

**GENDER EQUALITY, DISABILITY INCLUSION AND
SOCIAL INCLUSION (GEDSI) POLICY**
Prepared by the Executive Division
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1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1 International IDEA’s vision is anchored in the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Institute recognizes that democratic principles are essential enablers of the Agenda’s realization, being rule of law; access to justice; accountable and transparent institutions; responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making in line with the ‘leave no one behind’ principle; and fundamental freedoms.
- 1.2 Gender equality and the inclusion of marginalized groups are central to International IDEA’s work to advance, promote and protect sustainable democracy worldwide, by responding to key challenges and opportunities for strengthening democracy in the current and emerging democracy landscape. Around the world women and other marginalized groups face unequal treatment, limited access to opportunities, and systemic barriers to participation. The Institute acknowledges that privileged groups, notably men in positions of power, continue to dominate decision making and leadership processes at all levels.
- 1.3 People of all gender identities and expressions, who do not conform to socially prescribed gender norms, including transgender, non-binary, gender diverse and gender expansive individuals as well as men and boys who do not align with dominant masculine stereotypes often face stigmatization, discrimination and marginalization. More broadly, relationships among individuals of all genders are shaped by the socio-cultural values, gender roles and unequal distributions of power that vary across societies and contexts.
- 1.4 Inequality and exclusion manifest differently across regions and contexts. In all countries where International IDEA works, various forms of gender-based discrimination, stereotyping, and exclusion persist, compounded by intersecting factors such as age, class, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation and socio-economic status. The Institute therefore recognizes that

addressing inequality requires understanding how these intersecting factors shape individuals' experiences, and applying this learning across its Institute's culture, processes and programming at global, regional and national levels.

- 1.5 For ease of reference, this Policy uses the terms women, men, girls, and boys "in all their diversity". This phrasing does not diminish International IDEA's full recognition of diverse gender identities and expressions.
- 1.6 Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) refers to the systematic integration of gender equality, disability inclusion and broader social inclusion principles into all internal Institutional practices, systems and culture, as well as into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all projects and programmes.
- 1.7 International IDEA aims to be a global leader in advancing inclusive democracy by systematically integrating gender equality, disability inclusion and broader social inclusion across its knowledge production, policy engagement and programme implementation. Through this policy, the Institute commits to ensuring that inclusion is not treated as a standalone objective but as a core condition for legitimate, resilient and representative democratic institutions.
- 1.8 Key terms used in this Policy include:
 - a) Gender equality – equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all genders.
 - b) Disability inclusion – ensuring full participation of persons with disabilities through accessibility, reasonable accommodation and inclusive design.
 - c) Social inclusion – removing structural barriers that prevent individuals or groups from fully participating in social, political and economic life.
 - d) GEDSI mainstreaming – systematic integration of gender equality, disability inclusion and social inclusion considerations across policies, programmes and institutional practices.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 International IDEA's Strategy affirms that inclusive participation and representation are fundamental enabling elements and principles of a functioning democracy. Every individual regardless of class, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, culture, and ethnicity, socio-economic status or religious background, must have an equal right and opportunity to engage with and contribute to democratic institutions and processes.
- 2.2 Despite this principle, democracies do not always provide equitable opportunities for participation and representation. Persistent barriers, including gender-specific political violence, harmful stereotypes and social norms, limited access to justice and shrinking civic space disproportionately affect women, girls, gender-diverse individuals, minorities, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, youth and socio-economically marginalized groups. Inclusive and accountable democratic institutions and processes can only be achieved when gender equality, disability inclusion and social inclusion are meaningfully advanced.
- 2.3 International IDEA is therefore committed to ensuring that the rights, needs, and lived experiences of all individuals are recognized, considered and addressed, in all of its work. This commitment reflects the Institutes vision of *"a world in which everyone lives in inclusive and resilient democracies."*

- 2.4 Promoting GEDSI requires the identification and mitigation of unintentional biases, exclusionary practices, and structural barriers that may arise in IDEA’s internal environment or programmatic work. This includes, but is not limited to:
- a) integrating GEDSI principles into planning, decision-making, resource allocation, programme management and organizational development.
 - b) conducting gender and inclusion analysis prior to project design.
 - c) integrating GEDSI considerations throughout project planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
 - d) promoting the meaningful participation of women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups in decision-making processes, and
 - e) collecting and using disaggregated data to track progress and assess impact.
- 2.5 The purpose of this Policy is to establish a clear, consistent and Institute-wide approach that operationalizes International IDEA’s commitment to gender equality, disability inclusion and social inclusion. It aims to ensure that the Institute’s internal environment and culture is free from discrimination, harassment, and abuse, and that all projects and programmes meaningfully mainstream GEDSI principles in their design and implementation.

3. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

- 3.1 This Policy applies to all International IDEA Staff Members, irrespective of contract type, duty station or function. All Staff Members are custodians of the Institutional environment and culture which are grounded in International IDEA’s Core Values of respect, professionalism, and integrity.
- 3.2 All Staff Members are expected to contribute to an Institutional culture that promotes gender equality, disability inclusion and broader social inclusion. This includes demonstrating inclusive attitudes, and behaviors, challenging discriminatory practices and supporting colleagues and stakeholders in ways that uphold the dignity and rights of all individuals.
- 3.3 This Policy applies to the design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all projects and programmes across the Institute. All Staff Members at global, regional and country level are required to mainstream GEDSI principles throughout the full project cycle.
- 3.4 To support this commitment International IDEA will strengthen the GEDSI knowledge and capacities of Staff Members through onboarding processes, continuous learning opportunities such as Communities of Practice, internal training and knowledge sharing initiatives.

4. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 This policy forms part of International IDEA’s broader governance and accountability framework. Its effective implementation relies on alignment with the Institute’s established, policies, procedures and strategic documents which together guide Institutional management, culture and programmatic delivery. The following should therefore be read in conjunction with this policy.
- a) Statutes of International IDEA
 - b) International IDEA’s Vision, Mission and Strategy

- c) Resource Mobilization Procedure
- d) Partnership Policy
- e) Strategic Partnerships, Funding and Representation Procedure
- f) Operational Partnership Procedure
- g) Project Management Procedure
- h) Procurement Policy and related Procedures
- i) Human Resources and Organizational Procedures, including:
 - Staff Regulations
 - Staff Rules
 - Recruitment Procedure
 - Onboarding Processes
 - Learning and Development Procedure
 - Compliance Training Procedure
 - Performance Management Procedure
 - Conflict Resolution Procedure
 - Prevention of Harassment Procedure
 - Whistleblower Procedure
 - Dignity at Work Policy, and
 - Accessibility Procedure

5. CORE POLICY PRINCIPLES

5.1 The following principles guide the interpretation and implementation of this policy. They apply to all Staff Members and underpin the Institute’s commitment to gender equality, disability inclusion and broader social inclusion.

- a) International IDEA is committed to maintaining an Institutional environment that consistently demonstrates respect, dignity, inclusivity and non-discrimination toward all individuals, both internally and in their external engagements.
- b) The Institute upholds the highest standards of professional conduct and service delivery, ensuring that all interactions and decisions reflect IDEA’s Core Values of integrity, respect and professionalism.
- c) A gender-responsive and inclusion-focused management system shall be maintained across all Institutional processes.
- d) International IDEA is committed to continuous learning and capacity strengthening. All Staff Members shall have opportunities to enhance their knowledge, skills and competencies related to GEDSI through training, learning activities and development initiatives, enabling them to fulfil their responsibilities in an informed and consistent manner.

- e) The Institute recognizes that fostering an inclusive culture requires intentional, proactive effort. Therefore, Staff Members are expected to model inclusive behavior, challenge discriminatory practices, and contribute to an environment where all individuals feel valued, respected and able to participate fully.

5.2 International IDEA is committed to ensuring accessibility and the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in both its internal environment and programmatic work. This includes promoting accessible events and communication, applying universal design principles where feasible, and considering reasonable accommodation needs in programme implementation and Institutional practices.

6. INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES

6.1 Effective implementation of this Policy requires strong leadership, visible commitment and accountability at the highest levels of the Institute. The Secretary-General and Directors hold overarching responsibility for promoting gender equality, disability inclusion and social inclusion across all Institutional systems, workplace culture and external engagement. Their leadership shall be demonstrated through clear communication, inclusive decision making and modelling of the behaviors promoted by this Policy.

6.2 The Human Resources and Organizational Development (HROD) Team provides Institutional leadership, guidance and coordination to ensure that GEDSI principles are embedded across all Institutional practices. HROD works in partnership with Line Managers and Staff Members to foster a diverse, inclusive, and non-discriminatory workplace culture. To support the Institute in achieving this, HROD will facilitate, advise on, and help operationalize the following measures, which will be implemented jointly by HROD, Line Managers and relevant teams:

- a) Recruitment systems and processes shall promote equal opportunities for individuals of all genders, identities, backgrounds and abilities. Outreach, advertising and selection processes will be designed to support inclusive hiring and attracting diverse candidates.
- b) Job descriptions and advertisements shall incorporate responsibilities related to GEDSI mainstreaming and highlight GEDSI awareness or experience as an asset.
- c) Recruitment strategies shall intentionally widen the applicant pool by reaching to diverse professional networks and underrepresented groups.
- d) Recruitment panels shall wherever feasible include individuals of different genders and interview questions shall assess candidates understanding of and commitment to GEDSI principles.
- e) Remuneration shall be based on objective criteria, ensuring equal pay for work of equal value, regardless of gender, identity, nationality, disability status or other characteristics.
- f) Contract modalities, salary scales, and compensation frameworks shall be applied consistently and transparently to prevent inequities.
- g) Performance objectives related to GEDSI mainstreaming shall be integrated into performance planning and appraisal processes for all relevant roles.

