



# **GENDER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY**

*Version 2024*

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## WEWORLD GENDER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

WeWorld is a foundation that has been established in December 2018, following the merger of WeWorld Onlus (established in Milan in 1999), and the GVC Association (established in Bologna in 1971). The foundation works across 25 countries, including Italy, to ensure that the fundamental rights of every human being, especially women, girls, persons with diverse SOGIESC<sup>1</sup>, persons with disabilities, persons on the move, minorities and marginalized groups, are recognized and respected, tackling poverty, violence and injustice, whilst generating opportunities and sustainable development.

WeWorld strives for a better world where everyone, including children, have equal opportunities and rights, access to resources, healthcare, education, and fair employment. A world where a positive and inclusive environment is fostered; where war, violence and exploitation are banned. A world where nobody is left behind.

The primary groups for WeWorld operations are children, young persons and women, namely 'actors of change' in every community for a fairer and more inclusive world. Through development programs WeWorld helps people overcome emergencies so that they can rebuild and lead a dignified life and look ahead to a future that offers opportunities (within the context of Agenda 2030).

This policy is complementary to the set of standards of behavior that all WeWorld personnel are already required to adhere: the Code of Ethics and Conduct, Antifraud and Anticorruption Policy, the PSEAH policy, the Child Safeguarding Policy, and the 231 Procedures also referred as the Model.

The present Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy constitutes integral part of the Foundation's strategy.

## 1.1 PURPOSE AND AIM OF THE POLICY

WeWorld recognizes that despite constituting at least half of the total number of children and adults globally, women and girls are often classified as a minority and vulnerable group. This includes persons with diverse SOGIESC, the elderly, persons with disability and persons on the move. The needs, experiences, challenges and gaps faced by women, gender and diversity groups are uniquely different, and often, these differences are overlooked.

WeWorld recognizes the need to identify, understand and analyze these gendered impacts to effectively advocate and support the self-determination of every individual.

## 1.2 SCOPE AND RECIPIENTS OF THE POLICY

WeWorld is committed to fostering the well-being of every human being regardless of their age, gender diversity, disability or background. The scope of the Policy is to detail core principles,

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<sup>1</sup>Definition of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC), IOM, 2020, available here: <https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/documents/IOM-SOGIESC-Glossary-of-Terms.pdf>

behavioral standards, preventative measures and procedures in building a safe working environment in every aspect of the Organization's operations and beyond.

This Policy applies to:

- All WeWorld staff, volunteers, consultants and representatives worldwide;
- Partners, suppliers, contractors, subgrantees or those who otherwise have a contractual relationship with WeWorld, unless it has been agreed that the partner will apply its own Gender Policy;
- Journalists, photographers and any other visitors in any capacity.

## 2. POLICY STATEMENT

WeWorld is dedicated to fostering an inclusive environment that upholds gender equality and celebrates diversity in all its forms. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), WeWorld recognizes that gender equality is not only an essential human right but also a crucial foundation for building a peaceful, resilient, prosperous, and sustainable world. This commitment is deeply rooted in the organizational spirit and is aligned with the prioritization of the needs of the most marginalized individuals. WeWorld places significant emphasis on combating inequalities and ensuring equitable access to communities and individuals that are marginalized or at risk of exclusion, through a lens that acknowledges gender, age, disability and culture sensitivity. WeWorld's programs are designed to accommodate the unique challenges faced by these groups in accessing services and resources, thereby fostering inclusivity and equal opportunities for all. Among them, women, girls, persons with diverse SOGIESC, persons with disabilities, persons on the move, minorities and marginalized groups.

The *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*<sup>2</sup>, and the UN Security Council *Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)*<sup>3</sup> and following resolutions are among the main legal and policy instruments serving as a normative frame of reference.

