DIVERSITY, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

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Contents

GLOSSARY

Accessibility: ensuring that facilities, services, information, and technology are usable and available to all individuals, including those with disabilities.

Affirmative Action: Policies and initiatives designed to increase opportunities for historically marginalized or underrepresented groups, often through proactive recruitment, hiring, and promotion practices.

Allyship: Active support and advocacy for marginalized individuals and communities, including taking action to challenge systemic inequalities and promote equity and inclusion.

Cultural Competence: The ability to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds, understanding and respecting their perspectives, values, and communication styles.

Discrimination: Treating individuals unfairly or unfavorably based on their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristics.

Diversity: The range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, religion, ability, and culture.

Equality: Ensuring that all individuals have equal opportunities, rights, and access to resources, regardless of their background or identity. This includes addressing systemic barriers that may prevent certain groups from fully participating and thriving.

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Equity: Recognizing and addressing disparities in opportunities, resources, and outcomes to ensure fair and just treatment for all individuals, particularly those who have been historically marginalized or disadvantaged.

Gender Identity: An individual's internal sense of their own gender, which may or may not align with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Harassment: Unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment based on a person's protected characteristics.

Implicit Bias: Unconscious attitudes or stereotypes that influence our understanding, actions, and decisions about others, often without our awareness.

Inclusion: refers to the extent to which people, with all their differences (in all their diversity), are allowed to participate (think, talk, determine, decide). Instead of exclusion (excluding people) or segregation (separating people), inclusion is about involving people in (the decision-making about) a group, organisation or society.

Inclusive Language: Language that avoids assumptions, stereotypes, or exclusions based on gender, race, ethnicity, or other characteristics, and that promotes respect and inclusivity for all individuals.

Intersectionality: is about the fact that sex, gender, ethnicity, age, class/caste, and (dis)ability (and other aspects of identity) should not be viewed separately but always in conjunction with each other. These dimensions always work together to create different positions of power and multiple layers of oppression and exclusion. So one must always look at how these dimensions intersect, how they are intersectional. As Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), who coined the term intersectionality, put it: 'The intersection of racism and sexism plays out in the lives of black women in ways that cannot be fully understood as distinct from the ethnicity and gender dimensions of these experiences.'

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Intersectionality: The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, which creates overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination and disadvantage.

Microaggressions: Brief, subtle, or unintentional actions or comments that convey derogatory or negative messages to individuals based on their membership in a marginalized group.

Privilege: Unearned advantages or benefits that individuals receive based on their social identity, such as race, gender, or socioeconomic status, which often go unrecognized by those who possess them.

Sexual Orientation: An individual's emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to others, which may be towards people of the same gender, different genders, or multiple genders.

Stereotype: A widely held but oversimplified and generalized belief or idea about a particular group of people, often based on assumptions or prejudices.

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity or expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

INTRODUCTION

The Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC) is committed to fostering a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment that respects and values the unique contributions of all individuals. .This Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DEI) policy articulates our commitment to fostering a workplace and organizational culture grounded in these principles. Internally, it serves as a guiding framework for our operations. Moreover, it extends beyond our organizational culture to encompass our projects and their impact, ensuring that we integrate Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) considerations into all facets of our work.

We recognize that language is both a powerful tool and a reflection of our values. It is through language that we articulate our commitment to addressing gender and fostering inclusive environments. However, we acknowledge the inherent complexities and limitations of language, understanding that not all experiences can be easily captured or articulated. Our choice of words and terminology is not static but evolves alongside societal norms and understanding. Therefore, this document serves not as a definitive endpoint but as a living testament to our ongoing efforts to engage with GESI principles through language. By providing explanations and context for our terminology, we aim to empower readers to critically evaluate and engage with the language used. Ultimately, it is our dedication to ethical, inclusive, and equitable language that enables us to express our values and aspirations for a more just and inclusive world.

