what is horizontal structure?

a horizontal structure refers to working environment where there is little to no hierarchy

instead of having many layers of management, decision-making is decentralized and shared. in this structure, persons have autonomy, and it is more collaborative and equal way of working.

what are the differences between horizontal and vertical structures?

vertical structure is the traditional hierarchy where authority and decision-making power are concentrated at the top levels of the groups, organizations, etc.

persons at lower levels have less autonomy and typically follow orders from above. in this structure, there are clear chains of command and rigid roles.

in contrast, a horizontal structure is more about collaboration and sharing power.

why is horizontal structure important?

a horizontal structure is important for several reasons. Some reasons are:

- it helps break down traditional power imbalances and supports a more inclusive environment
- it allows the teams to be more agile to change
- it gives persons autonomy and a sense of ownership in their work
- it encourages teamwork and open communication across all persons involved

for us, horizontal structures are particularly important because they challenge patriarchal power dynamics, where everyone's voice - regardless of gender, sexuality, or background - matters.

at Change, we strive every day to maintain this way of working, constantly reminding ourselves to stay true to these principles.

what challenges may be in horizontal structure?

though the horizontal structure has many advantages, it also comes with some challenges:

- decision-making can sometimes become slow

- in environments where a vertical structure has been the norm, persons may resist shifting to a more equal, collaborative way of working

however, these challenges can often be overcome with clear communication, that is focused on collaboration and support.

from where to start if you are now working in vertical structure and want to change to horizontal?

if you are currently working in a vertical structure and want to shift to a more horizontal model, here are some steps you can take:

- ☐ begin by educating yourself and share information with others about the benefits of a horizontal structure. this can involve reading articles, discussing the topic with like minded persons, etc.
- ☐ change works best when people are on board with it, so start small with discussions around collaboration and shared decision-making
- ☐ moving to a horizontal structure doesn't need to be an overnight change. start by encouraging more team-based decision-making
- ☐ create a more flexible approach to roles and responsibilities, focusing on shared goals and open communication rather than rigid hierarchies
- ☐ foster an environment where everyone feels comfortable speaking up, sharing ideas, and contributing to decisions

by focusing on collaboration, empowerment, and inclusivity, you can gradually shift your environment from a vertical to a horizontal structure, creating a more feminist, equal, and creative place around you.