Inter-Generational, Shared and Transformative Leadership

Advancing Women’s Rights

Public Lecture Presentation

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Presentation Outline

• Background About the World YWCA

• Conceptual Framework

• Why Inter-Generational Perspectives Leadership

• Linking inter-generational with shared and transformative leadership approaches,

• Contribution towards advancing the women’s rights agenda

• Indicative Analysis and Observations

• General Recommendations
World YWCA

- Founded in 1855 in London, and Federation established in 1894
- Present in 125 countries (108 Affiliated members and 17 developing groups)
- Present in 22,000 communities and reaches 25 million women and girls
- World Office (Headquarters) in Geneva, Switzerland, since 1930s
- Core mission is leadership development of women and girls for collective action
- Current Program has 3 main goals
  - Inter-generational leadership
  - Women Rights (SRHR, HIV and VAW)
  - Movement Building and Good Governance
- Two Tier Governance Structure
  - World Council, meets every 4 years (elects leaders, approves strategy, and adopts policy)
  - Board of 20 members, with 25% young women under 30 (constitutional requirement)
Conceptual frameworks underpinning inter-generational leadership

• 3 Conceptual Frameworks shapes my research focus

  – Human Rights (*notions of participation; non-discrimination, inclusion*)

  – Empowerment Framework (*knowledge, skills, resources, opportunities and choices*)

  – Social Capital (*harnessing and building the full potential of communities for development and well-being*)
Why Inter-Generational Approach

• NGO leadership mostly modeled on current norms and hierarchy of power, position and culture
  – unequal access and opportunity for effective participation of women of all generations in leadership

• Inability of current leadership models to effectively harness the potential of young people, and yet
  – Young people 18-30 have legal rights and are already taking significant roles in families; employment and labor market; as voters and consumers.
  – Innovative, creative and have the power to unleash transformations in society (social media innovations; Arab spring revolutions etc.).
  – Young people are impacted differently by the same issues, i.e. domestic violence; and have their own voice and options for solutions.
  – Young people are already growing leadership skills through experiences especially for those living in poverty or conflict situations who develop survival skills early in life.

• Influence of culture and values on participation and leadership approaches across gender and age; can be an opportunity or a barrier for inter-generational leadership.

• Expands the notion of democracy and voice of citizens as values that NGOs advocate for and seek to apply within their own governance.
Link between inter-generational, shared and transformative leadership

- Inter-generational and shared leadership expands the knowledge and experience base of an organization (social capital).
- Creates the glue for community cohesion, trust, confidence and respect across generation and other diversities of income, social status etc. (empowers and advances rights).
- Contributes to qualitatively of policy options and services oriented programs, by increases sensitivities through inter-generational perspectives (rights and diversity).
- Social capital base for succession planning and management of the organization, and avoid governance crisis.
- Building a mentorship base and network of leaders across generations committed to the same issues, as both successions and sustainability (social capital)
- Motivates NGOs to develop creative governance and leadership models and programmes that challenges the current models that continue to advance the values of democratic and inclusive governance (transformative and rights).
Contribution to Women’s Rights

- Supports an investment in critical numbers of young women as champions and advocates for women’s rights.

- Addressing the barriers that confront women of all generations with regards to access, quality participation, retention and succession.

- Harnesses the resources that exist especially in young women and older women.

- Recognises the inter-generational nature of gender equality issues.

- Affirms that achieving gender equality is a long term process and requires long-term investment in human capital and leadership that sustains the vision.

- Addresses the current deficit of projects and programs, towards a stronger women’s rights movement.
Analysis and Observations

• Little literature on inter-generational leadership and more on share and transformational leadership.

• Young people, especially young women are seen more as beneficiaries and program participants and NOT as leaders by many NGOs.
  – Approaches and programs for young women’s leadership structural focused, i.e. affirmative action in decision making
  – Leadership for personal decision making in private lives, life-skills and mentorship
  – Project participants in service delivery or in single age-group initiatives i.e. summer camps, girls space, etc.

• Older people, mostly women are expected to “retire” and not be visible active leaders, and only reach out to for contributions or legacies.

• Generational tensions/conflicts, perceptions on leadership issue
  – Older people seen as holding on to power, positions, and resources and not letting go (mostly by young people)
  – Older people having a sense of entitlement and that they “earned” the position, and young people should strive and claim, and not just be “given” leadership.
  – Young people are inexperienced; unavailable and too mobile to lead

• Not enough qualitative space for inter-generational dialogues and conversations on leadership related issues.

• Current governance models of many organizations (institutional, structural and culture) do not adequately promote inter-generational approaches.
Recommendations (illustrative)

• Invest more research in inter-generational leadership, and ground the theories and evidence for contribution to quality governance, and organizational effectiveness.

• NGOs/organizations, should adopt mixed methods to achieve inter-generational leadership, to include:
  – Formal structural and institutional changes like special measures
  – board mentorship and skills building for leading inter-generationally.
  – Change/shifts in organizational cultures
  – Safe spaces for inter-generational dialogues and conversations on issues of power and leadership.
  – Training, couching, mentorship

• Increased documentation, awareness building on young people especially young women as leaders (from victimhood to leadership).

• Recognize more the impact of youth and gender demographic data, social media and other trends as critical political, social and economic factors for organisations’ policy and programme options
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