THE SHRINKING SPACE OF CIVIC SPACE: NHC'S ALIGMENT WITH THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

The situation of human rights is deteriorating on a global scale. From the increasingly frequent subversion of the rule of law by authoritarian regimes, shrinking civic space and fundamental freedoms, to a sharp rise in nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric and practice in democracies, the universal human rights values and principles are coming under intensifying threat and attack. What was once perceived as a given – a shared culture of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms – is more and more showing itself to be a precarious ideal that must be ardently fought for and consistently defended. Despite this sobering context, human rights organisations fiercely push back against repression.

The Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC) stands firmly committed to the international framework on human rights, a cornerstone of its mission. This commitment extends across various crucial pillars, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 – achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, SDG 8 – promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all as well as SDG 16 - promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

At the EU level, inclusion and diversity are also key principles that guide the EU's efforts to build a more equal, just, and prosperous Europe. They are integral to promoting human rights, combatting discrimination, and fostering a sense of belonging and unity among all individuals and communities within the EU member states. Likewise, the principles of equality and non-discrimination are at the heart of the European Union. These principles are enshrined in the Treaty on European Union, Article 2, proclaiming these values as the foundational principles of the Union.

The European Union is anchored in values of equality, social fairness, freedom, democracy and human rights. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union provide the basis to combat all forms of discrimination, establishing equality as a cornerstone of EU policies. Inclusion and diversity are essential principles that guide the EU's efforts to build a more equal, just, and prosperous Europe. They are integral to promoting human rights, combatting discrimination, and fostering a sense of belonging and unity among all individuals and communities within the EU member states:

"*Social inclusion is at the core of the European Social Model and European values enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty. It is a cornerstone of the European Pillar of Social Rights and a priority of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*" (Eurofound, 2023).

In 2020 the European Commission introduced the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021-2027). With this action plan, the Commission sets out a strong framework to strengthen and step up integration and inclusion policies across the EU, thus contributing to the broader social inclusion agenda, drawing also on other relevant strategies and actions in the field of education, culture, employment, non-discrimination and equality.

The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 states very clearly that the European Commission will include a gender perspective in all stages of policy design, in all EU policy areas, internal and external. The strategy also reinforces the need to include an intersectional perspective across policies, as the combination of gender with other personal characteristics or identities often intersects thus contributing to unique experiences of discrimination – as a cross-cutting principle (Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025).

Likewise, according to the aforementioned strategy, more inclusion and more diversity is pivotal in order to bring forward new ideas and innovative approaches that better serve a dynamic and flourishing EU society. In the last years, the European Commission has led several initiatives in order to strengthen its commitment towards diversity and inclusion, such as the creation of the EU Platform of Diversity Charters, the European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity Award as well as the European Diversity Month. These initiates are good examples of the European Commission's long-term commitment for diverse and inclusive societies.

In line with the European Union's commitment to equality and inclusion, the Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC) is dedicated to upholding these principles in all aspects of our work. As an organization, we recognize the importance of fostering an environment that values diversity and promotes equity. Building upon the foundations laid out in the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021-2027), we are committed to implementing policies that strengthen social inclusion and embrace diversity. Our approach is guided by the principles outlined in the Treaty on European Union, emphasizing equality and non-discrimination as fundamental values.

KEY DEFINITIONS

DIVERSITY is related to the variety of human characteristics, backgrounds, identities, and experiences that make each individual unique. It encompasses dimensions such as gender, age, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and more. Diversity acknowledges that individuals have a wide range of attributes and perspectives that influence their interactions, contributions, and roles within society.

EQUALITY is the state or condition that affords all people equal enjoyment of human rights, socially valued goods, opportunities, and resources. More than parity or laws, genuine social equality is expanded freedom and improved overall quality of life for all.

EQUITY is the recognition and addressing of disparities in opportunities, resources, and outcomes to ensure fair and just treatment for all individuals, particularly those who have been historically marginalized or disadvantaged.

SOCIAL INCLUSION is achieving a work environment where all individuals are treated with justice and respect, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute to the success of an organization.

Equality is everybody getting
a pair of shoes.

