Diversity, equity and inclusion

Sub-strategy of the Swedish Red Cross' Strategic Direction for 2024–2030.

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1. Introduction

This sub-strategy is a result of the Swedish Red Cross' Strategic Direction for 2024–2030 highlighting diversity and inclusion as one of six focus areas during this period. It is also based on the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, and The Swedish Red Cross' anti-discrimination policy as well as the Discrimination Act, the Work Environment Act and the Swedish Work Environment Authority's regulations on victimization.

This sub-strategy is written for the entire Swedish Red Cross and will guide us until 2030. Everyone who is part of the Swedish Red Cross has a responsibility to ensure that the strategy is implemented.

The sub-strategy on diversity, equity and inclusion has been developed by a working group appointed by the Governing Board with participants from both the volunteer and employee organizations.
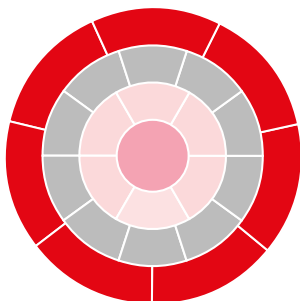
Diversity equity and inclusion

We are an organization committed to diversity and inclusion in order to respond to local needs and create relevant activities. We live by our fundamental principles through courageous leadership focused on diversity, equity and inclusion. Our different backgrounds and experiences give us credibility and agency, as well as greater commitment, innovation, and participation in our mission. We work preventively and act clearly in situations of discrimination or harassment within our organization.

By...

- ensuring greater diversity in our organization.
- promoting an inclusive culture that influences how we recruit, develop, and retain volunteers, elected representatives and employees.
- involve our target groups in the planning and implementation of our activities.
- always communicate in an inclusive way both internally and externally
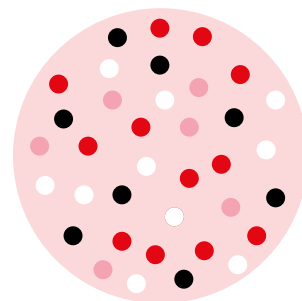
1.1 Key words in the sub-strategy

DIVERSITY

We welcome and represent a wide range of people with different identities and perspectives.

EQUITY

We give all people the opportunity and support to succeed and grow.

INCLUSION

We have a culture where individuals feel a sense of belonging and where differences are respected and valued.

More detailed definitions and additional words used in the sub-strategy are outlined in the glossary at the end of this document.

1.2 Our vision for diversity, equity and inclusion

- The Swedish Red Cross is an organization where everyone feels welcomed and included, where everyone can contribute to their full potential.

- We are the world's leading crisis and disaster response organization, operating both globally and locally. Our work on diversity, equity and inclusion is based on the seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It is important for us to be an inclusive organization that embraces people's experiences and differences. This promotes greater engagement, participation and forward thinking in our mission.

- Through courageous and inclusive leadership and active measures focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion, we ensure that the entire organization manifests our values and Fundamental Principles.

1.3 Why does the Swedish Red Cross work on diversity, equity and inclusion?

- The Fundamental Principles of humanity, impartiality and unity make diversity and inclusion core to our work – we provide assistance without discrimination and are open to all.

- Our starting point is the equal value and rights of all people. Everyone has equal and fair opportunities to get involved in the Swedish Red Cross.

- By increasing our focus on diversity, equity and inclusion, our work becomes more relevant and innovative. We become better at what we do.

- We recognise that we are in a post-colonial era and that we are influenced by our history. This means that we need to challenge colonial and racist patterns of thought that are part of our present.

- As an employer, we must comply with anti-discrimination legislation, and we also want to be a workplace that attracts and retains talent.

- Swedish society is undergoing demographic change, and our relevance and future is based on being an attractive organization that represents the diversity of the society in which we operate.

