imara
Leadership Initiative

Gender Equality and Inclusion Policy

October 2022

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear vision, direction, common language and consistent message to operationalise and communicate our commitment to the promotion of gender equality, girls' rights and inclusion for all of our staff, at all levels. In order to support the implementation of this policy and enable reporting, a standardised set of guidelines applicable to PII have been produced, focusing on Offices and Staff, Programming and Influencing, and Marketing and Communications.

Gender inequality and exclusion vary in their expression from place to place but, in all countries where we work, we encounter different forms of gender-based discrimination, gender stereotyping and an unequal distribution of power between women, men, girls and boys, and other genders as well as exclusion based on multiple factors. These factors include identities such as race, class, ethnicity, ability, language, sexual orientation, and gender identity, among others. We recognise that individuals have multiple identities that shape their experiences. We believe that our work on tackling gender inequality can be strengthened by examining how these identities intersect, and by using this learning to inform programmes and influencing. Gender inequality intensifies the negative effects of all other forms of exclusion and as a result, exclusion is different and often worse for girls and women. Girls often face the most significant barriers to exercising their rights among excluded groups, which is why gender equality and girls' rights remain a distinct priority for our work.

Achieving gender equality, promoting gender justice, realising girls' rights and fostering an inclusive society are core objectives of our work as an organisation dedicated to child rights and equality for girls. Our commitment is inspired by the Human Rights Framework and the globally agreed principles, such as non-discrimination. It is based on international and regional standards, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), as well as relevant soft laws and the global ambitions set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Attention to gender-specific rights violations is clear in the SDGs, as evidenced by a hard-won stand- alone goal which calls on the world to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (Goal 5) and a goal to reduce inequality within and among countries (Goal 10). Such commitments provide a solid foundation for our priority focus on gender equality, girls' rights and inclusion.

2. Policy Statement

We confront and challenge discrimination and human rights violations based on gender, including gender-based violence, and other forms of exclusion. We also challenge stereotyping and unequal power relations between women, men, boys, and girls to promote gender equality, girls' rights, and inclusion. We foster an organisational culture that embraces and exemplifies our commitment to gender equality, girls' rights and inclusion, while supporting staff to adopt good practice, positive attitudes and principles of gender equality and inclusion.

Applicable Requirements

In order to effectively promote gender equality, girls' rights and inclusion, we:

- Design, implement, monitor and evaluate quality gender transformative and inclusive development and humanitarian programmes and influencing. Implement long-term strategies of social norm change to end injustice, challenge unequal power relations and address the root causes of discrimination;

- Integrate gender equality and inclusion measures that align to and complement our Values and Behaviours Framework into our business processes, management functions and leadership, and the way we conduct our work. We do not tolerate practices that result in gender-based discrimination, exclusion or inequality based on gender or other forms of identity;

- Strengthen and build partnerships that promote respect for gender equality, diversity and inclusion. Engage partners in joint approaches to promote gender equality, girls' rights, and inclusion, and expand our partnership base giving particular emphasis to representative groups such as women's and girls' rights movements, disabled people's organisations, indigenous rights movements, among others;

- Strengthen and scale up our efforts to influence decision makers at all levels to embrace gender equality, girls' rights and inclusion;

- Mobilise and dedicate the appropriate/necessary human, technical and financial resources in line with and to meet our commitments to gender equality, girls' rights and inclusion; and

- Monitor and evaluate all of our work from the perspective of achieving gender equality, girls' rights, and inclusion, in order to improve the quality of our programme and influencing work, contribute to continuous learning, provide an evidence base to inform decisions, and ensure accountability to the people we work with and for.

3.Roles and Responsibilities

All of our staff members, regardless of function or location, are **responsible** for the implementation of the requirements outlined in this policy. These requirements are reflected in recruitment processes, job descriptions and performance reviews of staff at all levels and in the way we hold each other to account.

All senior managers are **accountable** for this policy; the Imara Leadership Initiative Board will monitor what senior managers are doing, and all staff are **ultimately responsible** for our commitment to and implementation of this policy.

To support accountability for this policy, there will be an effective review and monitoring process, led by Imara Leadership Initiative Assurance department, this will include an annual review and auditing of implementation and compliance with the policy, which will be shared across Imara Leadership Initiative Entities, and the Chief Executive Officer / Executive Director will report on the implementation annually to the Imara Leadership Initiative Board. Regular review will be covered by the Imara Leadership Initiative Board.

3.Terms and Definitions

- **Disability -** The term *"persons with disabilities"* is used to apply to all persons with disabilities including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments that, in interaction with various attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers, hinder the full realisation of their rights as well as their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

- **Diversity** - Diversity acknowledges that each individual is unique. It means recognising, accepting, celebrating and finding strength in individual differences such as gender, age, nationality, race, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.