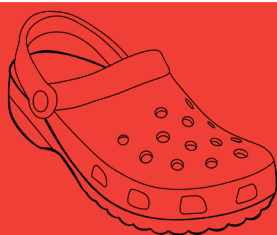Diversity is everyone wearing a
different type of shoe.

Equity is everyone getting
a pair of shoes that fit them.

Accessibility is having shoes,
or alternatives that feel comfortable.

Inclusion is feeling respected and valued
whether you are wearing shoes or not.

Belonging is showing up with or without
shoes and without fear of judgement.

NETHERLANDS
HELSINKI
COMMITTEE

NHC KEY POLICIES, STANDARDS AND PRINCIPLES

The following section presents the NHC's core policies, providing a comprehensive overview of the crucial ethical guidelines, standards and principles that underpin NHC's objectives and vision. The policy builds on NHC's already existing ethical guidelines and integrity system (whistle-blowers policy, complaint procedure , privacy policy). NHC has established various ethical protocols such as an integrity policy, a complaint and whistle-blowers policy as well as a privacy policy.

INTEGRITY POLICY

The current integrity system of NHC encompasses a Code of Conduct for Employees of NHC, a reporting point for external complaints and an external confidential councillor and whistle-blower point for internal complaints. The Code of Conduct of NHC is part of the individual employment contract between the NHC and its employees. The Code of Conduct applies to all employees in a broad sense (including experts, volunteers, trainees and members of the Supervisory board and Committee), regardless of their place of employment. All employees of the NHC are responsible for being aware of and adhering to the Code of Conduct and for observing a high standard of integrity in all aspects of our work.

COMPLAINT POLICY

Partners or external stakeholders who have complaints regarding statements, publications or activities of the NHC can send these, including their name and address, in written form where it will be reviewed by the Office Manager and Executive Director. The sender will receive a reply within 4 weeks. If the complaint is related to the Executive Director, the complaint will be handled by the chair of the Supervisory Board of the NHC. The NHC does not take responsibility for personal actions or statements by its staff, the Supervisory Board, or members of the committee. The NHC has a special regulation in case of objection, dispute, and appeal regarding employees of the NHC and their work situation or labour relationship.

WHISTLE-BLOWER POLICY

The NHC has contracted the services of an external whistleblowing organisation as part of our whistle blowing policy, SeeHearSpeakUp. SeeHearSpeakUp is a unique external and independent global whistleblowing service which allows employees to report matters without fear, bringing areas of concern in the workplace to the attention of their employer in a secure and confidential manner. The SeeHearSpeakUp service encourages employees to report issues that are of concern to them and the information can be of great benefits to the employer organisation by providing an early warning of instances such as malpractice, misconduct, health and safety breaches, fraud and many other forms of wrongdoing. Additionally, SeeHearSpeakUp is an independent reporting service that will act impartially to any concern that you raise that violates your organisations policies and codes of conduct. Employees can choose to supply SeeHearSpeakUp with their contact details or can choose to remain anonymous.

DATA PROTECTION

All data will be collected and stored in compliance with NHC's privacy policy, which is in line with the privacy and data protection regulation, especially the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016/679 on data protection and privacy for all individuals within the EU and the European Economic Area.

NHC'S COMMITMENTS TOWARDS DIVERSITY, EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

This document was designed to provide practical guidance and tools on how to further improve NHC's commitments pertaining to diversity, equality, equity and inclusion in its everyday work, across policies and practices.

This policy provides an **enabling framework for diversity, equality and inclusion**, thus conveying a comprehensive anti-discrimination and gender mainstreaming approach that will be applied to all NHC's policies, procedures practices and programmes, including in all stages of project design. In order to enhance NHC's effectiveness, impact and sustainability, we will rely on the GESI approach.

PROMOTING AN ENVIRONMENT OF RESPECT FOR ALL

Recognise and value the individualities of employees and stakeholders, ensuring a fair working environment where everyone has equal opportunities to develop their potential.

BUILDING A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

Promoting an environment where people have the freedom to be themselves, being able to share their ideas and expose their views in a respectful way with others through open and transparent dialogue. We will foster an inclusive environment where every individual feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique talents.