1.4 Current situation

In December 2022, a baseline survey was conducted to identify and understand the organization's strengths and gaps in terms of diversity and inclusion. The survey was conducted as a questionnaire to volunteers, board members and employees in 60 selected local branches, as well as members of the employee organization. The survey was followed up with qualitative interviews with around 20 Swedish Red Cross members. The results pointed to several challenges in terms of representation and inclusion, as well as a low reporting rate of harassment and discrimination. Many felt that the organization is not working actively enough on this issue, despite previous policies and initiatives. The results of the survey have been an important point of departure to this strategy.

1.5 Moving from words to action

For the credibility of the Swedish Red Cross as an organization, it is essential that diversity, equity and inclusion are reflected in practical action. We demonstrate our action by:

- working norm-critically from an intersectional perspective to analyse norms and power structures;

- increasing the skills of leaders, volunteers and employees on diversity, equity and inclusion issues;

- working in a data-driven and goal-oriented way;

- evaluating and monitoring the implementation of the sub-strategy in all parts of the Swedish Red Cross.

2. Targets

The Swedish Red Cross has defined five target areas that demonstrate our power to act and will guide the work on diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the organization:

Increased diversity	Anti-discrimination

Inclusive leadership	Inclusive communication	Inclusive culture

2.1 Increased diversity

We ensure representation by increasing the diversity of people with different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives in our organization. We recognize our exclusionary structures that prevent underrepresented groups from engaging with the Swedish Red Cross. All Swedish Red Cross members feel a sense of belonging and can have a meaningful participation and engagement with the Swedish Red Cross.

WE INCREASE THE DIVERSITY OF THE RED CROSS BY

- Developing methods and activities to attract a wider range of people to join the Swedish Red Cross.

- Implementing a continuous measurement of diversity in the organization by using measures and tools such as quantitative and qualitative surveys, employee surveys and data analysis (equality data). The target is to increase the impact of the organization's diversity efforts and to adjust and improve where necessary.

- Creating unbiased and competence-based recruitment processes where we challenge ourselves in how we value competence when selecting qualified people for boards, employment opportunities and volunteer roles. Evaluate and monitor the recruitment process to promote diversity.

- Creating a succession strategy to increase the diversity of decision-makers, promoting the development of the organization's collective cultural intelligence and understanding of diversity.

- Increasing the number of people with a foreign background in senior positions (governing board, elected representatives, senior management team and managers) to 33%.

- Increasing the number of people with foreign background in the employee organization to 33%. In other parts of the organization, we reflect the communities in which we work.

- Increasing the share of people with non-European backgrounds in the employee organization to 15%. In other parts of the organization, we reflect the communities in which we work.

- Striving for a gender balance in the range of 40–60% throughout the organization.

- Increasing the number of younger elected representatives and volunteers. 30% of our elected representatives are under 40.

- Working with the Swedish Red Cross Youth to implement measures that focus on the transition between the Youth organization and the Swedish Red Cross. 80% of the members of the Youth organization choose to join the Swedish Red Cross when they turn 30.

- Increasing the knowledge of everyone in the organization about LGBTQIA+, norms and the lived realities of LGBTQIA+ people and promoting approaches for an inclusive treatment of LGBTQIA+ people in the Swedish Red Cross.

- Ensuring the accessibility of our offices, activities, trainings and information for people with disabilities by making the necessary adaptations and providing appropriate equipment and technology.

2.2 Anti-discrimination

We work actively against discrimination, racism, sexual harassment and other abusive acts wherever they occur in the organization. We work to ensure that all Swedish Red Cross members have access to equal opportunities and are treated equally and fairly. We have zero tolerance for discrimination, abuse, ridicule, belittling comments and jargon. Everyone has trust and confidence that incidents will be dealt with as they arise.

WE STRIVE TO BE A NON-DISCRIMINATORY ORGANIZATION BY:

- Developing and introducing compulsory training for all Swedish Red Cross members on diversity and inclusion, including elements on discrimination, racism, microaggressions, sexual harassment and victimization. These should be repeated on a regular basis.

