

BLOG: INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

#BALANCEFORBETTER



During the early days of my career, there were times I yearned to talk to someone, discuss my ideas, share my challenges and get advice and support without getting myself, my work or my approach judged. I have had some supervisors, but our interactions were mostly task or target orientated. The advice I received from them used to be related to my official tasks and targets. I always felt something crucially valuable missing in those exchanges. Unlike a supervisor, a mentor is someone who guides the mentee, transmitting crucial advice without being authoritative or posing as a person wiser than you. A mentor focuses on the mentee's long term individual development. In my subsequent life, some of my supervisors have played the role of a mentor.

Among other things, mentoring fosters growth and leadership in the mentee. It facilitates maturity and capability by silently passing on insights and instilling confidence and hope.

Now, as a mentor myself, I try to enable my mentees to develop their own skills, strategies and capabilities so that they are enabled to respond to the challenges they face more effectively, with or without my physical presence in the situation. Mentoring is not a one-way street. It is my experience that mentoring is beneficial to both the mentee and the mentor. While working with the HERlead Fellows and sharing my journey, the needs of the community I worked with, and the solutions found to address those needs, I try to get their insights on how they would have approached a similar situation today. I find that they invariably bring in

the use of technology in finding solutions e.g. they share how they would have used the social media platforms for effective communication, for networking and collaborations and the mentor in me finds so much to learn in that.

For me, mentoring is not a one-time event, a "session" or an "activity." Rather it is an ongoing process and it is so because I firmly believe that there is no fixed time and space allocated for a "Eureka moment." One may come up with ground breaking ideas any time – and want to run it through with someone, the mentor. One is confronted by questions and challenges anytime and always wants someone to talk to and find a way out together.



Sharing my insights and learnings with a mentee has so far helped me grow as a leader. For me, leadership is about collaboration, sharing, finding solutions to the community problems and, in doing so, moving forward. It is about creating an enabling environment for the next generation of leaders by sharing one's experiences, challenges and the lessons learnt.

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This is the 3rd year I am co-hosting the Global Mentoring Walk with Vital Voices leader Elsa Maria.

The Global Mentoring Walk is a great platform to demonstrate the strength of women's leadership, and to collaborate and unite women in support of other women. There is a great power in sharing one's experience and in exchanging ideas, and the Global Mentoring Walk is the perfect space for this.

There are several women out there who have, over a period of time, gathered insights from their years of work and experience of changing the world. At the same time, there are the young potential and emerging leaders who are sometimes confused, overwhelmed, in need of information, advice, guidance and an ear ready to listen to their innovative ideas with trust. The Global Mentoring Walk is that platform where we can bridge the gap between these two groups. It is a platform to inspire other emerging leaders to take action and face challenges. The mentor can help the mentee to move forward with ease by foreseeing challenges, understanding means to overcome challenges and even pre-empt some of them. Learning from the experiences of others also helps the mentees to move forward with a faster pace with less cuts and bruises. As a mentor, discussing, introspecting and thinking out loud have helped me to sharpen my own critical thinking.

At the end of every opportunity as a mentor, I get the sense of giving back to the society and am always reminded of what Mahatma Gandhi said: "Be the change that you wish to see in the world."