At NHC, we are dedicated to fostering an environment where individuals feel safe to express themselves authentically, share their ideas, and engage in open and transparent dialogue with others. To achieve this, we are committed to implementing concrete measures that promote inclusivity and respect. This includes actively listening to diverse perspectives, providing platforms for marginalized voices to be heard, and addressing any instances of discrimination or bias swiftly and effectively.

We will prioritize training and development initiatives to enhance cultural competency and awareness among staff members, ensuring that everyone is equipped with the tools and knowledge to foster an inclusive environment. By creating a culture of empathy, understanding, and mutual respect, we will empower every individual to contribute their unique talents and perspectives towards our shared goals.

ESTABLISH PROCESSES FREE OF PREJUDICE

Treat everyone fairly and equitably, without discrimination on grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, social class, ability, religious beliefs, nationality and political beliefs including internal guidelines and processes such as recruitment, termination, promotion, compensation and benefits,.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

NHC's efforts will consistently analyse and attend to the needs, priorities and experiences of all individuals whilst formulating policies, strategies, in its programmes, projects and conducting knowledge-strengthening activities. This approach, established as a global strategy through the adoption of the Platform for Action at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, aims to ensure the systematic integration of a gender perspective. It is a strategy for making everyone's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that all individuals a benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.

INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

Focusing on skills, qualifications, and potential rather than biases. We will proactively attract candidates from diverse backgrounds.At the NHC, we are committed to cultivating a diverse and inclusive workforce through our recruitment practices. We recognize that traditional hiring methods may perpetuate biases and limit opportunities for individuals from underrepresented backgrounds. Therefore, we prioritize a holistic approach that focuses on skills, qualifications, and potential rather than biases.

NO TOLERANCE FOR PREJUDICE, DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Respect the dignity and human rights of all people in the workplace. Any violations of this policy are considered violations of NHC's Code of Conduct, and are subject to the penalties outlined within the Code.

ADDRESSING HARMFUL MECHANISMS THAT REINFORCE HISTORIC POWER IMBALANCES AND INJUSTICE

We do this for example by integrating gender, social inclusion and intersectionality as topics in our training modules or by making this perspective part of our analysis and policy advocacy. We are committed to dismantling harmful mechanisms that perpetuate historic power imbalances and injustice. These mechanisms encompass a wide range of systemic issues, including but not limited to gender inequality, social exclusion, and intersecting forms of discrimination.

For instance, gender inequality manifests in various ways, from unequal access to resources and opportunities to the perpetuation of gender-based stereotypes and norms. Social exclusion marginalizes individuals and communities based on factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and disability, denying them equal participation and representation in society. Intersectionality highlights the complex and interconnected nature of discrimination, recognizing that individuals may experience multiple forms of oppression based on intersecting identities.

To address these harmful mechanisms, we integrate gender, social inclusion, and intersectionality as core topics in our training modules and policy advocacy efforts. For example, we incorporate gender-sensitive approaches in our analysis of human rights issues and advocate for policies that promote social inclusion and address intersecting forms of discrimination. By actively engaging with these topics and incorporating them into our work, we strive to challenge systemic barriers and promote equity and justice for all.

INTEGRATING AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH

NHC aims to provide targeted support for and solidarity with those groups and people whose rights are first and most under pressure because of their backgrounds and historic position in society. Building on our history of engagement, we especially look for alliances with and support to LGBTQI+ and women's rights and gender equality organisations that are active in the field of human rights.

PROMOTION OF DIVERSITY, EQUALITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION!

Stimulate dialogue and debate to increase awareness of NHC staff, third parties, networks, partners and the general public about respect for diversity, equality and inclusion as well as combatting all forms of discrimination.

GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION (GESI) ANALYSIS

We aim to extensively apply the GESI framework across all our programs, ensuring its integration throughout every phase of our projects, from initial design to monitoring and evaluation. By incorporating GESI principles at every step, we seek to foster inclusivity and address systemic inequalities effectively.

