

International Women's Day 2025 #AccelerateAction Toolkit

A practical resource for organisations to drive meaningful action towards gender equity.



Note from the Author



I vividly remember my first experience of gender inequity; I was 5 years old. I had completed my math classwork and noticed the boys beside me working on the next page. So, I asked the teacher if I could do the same. Her response was clear: *“That’s only for the boys. Sit quietly until your group is finished.”*

I remember feeling deeply frustration, like I was being dismissed because I was a girl. Little did I know that that moment ignited a lifelong commitment to advocating for women and championing gender equity in the world.

Fast forward to today, as a Chartered Psychologist with over 20 years of international experience, I now work with organisations to unlock the full potential of their diverse talent and build inclusive cultures where everyone can thrive and belong.

This toolkit is designed to help teams take meaningful action this International Women’s Day, raise awareness, harness the power of female talent, and drive gender equity in a way that creates lasting positive change.

I hope you find it valuable!

– **Sarah Christensen**



***Let’s #AccelerateAction,
together!***

How To Use This Toolkit



This toolkit is designed to be a practical and flexible resource for organisations looking to celebrate IWD in a meaningful and impactful way, while driving real change in gender equity.

How to Use This Toolkit

- Plan impactful IWD activities
- Spark conversations
- Empower leaders and teams
- Drive year-round change

Whether you're hosting an event, launching an initiative, or simply starting a conversation, you can use these resources in a way that makes sense for your and your team.



A Brief History of International Women's Day (IWD)



IWD has been celebrated since **1911**, marking a global movement for **women's rights, equality, and social progress**. It serves as a reminder of the strides made and the challenges still ahead in achieving **true gender equity**.

International Women's Day 2025 Theme: #AccelerateAction

This year's theme is a call to move **beyond conversation to action**. Organisations and individuals are encouraged to **drive real change** by:

- Breaking barriers in **leadership and opportunity**
- Addressing **bias and systemic inequalities**
- Creating **inclusive cultures where all talent thrives**

See our [“A Data-Driven Perspective on International Women's Day & Gender Equity”](#) research paper available on our website for further details on IWD, why it matters and up-to-date research findings on the state of women at work in the Middle East – visit our [website](#).

Glossary of Terms



Gender Equality

Defined as: Providing men and women with the same resources, opportunities, and treatment.

Workplace Example: An organisation that provides equal parental leave for both parents.

Gender Equity

Defined as: Recognise that individuals have different needs and circumstances and tailored support to ensure equal outcomes.

Workplace Example: A company offering additional leadership training for women to bridge representation gaps.

Intersectionality

Defined as: Different social identities (e.g. gender, race) intersect and create overlapping systems of discrimination.

Workplace Example: A woman of colour may experience different workplace challenges compared to a white woman.

Gender Bias

Defined as: The tendency to prefer one gender over another, often based on stereotypes rather than individual merit.

Workplace Example: In feedback, men are often described as "assertive" while women are labeled as "bossy" or "aggressive."

Glossary of Terms (cont.)



Mentorship

Defined as: Involves providing guidance, advice, and career support to help individuals grow.

Workplace Example: A mentor may advise a woman on improving her leadership skills or how to navigate office politics.

Sponsorship

Defined as: Using one's influence and networks to actively advocate for someone's career advancement.

Workplace Example: A sponsor will recommend her for a promotion or a high-visibility project.

Glass Ceiling

Defined as: An invisible barrier that prevents women from advancing to senior leadership positions, despite their qualifications.

Workplace Example: A woman with strong performance and experience is repeatedly overlooked for executive promotions.

Psychological Safety

Defined as: A work environment where employees feel safe to voice opinions, ask questions, and take risks without fear of judgment.

Workplace Example: A manager ensures that all voices are heard in meetings and that no one is penalised for speaking up.

Take Our Gender Equity Quiz



Here is a fun quiz to send out to your employees to help them assess and reflect on their role in promoting gender equity.

Participants answer 10 statements and score themselves to see where they stand on the Gender Equity Spectrum.

Scoring System

For each statement, participants rate themselves on a scale from **1 to 5**:

- 1** = Never
- 2** = Rarely
- 3** = Sometimes
- 4** = Often
- 5** = Always

At the end, they tally their score and find out their **Gender Equity Persona** with practical actions to improve.



Gender Equity Quiz



1. I actively listen to women's experiences without dismissing or minimising them.
2. I call out gender bias or microaggressions when I witness them, even when it feels uncomfortable
3. I ensure that women's voices are heard and not interrupted in meetings.
4. I advocate for women to have equal opportunities for hiring, promotions, and leadership roles.
5. I check my language to ensure it's inclusive (e.g., using 'team' instead of 'guys') and free from gender stereotypes.
6. I amplify the contributions of women by crediting their ideas and work.
7. I challenge stereotypes that limit women's potential (e.g., 'women aren't suited for leadership').
8. I encourage and invite men into gender equity conversations, ensuring it's a shared responsibility.
9. I continuously educate myself on gender equity issues and challenge my own biases.
10. I take meaningful action, beyond awareness, to foster an inclusive workplace for women.