WeWorld's work in promoting gender equality, diversity, and inclusion is guided by international frameworks like:

- IASC 'Gender in Humanitarian Action Handbook'<sup>4</sup>;
- IASC 'Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities'<sup>5</sup>;
- UNHCR's 'Age, Gender, and Diversity Policy'<sup>6</sup>;
- And working towards the application of the 'Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability'<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) , UN General Assembly, 1979, available at: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Resolution 1325, UN Security Council, 2000, available at: [n0072018.pdf \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2000/00072018.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Gender in Humanitarian Action Handbook, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2018, available at: [IASC Gender in Humanitarian Action Handbook - Home Page - IASC Gender in Humanitarian Action Handbook \(gihahandbook.org\)](https://www.iasc.org/handbook/)

<sup>5</sup> Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2019, available at: [IASC Guidelines, Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, 2019 | IASC \(interagencystandingcommittee.org\)](https://www.iasc.org/guidelines/)

<sup>6</sup> Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity, UNHCR, 2018, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/media/policy-age-gender-and-diversity-accountability-2018>

<sup>7</sup> Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability, Core Humanitarian Standards Alliance, 2024, available at: [https://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/ugd/e57c40\\_f8ca250a7bd04282b4f2e4e810daf5fc.pdf](https://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/ugd/e57c40_f8ca250a7bd04282b4f2e4e810daf5fc.pdf)

WeWorld commits to transparent and participatory practices, engaging especially underrepresented community members in all project phases to ensure power is used responsibly and equal opportunities for all.

WeWorld fosters an inclusive culture within its operations, ensuring the teams' composition mirrors the diversity and values of the communities we assist. WeWorld prioritizes safe and respectful environments, free from discrimination, actively engaging to ensuring respect and observance of Child Safeguarding and PSEAH Policy.

We continuously refine our practices to align with evolving international standards on gender equality, diversity, and inclusion, demonstrating our commitment to ensuring dignified lives for all without discrimination or exclusion.

### 3. NOTE ON LANGUAGE AND DEFINITIONS

In its efforts to promote equality and diversity in access to human rights and dignified existence, WeWorld recognizes the critical need to carefully consider the language used in daily communications. This involves examining how language describes, interacts with, and understands individuals, communities, and various contexts.

WeWorld acknowledges the significant influence it holds as an international organization that interacts with an intersectional approach with children, adults, and communities globally, carefully considering factors such as age, gender, race, sexuality, religion, ability, and mobility.

WeWorld is committed to adopting language that neither patronizes nor reinforces stereotypes, but instead challenges the structural inequalities created by patriarchy, capitalism, racism, and colonialism.

Furthermore, WeWorld ensures that equality and inclusion are central to every action, striving for accountability to every individual and community engaged through its work.

- **Ableism:** *A system that assigns value to people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of what is considered normal, productive, desirable, intelligent, excellent, and physically fit. These ideas are deeply rooted in eugenics, anti-Blackness, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism. This system of oppression leads society to value people based on their cultural background, age, language, appearance, religion, where they were born or live, their "health/wellness," and their ability to meet certain expectations of achievement and behavior. It's important to note that ableism affects everyone, regardless of whether they have a disability or not<sup>8</sup>.*
- **Accountability to Affected Populations:** *The process of using power responsibly, and taking account of and being held accountable by different stakeholders, primarily those who are affected by the exercise of such power. Accountability means putting people and communities at the centre of decisions on issues that affect them<sup>9</sup>.*

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<sup>8</sup> Definition of Ableism, by Talila Lewis, January 2022, in 'The ABC of Bodily Autonomy for Young Persons with Disability' by the Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, 2023, available at: <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/ABCOFBodilyAutonomyPwDs.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Accountability Definition, Core Humanitarian Standards on Quality and Accountability, CHS Alliance, 2024, available at: [https://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/ugd/e57c40\\_f8ca250a7bd04282b4f2e4e810daf5fc.pdf](https://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/ugd/e57c40_f8ca250a7bd04282b4f2e4e810daf5fc.pdf)