- **Empowerment** - Empowerment is a strategy to increase girls' agency over their own lives, and their capacity to influence the relationships and social and political conditions that affect them. Lack of power is one of the main barriers that prevent particularly girls and young women from realising their rights. This can be overcome by a holistic and sustainable strategy of empowerment, involving girls, boys and young people in changing gender norms to the benefit of all.

Gender-based empowerment focuses on promoting simultaneous change in: norms, attitudes and behaviours; social and economic resources and safety nets; as well as policy frameworks and budgets. It is a core strategy of any effective work promoting gender equality and inclusion.

While empowering girls and young women is key in promoting their rights, it is also essential to engage boys and young men as partners and co-beneficiaries in the realisation of gender equality. Gender norms and stereotypes often privilege boys and young men; however their behaviours and decision-making are also constrained and shaped by rigid social and cultural expectations. Men and boys can play an important role in overcoming gender inequality and discrimination both as power holders and as beneficiaries of change.

- **Exclusion** - Exclusion is the process that prevents certain individuals or groups from fulfilling their rights. Exclusion is caused by inequality in the distribution of resources and power, by inequality in the value assigned to different groups, and by the social norms that perpetuate these differences. These causes are interlinked and compound each other. It is most often those that are not valued whose rights are not realised. *For example, girls, boys and youth with disabilities are often stigmatised and not valued; schools are not designed to be accessible and teachers are not adequately trained which means that their specific needs are not addressed and subsequently their right to an education is denied.*

- **Gender Equality -** Gender equality means that all persons, regardless of their gender, enjoy the same status in society; have the same entitlements to all human rights; enjoy the same level of respect in the community; can take advantage of the same opportunities to make choices about their lives; and have the same amount of power to shape the outcomes of these choices.

Gender equality does not mean that women and men, or girls and boys are the same. Women and men, girls and boys, and individuals with other gender identities have different but related needs and priorities, face different constraints, and enjoy different opportunities. Their relative positions in society are based on standards that, while not fixed, tend to advantage men and boys and disadvantage women and girls.

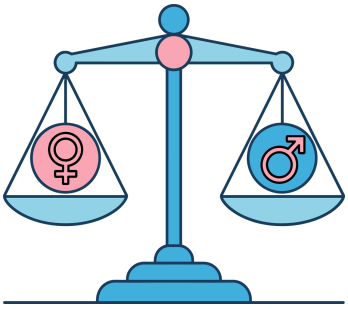
Consequently, they are affected in different ways by policies and programmes. A gender equality approach is about understanding these relative differences and intersecting identities, appreciating that they are not rigid and can be changed. It is important to keep these differences and intersecting identities in mind when designing strategies, policies, programmes and services.

Ultimately, promoting gender equality means transforming the power relations between women and men, girls and boys and individuals with different gender identities in order to create a more just society for all. One part of a strategy to achieve gender equality is gender equity. A gender equity approach is the deliberate process of being fair in order to produce equal and measurable outcomes.

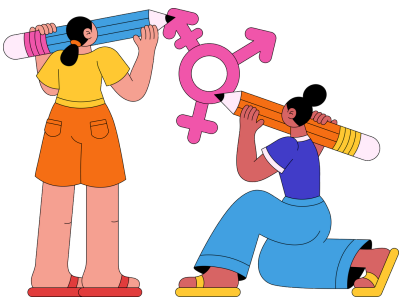
- **Gender Identity -** Gender identity refers to how an individual feels about their own gender. Individuals may identify as male, female or assomething else and their gender identity may or may not be the same as the sex that they were assigned at birth. Everyone has a gender identity and expresses their gender in a unique and personal way.

- **Gender Justice** - The concept of gender justice underlines the role of duty bearers for the rights of women, men, girls and boys. Gender justice is the ending of inequalities between females and males, which result in women's and girls' subordination to men and boys. It implies that girls and boys, women and men have equal access to and control over resources, the ability to make choices in their lives, as well as access to provisions to redress inequalities, as needed. A commitment to gender justice means taking a position against gender discrimination, exclusion and gender-based violence. It focuses on the responsibility to hold duty bearers accountable to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, including of girls and women.

- **Gender Transformative Approach** - Gender inequality varies from place to place, but everywhere some form of gender-based discrimination, gender stereotyping, and an unequal distribution of power between women and men, girls and boys is found. At the same time robust evidence demonstrates that gender equality is beneficial for girls and boys, men and women, and society as a whole. International law also recognises that gender equality is a key principle of human rights.

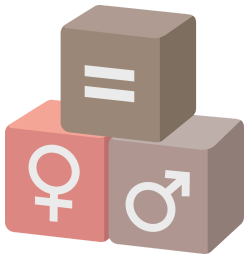


Therefore, Imara Leadership Initiative contributes to gender equality in all our programming and influencing work as outlined in our purpose to achieve children's rights and equality for girls. To this end, we use a gender transformative approach. This means that we explicitly tackle the root causes of gender inequality, particularly unequal gender power relations, discriminatory social norms and legislation, in all our work. In this way we aim not only to improve the daily condition of girls but also to advance their position and value in society.