- Reviewing and improving procedures for reporting discrimination, sexual harassment and victimization in order to increase the reporting rate. The procedure should include information about who does what, who reports and who is responsible for reporting to management and the board, as well as reporting back to the person who has reported the incident.

- Information on how the Swedish Red Cross works with anti-discrimination should be included as a mandatory part of the induction programme for both volunteers and employees.

- Working to ensure that everyone takes responsibility for responding to discrimination, abuse, demeaning comments and jargon.

- Identifying and implementing measures to create safety and trust in processes.

2.3 Inclusive leadership

We develop inclusive leadership that listens to perspectives, recognizes the individual differences, challenges norms and has the courage to change. Swedish Red Cross leaders – volunteer leaders, elected representatives and managers – are role models and take responsibility for working actively with diversity, equity and inclusion. Leadership is crucial for everyone to feel respected and included.

WE DEVELOP INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP BY

- Setting clear and measurable expectations for everyone in a leadership role within the Swedish Red Cross in how they exercise inclusive leadership.

- Offering training on diversity, equity and inclusion and inclusive leadership as part of our mandatory training programme for elected representatives, volunteer leaders and managers.

- Providing training and resources for elected representatives, volunteer leaders and managers to know how to manage conflict and act when they identify discrimination or inappropriate behavior.

- Elected representatives and managers integrate concrete targets for diversity and inclusion in action plans and operational plans and work actively with the follow-up.

2.4 Inclusive communication

We communicate in an inclusive manner both internally and externally, ensuring that we do not reinforce prejudices and norms. We portray people with respect, dignity and on equal terms in text and images. We use equality as a starting point for how we see and portray people. We show that everyone has a place and can make themselves heard within the Swedish Red Cross.

WE STRENGTHEN OUR INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION BY:

- Conducting a thorough analysis of the needs for inclusive communication internally and externally in the Swedish Red Cross.

- Ensuring that communication on the Swedish Red Cross website and other platforms is easy to understand and accessible, by communicating in simple Swedish and English.

- Extending the ethical communication guidelines and image handbook to include norm-critical communication that is inclusive.

- Ensuring that all employees have undergone training on inclusive communication. Ensuring that the basics of inclusive communication are included in the introduction to the Swedish Red Cross.

- Prioritizing the recruitment of multilingual communicators to facilitate communication in different languages when relevant.

- Ensuring that our campaigns are inclusive and speak to the diversity of society. We involve different groups in society in the planning and implementation of the campaigns.

2.5 Inclusive culture

We promote an inclusive culture that recognizes the benefits of diversity. We show trust and respect, allow and value differences, are open to different perspectives and share knowledge and experience. We eliminate exclusionary structures, including language barriers. All Swedish Red Cross members feel respected and included.

WE PROMOTE AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE BY:

- Systematically measuring and evaluating the organization's culture of inclusionand identifying and addressing any exclusionary structures and norms.

- Removing language barriers to ensure inclusion, such as in recruitment and mandatory training programmes.

- Encouraging the culture to be accepting of individuals with different life situations and beliefs, for example by providing worship spaces, encouraging celebrations of different holidays and having accessible facilities.

- Increasing participation in our training programmes by offering digital tools and technology that enables participation regardless of geographical location and accessibility.

- Encouraging employees and volunteers to form resource groups. A resource group brings together volunteers and employees with similar experiences or backgrounds based on the seven grounds of discrimination according to the Discrimination Act. The aim is to create a safe space to discuss experiences, while providing an opportunity to raise any suggestions and improvements to increase inclusion in the organization.

3. Responsibility, governance and implementation

3.1 Responsibility

All Swedish Red Cross members have a responsibility to follow our Fundamental Principles and Code of Conduct. Everyone contributes to creating an organization that is characterized by inclusion, openness, and trust in each other. The responsibility is the same whether you are a volunteer, elected representative, employee, or a manager. It is also very important that everyone, regardless of role and function, takes responsibility for reporting or speaking out when something problematic is said or when we suspect or experience discrimination, harassment, or abuse. Elected representatives and managers have a special responsibility for compliance with the strategy and for ensuring that the strategy is transformed into an action plan as part of the regular operational plan.