- **Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD):** The AGD approach emphasizes the importance of recognizing and addressing the unique needs and rights of all persons, taking into account their age, gender, and other diversity factors. This approach ensures inclusive, participatory, and equitable humanitarian responses, aiming to empower all individuals to participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their lives and to have equal access to resources and protection. AGD is integral to achieving gender equality and enhancing overall accountability in humanitarian actions.
- **Diversity:** *The presence of differences among people in terms of their identities, backgrounds, experiences, perspectives and characteristics. These differences can include, but are not limited to, factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, abilities/disabilities, religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds*<sup>10</sup>.
- **Gender:** Is a social and cultural construct that influences the norms and behaviors expected of individuals based on the biological sex assigned at birth. Gender identity encompasses a spectrum of identities that may or may not align with this assigned sex. Understanding the distinction between sex, which is biological, and gender, which is culturally and personally defined and differs in every context, is crucial for recognizing the diversity of human experiences and acknowledge differentials of power.
- **Gender Inequality:** Gender norms disproportionately affect women and gender-diverse persons, by restricting their rights through unpaid care work, educational barrier, wage disparities, limited access to sexual and reproductive justice and rights. Gender norms also contribute to the marginalization and erasure of non-binary, transgender and gender-diverse persons.
- **Inclusion:** Involves an intersectional proactive approach to ensure all individuals, including those who face systemic barriers - such as women and girls, the elderly, persons with disability, persons on the move, and marginalized communities - can fully participate meaningfully to every aspect of a dignified life. This requires identifying and tackling the social, economic, cultural barriers that vary by genders, to guarantee fair treatment and equitable opportunities and benefits, particularly in areas where historical disparities have disadvantaged women and girls.
- **Racial Discrimination:** *Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life*<sup>11</sup>.
- **Patriarchy:** *Patriarchy is a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence.*<sup>12</sup>
- **Power:** *Power dynamics shape access to resources and opportunities and can perpetuate inequalities or drive change towards more equitable systems. By understanding and redistributing*

<sup>10</sup> Diversity Definition, , Core Humanitarian Standards on Quality and Accountability, CHS Alliance, 2024, available at: [https://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/ugd/e57c40\\_f8ca250a7bd04282b4f2e4e810daf5fc.pdf](https://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/ugd/e57c40_f8ca250a7bd04282b4f2e4e810daf5fc.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, UN General Assembly, 1965, Art.1. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial>

<sup>12</sup>Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center, Bell Hooks, page 18, 1984.

*power, it is possible to create more inclusive environments that enable women and all marginalized groups to participate fully and equitably in decision-making processes.*

## 4. PRINCIPLES

Addressing gender and diversity concerns in the design and implementation of development and humanitarian programs is essential, as each individual has unique needs. Women and men, girls and boys, persons with diverse SOGIESC, each have distinct roles that demand tailored approaches. Moreover, systemic inequalities persist based on factors such as gender identity, disability, background, movement, and marginalization. Marginalized groups are consistently underrepresented in decision-making processes that shape their communities and their own lives, and are systematically erased from access to opportunities and services. This exclusion and inequality prevent both children and adults from reaching their full potential, resulting in a loss for the society as a whole.

WeWorld is committed to incorporating Gender and Power concerns into program design and implementation. The Organization aims to advance Gender equality, Diversity and Inclusion in all aspects of its work and across the Organization, guided by the following principles:

### 4.1 GENDER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Gender equality, diversity and inclusion are essential components to foster a peaceful, resilient, prosperous, and sustainable world, where every child and person has access to opportunities tailored according to their needs, and to a dignified life.

### 4.2 ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES AND ROOT CAUSES

It is essential to tackle the deeply rooted causes of gender inequality and marginalization, addressing the discriminatory and patriarchal social norms and advocating for enhancement of supportive laws and policies that promote equity, diversity and inclusion.

### 4.3 GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH

Gender equality should involve entire communities, incorporating gender-sensitive approaches at all societal levels, ensuring the involvement of persons of all ages, all genders, all abilities, all backgrounds.

