts in this area and to making UNICEF UK a truly diverse and inclusive place to work, so that we can deliver the best results for children. Challenges do still exist and will shape our continued areas of focus and effort. We are steadfast in our resolve to achieving our goals. We know this is a journey which requires commitment, consistency and determination over time and that we are still at an early stage.

8.2. We believe that we have made a good start, putting in place practical and tangible changes to ensure our systems, processes, policies and brand are conducive to an inclusive workforce that will provide us with the foundations to build the equitable and inclusive culture we need to deliver our best work for children.

8.3. Primarily, we are keen to continue to learn, listen and take concrete actions to improve. We want to take a collaborative approach to anti-racism and look forward to the findings and recommendations of this Committee's Inquiry.