Gender Equity Quiz Scores




Your Gender Equity Persona & Next Steps

50 – 40 points:

The Equity Champion


You are a strong advocate for gender equity and actively take steps to support women in the workplace.

 **Next Step:** Challenge organisational norms by mentoring, sponsoring, and influencing leadership to embed inclusive policies.

39 – 30 points:

The Active Ally


You believe in gender equity and take action when you can, but there's room to be more intentional.

 **Next Step:** Look for opportunities to proactively challenge biases, amplify women's contributions, and engage in structured allyship.

29 – 20 points:

The Inclusive Learner


You support gender equity in principle but may have the potential for more active engagement.

 **Next Step:** Focus on small, everyday actions like speaking up when bias occurs and expanding your awareness of workplace equity issues.

19 – 10 points:

The Emerging Supporter

You may not realise how gender equity impacts the workplace, or unsure of how to contribute.

 **Next Step:** Start by educating yourself about gender equity through training, listen to women's experiences, and exploring how biases show up at work.

Quick Conversation Starters for Gender Equity Discussions



Engage teams in meaningful discussions about gender equity in a non-intimidating and constructive way.

These conversation starters can be a great way to engage everyone during **team meetings, lunch-and-learns, leadership discussions, or International Women's Day events** to encourage open dialogue, reflection, and action on gender equity.

How to Use These Prompts Effectively

- **Make it a habit** – Dedicate 10 minutes in meetings to discussing one of these topics.
- **Create a safe space** – Encourage honest conversations without judgment.
- **Encourage diverse perspectives** – Invite different team members to share their thoughts.
- **End with action** – Ask participants to commit to one small change.



Opening Questions: Setting the Scene



These questions help kick off discussions by establishing a shared understanding of gender equity.



What does gender equity mean to you, and how is it different from gender equality?



Why do you think gender equity is important in our workplace? How does it benefit everyone?



Have you ever witnessed or experienced gender bias at work? How did it play out?



Can you think of a time when gender diversity led to better decision-making or innovation in our team?



What workplace barriers do women still face, and how can we remove them?

Mini Playbook for Leaders



Your Role as a Leader

As a leader, you set the tone for gender equity in your organisation. Your actions, decisions, and advocacy shape an inclusive culture where everyone, regardless of gender, can thrive.

Your influence matters. Employees look to you for guidance on what's acceptable, supported, and prioritised. By committing to gender equity, you drive **better decision-making, stronger engagement, and higher performance** across your teams.

The following include **5 key actions** you can take as a leader to **accelerate gender equity** in your organisation.



5 Key Actions to Accelerate Gender Equity



1. Amplify Women's Voices in Meetings

- Ensure that women are **heard, acknowledged, and credited** for their contributions.
- **Call out interruptions** and re-centre the conversation when needed.
- Use meeting facilitation strategies like **'round robins'** or **structured turn-taking**.



2. Challenge Bias in Hiring & Promotions

- Insist on **diverse candidate slates** for recruitment and leadership roles.
- Review promotion decisions for **potential gender bias** in performance evaluations.
- Use **structured interview questions** to ensure fair hiring processes.

5 Key Actions to Accelerate Gender Equity



3. Advocate for Fair Policies

- Ensure hiring, promotions, and performance evaluations are **structured, transparent, and free from bias**.
- Regularly review workplace policies to ensure they **support all employees equitably**.
- Create **clear reporting channels** for bias or inequities and ensure employees **feel safe** using them.



4. Be a Sponsor, Not Just a Mentor

- **Mentors give advice. Sponsors create opportunities.**
- Actively **champion women for leadership roles, high-visibility projects, and promotions.**
- Call out **gendered feedback** that holds women back (e.g., being ‘too assertive’ vs. ‘a strong leader’).

5 Key Actions to Accelerate Gender Equity



5. Hold Yourself & Others Accountable




Bonus Tip: Engage Men as Allies

- Set **clear gender equity goals** and measure progress.
- **Role model inclusive leadership**—walk the talk by demonstrating behaviour you expect from others.
- Publicly **recognise and celebrate** gender equity champion within your organisation.

Gender equity is not just a ‘women’s issue’, it’s a business imperative.

Encourage men to be active allies by:

- ✓ Attending gender inclusion training
- ✓ Calling out workplace bias
- ✓ Advocating for parental leave & flexible work for all.