In essence, a GESI analysis goes beyond recognizing diversity and inclusivity; it involves a proactive effort to uncover and address underlying inequalities and systemic biases that hinder equitable development. It is a crucial tool for promoting social justice, human rights, and sustainable development by ensuring that policies and interventions benefit all members of society, regardless of their background or identity.

The GESI will mainly entail that:

• **Differences based on gender and marginalisation** are addressed in the design of the project activities and deliverables;

• **Gender equality and social inclusion** of marginalised groups are promoted in grassroots support (through subgranting), capacity strengthening, awareness raising and coalition building methodologies;

• **These activities are properly monitored** and in line with the GESI framework (in order to measure, for instance, its **gender-responsiveness**).

More specifically, the GESI framework should contribute to:

• **Encouraging equal participation** of all individuals in project activities at all levels;

• Ensuring that the **working conditions and culture within the consortium members** in general and within the framework of the project in particular allow all individuals to have **equally fulfilling careers**;

- Incorporating **gender-specific and gender-sensitive factors and indicators** to enhance the overall societal relevance of the anticipated project activities.

- **Collecting disaggregated data** by gender, age, location, disability and other vulnerabilities in order help trace and address any underrepresentation of marginalised groups in grassroots support (through subgranting), capacity-strengthening, awareness raising and coalition building activities.

- **Analysing the gender constraints or barriers to ensure full participation of target groups in project activities**: the target groups may face several barriers to access project activities (accessibility barriers, language barriers, disability-specific barriers, availability of childcare provision, etc). Therefore, it is essential to undertake preventive measures in order to ensure full participation of all individuals in all their diversity in project design and implementation.

- **Including targeted actions** that particularly address the needs and opportunities of women, girls, and other marginalised groups;

- Specifying other measures such as **gender mainstreaming and policy dialogue** for addressing the needs and opportunities of all individuals and other marginalised groups;

- **Implementing GESI- Responsive Assessment Tools** as a critical component of overall progress and outcomes, with a view to assess gender integration and social inclusion.

- Address the **specific needs of all individuals**, people of different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds and of people with disabilities and other vulnerabilities throughout all phases of the project (analysis, design, planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting, evaluation) to enable beneficiaries to participate and benefit equally, whilst contributing to tackling inequality and discrimination.

CHECKLIST: KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK IN THE DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF PROJECTS

n assessing the inclusion of gender equality of each project, a gender equality checklist has been developed. The checklist is meant as a tool throughout the process of project development, implementation, monitoring, and result evaluation.

KEY QUESTIONS

- Does the situational analysis consider the different social, economic, cultural and political situations of marginalised groups (such as human rights defenders)?
- Will the project contribute to better gender equality in the field the project is targeting?
- Will the project contribute to reducing gender inequalities (e.g. supporting a national gender equality policy)? Will it be sustainable?
- How does the project contribute to the overall goal of gender equality in the country?
- How will gender equality be integrated in activities and tools?
- Does the monitoring framework include measurable gender and social inclusion indicators appropriate to the program and its activities?
- Do the activities include interventions to advance empowerment of marginalized people (e.g., targeting persons with different disabilities, support to these groups, and capacity-strengthening?
- Does it increase access to services and resources, enhance everyone's participation and decision-making in the project)?
- Do the activities include interventions to advance the empowerment of women and other marginalised groups?
- Does the implementation plan appropriately address the dimensions of gender inequality and social exclusion?

CONCLUSION

The Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DEI) policy stands as a firm commitment to creating a future where every individual's uniqueness is celebrated, and every voice is valued. By embracing diversity, we harness the power of varied perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences to drive innovation, enrich our work, and enhance our impact.

As we move forward, this policy will guide our actions, shape our initiatives, and drive our collaborations. We recognize that our strength lies in our collective diversity, and by fostering an inclusive environment, we amplify the impact of our work. By nurturing a culture that champions equality, we create opportunities for every individual to excel. Through unwavering dedication to inclusion, we ensure that no one is left unheard or unseen. The Netherlands Helsinki Committee remains resolute in championing these values and looks forward to the positive transformations they will bring to our organization, our partners, and stakeholders.

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