- h) Disaggregated workforce data shall be tracked and reported on annually in the annual financial statements. Data collection shall respect privacy and voluntary self-identification principles.
 - i) International IDEA shall provide working conditions and family-friendly arrangements that support the practical needs of Staff Members of all genders, enabling them to balance professional responsibilities with care-giving and personal obligations.
- 6.3 Women will constitute at least 40% of all senior (levels 1 -3) and middle management (levels 4 - 5) positions at International IDEA.

7. MAINSTREAMING GENDER AND INCLUSION IN PROGRAMMING

- 7.1 Gender equality, disability inclusion and social inclusion extend beyond numerical representation or legal commitments. They require ensuring all individuals, in all their diversity can fully enjoy their human rights, freedoms, opportunities, participate meaningfully in decision-making and benefit equitably from democratic processes, institutions and outcomes.
- 7.2 In line with its institutional strategy International IDEA will mainstream
- a) Gender equality, disability inclusion and social inclusion (GEDSI).
 - b) Conflict sensitivity; and
 - c) Environmental protection across all thematic priorities.
- 7.3 Mainstreaming GEDSI requires systematically assessing and addressing the effect of any planned action, process, legislation, policy or programme on women, men, girls, boys, and gender-diverse individuals as well as persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, minorities and other marginalized groups. This approach ensures that the concerns and lived experiences and rights of excluded groups are integrated into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all work in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that all persons in all their diversity benefit equally, and inequality is not reinforced. It is important to highlight that mainstreaming is not an end, but a means to achieve gender equality and inclusion.
- 7.4 The overarching goal of mainstreaming is to ensure that inclusive and accountable democratic institutions and processes are strengthened as all individuals in all their diversity participate and are represented on an equal basis, have equal rights and have an equal voice and influence in the decisions that affect their lives.
- 7.5 Mainstreaming GEDSI does not preclude the need for targeted initiatives, legislation, policies and programmes for women, youth, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, minorities, or other marginalized groups to address the persistent and prevailing gaps, inequalities and marginalization. Such targeted measures complement and strengthen mainstreaming efforts.
- 7.6 Mainstreaming gender and inclusion across all International IDEA's projects and programmes is essential as inclusive and accountable democratic institutions and processes requires shared responsibility. This means that the thematic leads for all areas of work in Regional and Global programmes are accountable for effectively mainstreaming GEDSI within their respective workstreams, project cycles and technical outputs.
- 7.7 There is a need for multidimensional and intersectional GEDSI mainstreaming because there is no 'one-size fits all' mainstreaming intervention. Therefore, workstreams will effectively respond to global, regional and country contexts by considering prevailing gender roles and norms and gender-based power dynamics, as well as any other societal inequalities and

discriminatory practices. This will enhance the effectiveness of gender and inclusion mainstreaming in programming.

- 7.8 To put GEDSI mainstreaming into consistent practice, all workstreams shall:
- a) Identify GEDSI related inequalities, risks and opportunities as part of the context analysis and integrate findings in the design of programmes and activities.
 - b) Ensuring that GEDSI considerations are integral themes addressed in knowledge products, capacity development, advocacy, and events convened.
 - c) Collect and analyze disaggregated information (voluntarily disclosed) including sex, gender identity, disability status, age and other relevant factors for participants engaging in capacity development, advocacy and events convened and featured in knowledge products.
 - d) Ensure that programme and Institutional reports integrate and feature GEDSI outcomes, lessons learned and recommendations for strengthening inclusion.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 8.1 Implementation of this policy is supported through the following Institutional responsibilities:
- a) Secretary-General and Directors provide strategic leadership and ensure Institutional commitment to GEDSI principles.
 - b) Programme and Team Heads are responsible for ensuring GEDSI mainstreaming within their respective portfolios and for integrating GEDSI objectives into programme design, implementation and reporting.
 - c) HROD provides institutional guidance on inclusive workplace practices, recruitment and Institutional culture.
 - d) Designated GEDSI focal points or technical advisors, where applicable, provide expertise and support to teams implementing GEDSI approaches in programming.

9. POLICY CONTROLS

- 9.1 The Institute as a whole is collectively responsible for the implementation of this policy. All teams, workstreams and Staff Members shall take appropriate measures to apply GEDSI principles within their areas of responsibility and ensure compliance with the Policy's provisions.
- 9.2 Programmes, projects and workstreams shall report on the implementation of this Policy through regular planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes. This includes identifying challenges, documenting progress, and highlighting lessons learned to strengthen GEDSI mainstreaming.
- 9.3 The Executive Director has the authority to provide clarification and resolve questions arising from any ambiguity in the interpretation and application of the policy. Where necessary, the Executive Director may consult with the Secretary-General, Directors or relevant technical experts.

- 9.4 Failure to comply with this policy may result in corrective or disciplinary measures in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure and other relevant HR procedures. All Staff Members are expected to uphold the principles, responsibilities and behaviors outlined in this Policy.
- 9.5 This Policy shall be reviewed periodically to ensure its continued relevance, effectiveness and alignment with institutional strategy, international standards and emerging best practices. Revisions shall follow the Institute's established policy review and approval process.
- 9.6 This policy was approved on 10 March 2026 and enters into effect immediately upon approval.