The Governing Board of the Swedish Red Cross is ultimately responsible for this sub-strategy.

3.2 Governance and monitoring

The strategy is followed up as part of the Swedish Red Cross' operational follow-up, sustainability reporting, and local branch reporting and in the way the board decides that the strategic direction should be followed up.

Measurement and follow-up in the Voluntary Organization

We use the branch report as a tool to collect data from the volunteer organization on a regular basis. In the branch report we ask if:

- The branches have procedures and follow-up to ensure that their work on inclusion and anti-discrimination is strengthened.

In addition, we collect the following data:

- Gender, age and place of residence of elected representatives and members from Redy.

- The foreign background of elected representatives and members is measured every two years using data purchased from Statistics Sweden (SCB).

Measuring and monitoring in the employee organization

We use a variety of methods to measure and monitor:

- We use equality data as a method in surveys to measure structural differences between different groups through self-identification and thereby create conditions for more equality and inclusion.

- Gender and age are key indicators that we produce data on annually. Foreign background is measured every two years with the support of data purchased from Statistics Sweden (SCB).

- We regularly measure engagement and inclusiveness through the Engagement and Inclusion Index in our employee surveys/pulse surveys.

- We follow up and report incidents and whistleblowing cases in a report of safeguarding cases. The purpose of the report is to follow up on cases and ensure that they have been handled in accordance with our guidelines and procedures, and to draw conclusions in order to be able to carry out the right type of preventive work.

- We take active measures to prevent and combat discrimination and otherwise promote equal rights and opportunities.

- We conduct a follow-up perspective survey with the support of an external party in the middle of the strategy period, and at the end of the strategy period.

3.3 Implementation of the strategy

Work on diversity, equity and inclusion should be part of regular operational plans.

4. Glossary of terms

Diversity means that there is a mix of different identities, experiences and perspectives of individuals within the organization. Diversity factors include gender, age, disability, sexual orientation and identity or expression, socio-economic, ethnicity, faith, and language. A diversity of perspectives refers to the way different individuals perceive, analyze and look at things from different points of view, based on both characteristics and what has shaped them.

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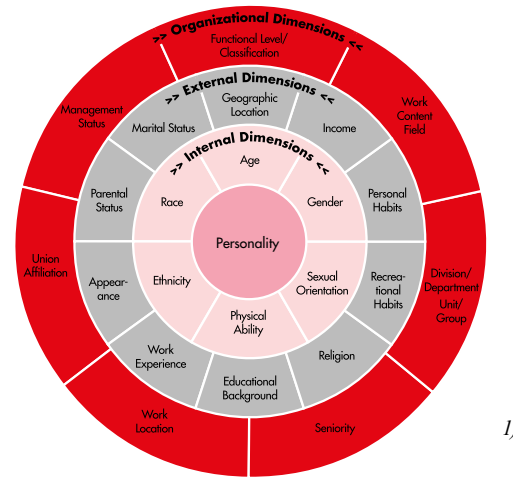
Equity focuses on providing resources and support in proportion to individual needs and circumstances. This means that some individuals or groups may need more resources or support to achieve the same level of participation and success as others, taking into account their unique challenges and circumstances.

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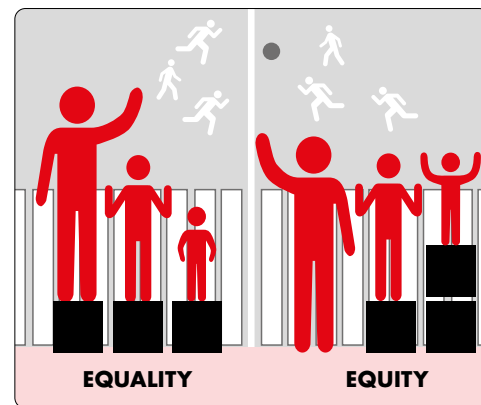
Inclusion is the active actions that an individual encounters every day – behaviors, treatment, group norms, leadership and structures – that result in individuals being able to be themselves while experiencing a sense of belonging and connectedness. Individuals are treated as part of the community, valued for their uniqueness and able to contribute regardless of their background and perspective. Inclusion also means eliminating structural barriers and creating conditions for individuals to feel welcomed, respected and included in the organization.