 **Final Thought:** *Gender equity isn’t just about fixing policies, it’s about shifting mindsets, behaviours, and culture.*

5 Practical Ways to #AccelerateAction



Driving meaningful change towards gender equity requires action on multiple fronts including policies, processes, behaviours and mindsets which are embedded into everyday **decisions, interactions, and leadership expectations.**

This needs **consistent application** of fair and transparent practices, **active role modeling**, and holding **leaders accountable** are key to sustaining momentum.

Here are five practical ways to **#AccelerateAction** and create a more equitable workplace where everyone can thrive.



Ways to #AccelerateAction: #1



Use Inclusive Language & Imagery



What It Is



The words and visuals we use shape workplace culture. **Inclusive language** ensures communication is free from gendered or exclusionary terms, while **diverse imagery** represents the people we work with and serve.

Why It's Important



- Reinforces a culture of respect and inclusion.
- Reduces unconscious bias in communication and visual representation.
- Helps avoid outdated stereotypes and ensures everyone feels valued.

How To Do It



- Swap **gendered job titles** for neutral alternatives (e.g., *chairperson* instead of *chairman*).
- Use "**they/them**" or **neutral alternatives** when referring to someone whose gender is unknown.
- Choose **diverse and representative images** that reflect different genders, ethnicities, and abilities.

Ways to #AccelerateAction: #2



Break Down Bias



What It Is



Bias, often unconscious, influence decisions in all areas of working life, including hiring, promotions, and our engagement with others. This can create barriers for women as they advance in their careers.

Why It's Important



- Ensures fair practices and processes.
- Leads to more diverse and higher performing teams
- Ensures decision-making is based on skills and merit rather than assumptions.

How To Do It



- Implement **structured processes** with standardised evaluation criteria to minimise bias.
- Train employees to recognise and challenge bias.
- Rotate high-visibility projects and leadership opportunities to ensure fair access for all employees.

Ways to #AccelerateAction: #3



Support Flexible Working Models



What It Is



Flexible work arrangements (e.g. hybrid work, flexible hours, and parental leave) allow employees to balance work and personal responsibilities.

Why It's Important



- Helps retain **high-performing women** who may otherwise leave due to caregiving demands.
- Supports a **more engaged and productive** workforce.
- Creates **equitable career growth** opportunities for all employees.

How To Do It



- Normalise **flexible work policies** by ensuring leaders role model and support them.
- Encourage results-based performance rather than presenteeism to build trust in flexible working.
- Remove **flexibility stigma** by celebrating employees who use these benefits and sharing success stories.

Ways to #AccelerateAction: #4



Ensure Equal Access to Development



What It Is



Women often face fewer sponsorship and mentorship opportunities, limiting their career advancement.

Why It's Important



- Helps close the leadership gap.
- Increases diverse perspectives at decision-making levels.
- Boosts business performance, profitability, innovation, company brand and reputation.

How To Do It



- Establish **formal sponsorship programmes** where senior leaders advocate for women's growth.
- Ensure women have **equal access** to high-visibility projects and leadership training.
- Track and report **promotion rates by gender** to identify gaps, holding leaders accountable to drive action.

Ways to #AccelerateAction: #5



Measure & Report on Gender Equity Progress



What It Is



Tracking gender representation, participation, engagement and employee sentiment to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

Why It's Important



- Provides data-driven insights into workplace equity.
- Helps leaders take meaningful action based on real challenges.
- Builds trust and transparency with employees.

How To Do It



- Track gender representation at all levels and **assess promotion** rates to identify barriers to advancement.
- **Analyse participation** in leadership programmes, high-visibility projects, and decision-making roles by gender.
- Use **employee pulse surveys** and **focus groups** to measure workplace inclusion and identify equity gaps

How to Be a Better Ally for Women



Here are tangible actions individuals can take to support gender equity at work.

Advocate for women in meetings –
Calling out when women are interrupted and amplifying their ideas.

”

“I noticed [Name] was in the middle of sharing an idea, let’s hear her thoughts before we move on.”

Challenge biased assumptions –
Question stereotypes in performance reviews and promotions.

”

“Why are we assuming that [Name] isn’t ready for this leadership role? Let’s focus on skills and performance instead of assumptions.”

Sponsor and mentor women –
Encouraging male leaders to actively sponsor women’s career growth.

”

“I’ve seen [Name] excel in this area—I’d like to put her forward for this high-visibility project.”

Be an upstander, not a bystander –
Addressing bias and calling out inappropriate behaviour.

”

“That comment didn’t sit right with me. Let’s be mindful of how we talk about colleagues.”

Recognise invisible labour – Acknowledge and redistribute unpaid team tasks (e.g. planning team events).

”

“I’ve noticed [Name] is often the one organising team events. Let’s rotate responsibilities so it’s not always her.”

