

INASP organizational gender audit

*Report of findings and
recommendations - executive summary*

October 2017

Jenny Birchall and Ceri Hayes

Executive summary

This report outlines the scope, methodology, findings and recommendations arising from the INASP organizational gender audit. INASP is an international development charity working with a global network of partners in Africa, Latin America and Asia. It works to support individuals and institutions to produce, share and use research and knowledge, which can transform lives. At the time of the organizational audit, it had 28 members of staff; 24 women and four men.

The audit was part of a broader programme of work on gender equity being undertaken at INASP. One of the principles guiding INASP's work is: "Promoting Equity: Actively addressing the needs of both men and women across all of our work and addressing issues of power within the research and knowledge system." Work in this area has included an initial gender audit of INASP's external facing programmatic work, a number of partnership projects focusing on gender mainstreaming in the research and knowledge sector, the establishment of a cross-organizational Gender Working Group, and the development of a programme's gender action plan.

The organizational audit took place between April and October 2017, with the aims of:

- Exploring how effectively the particular needs of women and men have been accounted for in INASP organizational policies and culture and identify any critical gaps or challenges and how these can be addressed.
- Enhancing understanding of INASP management of the importance of gender issues in the context of HR policies and practices and organizational culture.
- Identifying key lessons and tools which can be used to ensure gender can be mainstreamed practically and effectively into current policies and practices.

Background and methodology

Audit activities were guided by a framework consisting of seven areas of enquiry:

1. Strategies and policies
2. Leadership and accountability
3. Workplace culture
4. Performance and rewards
5. Recruitment and selection
6. Resources
7. Monitoring and evaluation

Audit methodology included:

- Development of an audit framework
- A document review examining human resources policies from a gender perspective
- A confidential online staff survey
- Focus group discussions and interviews with INASP staff

Findings

The audit process highlighted a number of positive findings, including:

- INASP has a wide range of human resources policies, covering most aspects of organizational gender equality, as well as a clear and informative staff handbook. There is high awareness among staff of the existence of policies with gender equality or work life balance dimensions.
- The majority of INASP staff feel that senior leadership in the organization is gender balanced, that senior leaders actively promote INASP's commitment to gender equity, and that senior leaders lead by example around gender equality and respect for diversity and difference.
- Staff members feel that INASP ranks favourably on workplace culture; including flexibility, behaviour and inclusive practices, and 98% agreed with the statement "I am treated fairly and equally in the workplace regardless of my gender". Only 8% of staff do not work flexibly in some way, and 83% think that INASP actively promotes work/life balance and helps enable staff to manage family and caring responsibilities to some extent.

- No members of staff report ever having experienced or witnessed sexual harassment while working at INASP. 82% have never experienced or witnessed bullying, and 77% have never experienced other types of harassment or abuses of power. 71% say they have never come across discriminatory opinions and attitudes, or gender stereotypes, among colleagues at INASP.
- 96% of participating staff members feel that decision making at INASP is either very, or quite inclusive and collaborative. Many female staff members noted that they feel their voices and opinions are heard and respected, whereas in other organizations they had worked this had not always been the case.
- The majority of staff feel that women and men have equal opportunities for promotion, training and development at INASP. INASP's human resources management team (HMT) reviews salaries annually in order to identify and correct any gaps or discrepancies in pay and other benefits.
- The INASP staff body as a whole is very highly qualified. Several have a Ph.D., and many others have Masters degrees and/or substantive experience working in development, education and publishing across global regions. It is a great benefit for INASP that it can draw on the skills and experience of such a talented, largely female, staff group.
- Data is collected on staff gender by seniority, length of service, job role and whether full or part time. Data is also held on staff take up of benefits and provisions (such as maternity, paternity or adoption leave, parental leave or time off for dependents) by gender. It is monitored on an annual basis.

At the same time, a number of areas for improvement and further consideration were identified during the audit. These include:

- While INASP has developed a broad range of top-line policies, many include few details or guidance on how staff should implement them in practice. Some policies do set out clear procedures to follow, but do not explicitly address the different needs of women and men, or seek to actively address gender inequalities or promote equality between men and women employees.
- While the majority of staff members are aware of the existence of policies, they are not necessarily familiar with the contents. In some cases, policies are being misrepresented by incorrect information that is passed on informally and verbally within the organization.
- Staff noted that of the four men employed by INASP, three are managers and two are senior managers. HMT noted that of these four men, there is one representing each level of the organization; one Programme Officer, one Programme Manager, one Senior Programme Manager, and one Director. Of the five members of INASP's Senior Management Team, two are male and three are female. Of INASP's six board of trustee members, four are female and two are male.
- Some policies, particularly around flexible working, may not be consistently applied across the organization. This could lead to situations where some employees are better supported and able to balance caring commitments than others. However, senior managers at INASP are keen to ensure that, due to the small size of the organization, flexibility and discretion is allowed, and that management frameworks are in place to monitor consistency on a case by case basis.
- Some employees at manager level feel less able to work flexibly because of the demands of their jobs and high workloads. This is seen as a barrier that could prevent for those with caring commitments applying for promotion and development opportunities in the future.
- The majority of INASP staff are willing and keen to travel – for many it is one of the benefits of their job. However, employees are aware of the difficulties that could arise if, during the course of employment at INASP, a person's life changed, and caring commitments made their ability to travel more difficult.
- Concerns were raised about the fact that INASP currently offers only statutory maternity, paternity and adoption pay. Staff members recognise that the current economic climate and the small size of the organization is the likely reason behind INASP's policy in this area, but the financial sacrifice facing women taking maternity leave from their work at INASP was thought to be clear and concerning.
- A number of concerns around pay policies and practices with a gender dimension were identified. These include: the practice of asking job applicants for details of their current or previous salary; the practice of negotiating starting salaries; and the policy of awarding

discretionary pay increases. HMT noted that clear oversight procedures are in place around these practices.