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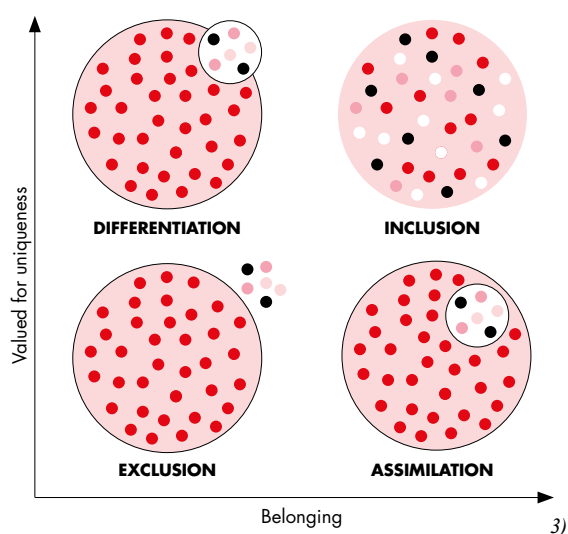
1) The image is based on "the Four layers of diversity model" created by Gardenswartz and Rowe.
It aims to broaden the view of what diversity means within organizations.
2) The image is based on an image by the artist Angus Maguire that was made for the Interaction Institute for Social Change.
3) The image is based on "A Summary of the evidence on inclusive education" and a support material for inclusion measurement from Mitt Liv AB.

Accessibility means that organization is available to everyone without discrimination. It includes access to information and physical accessibility, including the adaptation of premises.

Disability is an impairment of physical, mental, or intellectual functioning. A disability may result from an illness or other condition or from a congenital or acquired injury. Such diseases, conditions or injuries may be permanent or temporary.

Discrimination is when someone is disadvantaged by being treated worse than someone else, if the disadvantage is related to one of the seven grounds of discrimination in the Discrimination Act. Those are gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, or age. We have chosen to also include language, in accordance with the Council of Europe recommendation.

Equality is a principle or ideal where all individuals in an organization are treated equally and given the same opportunities, rights, and resources.

Foreign background is defined by Statistics Sweden as foreign-born and native-born with one or two foreign-born parents.

Intersectionality is used to understand how different types of discrimination interact with regard to factors such as gender, age, class, racialization, and migration status, to name a few. Thus, an intersectional analysis does not only consider a single identity but examines how multiple identities interact and influence each other. The theory also emphasizes the importance of taking into account historical and cultural contexts, as well as power relations, when analyzing these interacting identities.

LGBTQIA+ is an inclusive acronym representing a spectrum of sexual and gender identities, including homosexuality, bisexuality, transsexuality, queer identity, intersexuality, asexuality, and other non-conforming identities (represented by the "+" sign).

Norm criticism can be used to question and work against norms that exclude people and groups who break the norm. Norms are unwritten rules, ideas, and ideals about how one is expected to be, live and look.

Postcolonialism is a field of research that analyses the impact of colonialism on the contemporary world. It makes visible and problematizes the formation of knowledge and provides a broader view of history. Postcolonial contemporary is used to emphasize that we live in a society and a world where colonial and racist structures still affect us.

Resource group is a group that brings together volunteers and employees with similar experiences or backgrounds based on the seven grounds of discrimination. The aim is to create a safe space to discuss experiences, while providing an opportunity to raise any suggestions and improvements to increase inclusion in the organization.

Transgender identity or expression. Each person's deeply individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the gender assigned to them at birth or the gender ascribed to them by society.

Victimization is an action directed against one or more employees in an abusive manner, which can lead to ill health or exclusion from the workplace community.