We work together with girls, boys, women, and men to achieve these objectives. While our projects benefit both girls and boys, adopting this transformative approach ensures that our work results in positive changes and sustainable outcomes for girls. We work strategically at three dimensions of change: norms, attitudes and behaviours; social and economic resources and safety nets; and policy frameworks and budgets. This might involve promoting and applying, where necessary and useful, affirmative action for girls and women so that long standinggender gaps are closed and inequalities are overcome.

- **Girls' Rights** - Girls everywhere face significant barriers to rights simply because they are young and female. To effectively support girls and achieve equality, it is essential to recognise that girls as a cohort represent one of the largest excluded social groups. Yet, as a group they have the potential to achieve collective agency and work together as a movement for change and achieve common strategic interests.Girls are right holders in their own right and not only a sub group of 'women' or 'children'. Girls' rights are covered by both the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).



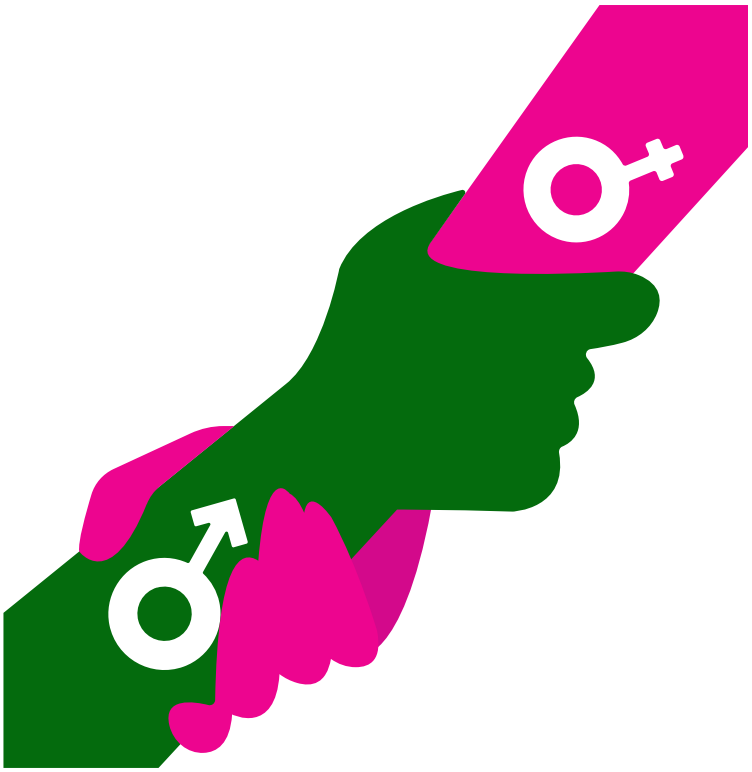
However, even though girls face particular risks and barriers to the realisation of their rights, and have specific needs that require special protection under law, the binding international human rights framework rarely explicitly spells out their specific rights. Different sources of international soft law may specify, though, girls' rights or contain references to girls' specific needs and vulnerabilities. Therefore, if we are to leave no girl behind, an important first step is to ensure that girl-specific rights are recognised, and realised as human rights. Therefore Imara Leadership Initiative, firmly believes that securing the rights of girls is the critical social justice issue of our time, and that girls' rights are human rights.

- **Inclusion** - is about bringing people into a process in a meaningful manner. It is the process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society and to fully enjoy their rights. It requires addressing the root causes of exclusion and understanding how intertwined the roots of different forms of exclusion are. Inclusion involves improving the opportunities available to girls, boys, youth, in particular those who are vulnerable and excluded, including children with disabilities, who are excluded on the basis of the social groups they identify with or are associated with, as well as respecting their dignity.

- **Intersectionality/ Intersecting Identities** - People do not fall neatly into single social groups. Each individual can have many identities that impact on how they interact with and are viewed by society. Unpacking these intersecting identities is key to understanding discrimination and exclusion because a person's experience of exclusion is often greater than the sum of all parts. *For example, to understand the experience of a girl from a minority ethnic group, we must invest in understanding how these two identities interact, frequently reinforcing each other in creating greater barriers to her rights and perpetuating even greater experiences of discrimination.*

- **Sexual Orientation** - Sexual orientation is a continuum that refers to each person's capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and/or intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.

- **Social Norms** - Social norms are a pervasive feature of all our lives. Norms are shared beliefs about what is typical and appropriate behaviour in a group of people, including women, girls, men and boys. Social norms are like informal rules, which also influence (and are influenced by) formal rules such as laws and regulations. Norms shape expectations and attitudes and can sustain and prescribe gender inequality. Around the world, social norms on gender shape the unequal status of women and girls and the expectations of their role in society.



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