- The majority of INASP's staff is female (representative of the development and education sectors more broadly). INASP receives fewer job applications from men, and the strongest candidates in recruitment rounds are usually women. This in itself is not a challenge, because the INASP staff body as a whole is very highly qualified and it is of great benefit to have such a talented, largely female, staff group. However, if INASP seeks to attract a more gender-balanced workforce in the future, this is something for further consideration.

Recommendations

Based on the audit's findings, a number of recommendations have been developed, which can be found in the full report, and as a list in appendix 6.5. Not all of these recommendations have been developed in direct response to problems or challenges at INASP; some of them are intended as suggestions that INASP may wish to take up in the longer term, as it works towards its aspiration to mainstream gender across all of its work and to be an exemplar organization in terms of promoting gender equity. Staff at INASP will now engage in a process of considering and prioritising the recommendations, in order to create a plan of action. Key recommendations emerging from the audit include:

- Expand key gender and equality related policies – such as the flexible working, discrimination, equal opportunities and harassment policies – to include more explanation, examples and implementation guidance. Incorporate an explicit gender equality dimension into policies where this will be relevant and useful – such as the travel, recruitment and flexible working policies.
- Update policies where information is out of date and create new policies in order to fill gender related gaps. Continue to provide training for all staff on new and refreshed policies.
- As organizational learning on gender increases within INASP, ensure that all senior leaders are equipped to talk about, and implement, INASP's commitments to gender equity.
- Support the development of leadership skills within INASP's current (largely female) staff body through connecting with external networks and groups, and capitalising on internal opportunities for support, learning and growth.
- Drawing on the informal good practice that INASP has followed on a case by case basis in the past, develop a policy on new parents' return to work. This should include travel on return to work, support and confidence building, flexibility, breastfeeding arrangements, and should join up with other policies related to caring.
- In the longer term, consider the provision of enhanced maternity, paternity and adoption pay. In the short term, continue to offer and develop lower cost incentives to support new parents and encourage them to return to INASP after their leave (for example transitional periods, mentoring, increased flexibility, overlaps between maternity leavers coming back and their maternity cover leaving).
- Develop guidance for staff around dealing with situations/incidents of gender discrimination and stereotypes when working in different cultural contexts. Provide spaces where staff can talk about this issue, learn from each other, and build their confidence in dealing with such situations.
- Ensure that data collected as part of the annual salary review is disaggregated and analysed by gender and full or part time position. Ensure that the process for awarding additional pay increases does not contain any form of gender bias.
- Update INASP's recruitment policy and provide specific advice and training to all staff involved in recruitment about the gender dimensions of recruitment and selection, including: the gendered dynamics around confidence and 'selling' oneself; the potential different needs and experiences of women and men applicants; the importance of recognising skills gained outside of the workplace; and applying a gender lens to negotiations around salary and working arrangements.
- Develop new content for the 'People' section of the INASP website, where potential applicants can find out about INASP's key human resources commitments, policies and procedures. Develop a statement to be added to recruitment materials and job advertisements saying that INASP is an equal opportunities employer, strives towards a diverse workforce, and welcomes applications from underrepresented groups. Where

appropriate, add a statement noting that applicants can apply to do the role on a full time, part time or job share basis.

- Strengthen INASP's HR M&E procedures, including by: collecting and analysing data on the gender of job applicants, broken down by the different stages of the application process; analysing data on staff take up of benefits by gender (such as maternity/paternity leave, flexible working, parental leave etc.); collecting and analysing data on the proportion of women and men who return to work after maternity, paternity, and adoption leave to resume their original jobs, and the number still in their posts after a year; and analysing the findings of exit interviews to identify any gender related issues impacting on staff's decisions to leave.

Overall, the audit has demonstrated that INASP ranks very favourably amongst its staff as a positive, safe and equal environment to work in. The fact that 98% of survey respondents feel they are treated fairly and equally in the workplace regardless of their gender is testimony to this. It is clear that there remain areas for further improvement at INASP as it seeks to build on the strong foundations within its internal organizational culture and practice. Considering, prioritising and actioning the recommendations set out in this report will help INASP to move from an organization that is “doing a lot of good gender equality things without really paying attention to whether they contribute to gender equality” (Staff survey respondent), to an organization that actively and positively promotes gender equality, celebrating and supporting the talented women and men who work at INASP, and contributing to new thinking on equitable working relationships and forms of leadership.