Activation Ideas to Celebrate IWD



International Women's Day (IWD) is more than a celebration, it's a chance to spark **meaningful conversations** and create lasting change. Many organisations struggle to move **beyond symbolic gestures** to initiatives that truly drive gender equity.

To help, we've **curated innovative activation ideas** that encourage participation, challenge perspectives, and foster inclusion. Whether through interactive events, storytelling, or systemic change, these ideas offer a fresh, impactful approach to IWD.



The Invisible Work Experiment



What it is

During this challenge, employees **track and redistribute** 'invisible labour' - tasks like note-taking, planning team events, mentoring junior staff, and providing emotional support. Tasks which are often disproportionately done by women.

Employees track these tasks over a week, then collaborate to identify patterns in behaviour before implement practical solutions to ensure the workload is balanced.

Why it matters

- ✓ Raises awareness of **unseen gendered work dynamics** that often go unnoticed.
- ✓ Helps organisations **redistribute workload fairly** and prevent burnout.
- ✓ Encourages **teams to challenge assumptions** about who is expected to take on unpaid office work.

Bonus impact

This initiative promotes a **more equitable and productive workplace** where everyone contributes fairly.



Reverse Mentoring Programme



What it is

This initiative flips the traditional mentorship concept, with **women mentoring senior leaders**.

In the structured 1-2-1 mentoring sessions, female employees from all levels, **share their real-life challenges and experiences** with senior leaders to help them better understand the biases and barriers to advancement and what supports would make a meaningful difference.

Why it matters

- ✓ Creates **empathy-driven leadership** by exposing leaders to perspectives they might not otherwise hear.
- ✓ Helps **decision-makers see gender barriers firsthand** and take informed action.
- ✓ Strengthens **cross-level relationships** between senior leaders and emerging talent, fostering advocacy.

Bonus impact

Organisations can integrate these learnings into **policy changes, leadership development, and structural improvements** to advance gender equity.



Workplace Allyship Pledge



What it is

Employees pledge to take measurable actions to support women at work e.g.

- Amplify women's voices in meetings
- Challenge biased language and behaviours
- Advocate for women in hiring and promotions
- Support work-life balance and flexible policies

The pledge launches as a **company-wide initiative**, with leaders signing first to set the tone. Signed pledges can be displayed on a **physical or virtual pledge wall** as a public commitment.

Why it matters

- ✔ Shifts allyship from **passive support to active, measurable commitment**.
- ✔ Engages **all employees, regardless of gender**, in driving workplace equity.
- ✔ Holds individuals **accountable for real change**, rather than just awareness.

Bonus impact

Companies can **track and celebrate** progress through quarterly check-ins and recognition of top allies.



Gender Equality Hackathon



What it is

A **half or full-day event** where cross-functional teams collaborate to develop **innovative solutions** to break down workplace gender barriers e.g. how to make **leadership pipelines more inclusive, implement a sponsorship programme or improving parental policies.**

Each team presents their solution, and **leadership commits to implementing the best idea.**

Why it matters

- ✓ **Drives actionable solutions** rather than just conversations.
- ✓ Involves **employees at all levels** in co-creating change, ensuring buy-in.
- ✓ Encourages **innovative, data-driven** approaches to solving gender equity challenges.

Bonus impact

Winning ideas can be incorporated into the DEI strategy and **implemented company-wide**, with teams involved in execution.



Sponsorship Circle



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IWD Story Wall: 'The Moment That Changed Everything'



What it is

Female employees share a **personal turning point** in their career related to gender equity, whether it was a moment when they were underestimated, supported, or challenged workplace norms.

These stories are displayed on a **physical or virtual story wall** throughout March, inspiring meaningful reflection and discussion.

Why it matters

- ✓ Encourages **storytelling and lived experiences** to spark awareness and change.
- ✓ Creates a **shared, inclusive workplace culture** where employees connect over common experiences.
- ✓ Helps organisations understand the **barriers women face** and how to break them down.

Bonus impact

These stories can be **turned into a learning series** or included in training materials to create insights into the lived experiences of women.



Closing Thoughts



Creating a truly inclusive and equitable workplace requires ongoing commitment, intentional action, and a willingness to challenge the status quo. This toolkit provides you with a range of ideas, insights, and practical steps to celebrate **International Women's Day** in a way that drives real impact.

Whether you implement small changes or large-scale initiatives, every action counts in accelerating progress.

We'd love to see how you bring this to life so please do tag Christensen Consultancy on social media.

Let's inspire meaningful change together.

#AccelerateAction #IWD25





For further information, support and guidance, contact us at:

Website: www.christensenconsultancy.com

Email: info@christensenconsultancy.com

Phone: +971 52 835 3867

LinkedIn: [Christensen Consultancy](#)