### 4.4 MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Women and men, girls and boys of all age, abilities, backgrounds must be equally engaged and provided with tailored opportunities to participate meaningfully in all societal aspects and be 'actors of change'.

### 4.5 INDEPENDENT AND INTEGRATED

Gender equality, diversity and inclusion are both a framework as well as an independent area of focus, across all levels of WeWorld work.

## 4.6 CAPACITY-BUILDING AND LEARNING

By integrating gender analysis and enhancing capacity-building for gender-responsive interventions, WeWorld advances toward gender equality, diversity, and inclusion. This ongoing process of learning and sharing knowledge aids in dismantling barriers and overcoming obstacles, enabling women, girls, and the most marginalized individuals to access opportunities and live dignified lives.

## 5. CORE ACTION DOMAINS

### 5.1 COMMITMENTS AS EMPLOYER

- **Equal Opportunity Employment:** Ensure job postings and hiring practices attract a diverse range of candidates, emphasizing gender equity and representation from different backgrounds and all demographics.
- **Pay Equity Audits:** Conduct regular pay equity audits internally, to ensure equitable compensation across genders and backgrounds, promptly addressing any disparities found.
- **Flexible Working Arrangements:** Offer flexible work schedules and remote working options to support employees with caregiving responsibilities, particularly beneficial for women who often bear a greater caregiving burden.
- **Menstrual Leave Policy:** Implement a monthly Menstrual Leave policy for all individuals who menstruate, regardless of their contractual status. This policy allows them to request one paid day of leave per month without the need to submit a medical certificate and provides the option to work remotely if preferred.
- **Professional Development:** Provide equitable access to development and leadership opportunities, with targeted programs to support the advancement of women and persons from different backgrounds into leadership roles. Facilitate mentorship opportunities, focusing on empowering women and minorities, and providing them with guidance and support in their career paths.
- **Inclusive Health Benefits :** Offer comprehensive health benefits that address a wide range of needs, including sexual and reproductive health, menstrual health, gender affirming care, disability and chronic illnesses, mental health and psychosocial support.
- **Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policies:** Regularly update and actively disseminate rigorous anti-discrimination and harassment policies (Code of Ethics and Conduct, PSEAH Policy, Child Safeguarding Policy), with a strong focus on preventing and addressing sexual harassment and gender-based violence. Ensure mechanisms are in place to take seriously and investigate all complaints and reports received.
- **Parental and Caregiving Support:** Provide robust parental leave policies for all persons irrespective of their contractual type, along with additional support for returning parents, such as flexible scheduling and childcare services.
- **Capacity Learning:** Implement regular mandatory training that covers cultural competency and gender sensitivity to foster an inclusive and supportive workplace environment and dismantle conscious and unconscious biases. Provide specific training for managers across all sectors and at all levels (HQ, Domestic Programs, Regional and Country Level) on inclusive practices, focusing on understanding the barriers faced by women, persons with disabilities and



marginalized individuals in the workplace. Ensure continuity in learning, from the induction phase to performance appraisal.

- **Safe and Accessible Work Environment:** Ensure a safe, respectful, and fully accessible workplace by accommodating the unique needs of individuals with disabilities and fostering an environment of safety and respect for everyone. Provide private spaces for breastfeeding, gender-neutral bathrooms, and designated areas for prayer to support individuals of any religious belief.
- **Language:** Ensure that sensitive and respectful language is consistently used and promoted across all WeWorld environments to increase comfort and understanding among colleagues. Actively address and counter any instances of abusive language use.
- **Transparent Reporting and Accountability:** Maintain transparency in reporting on diversity and inclusion efforts and outcomes, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.
- **Regular Policy Review and Update:** Commit to ongoing review and refinement of all policies to adapt to changing societal norms and best practices, ensuring consultation with all employees to address their needs and integration of Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- **Monitoring:** Carry out an annual evaluation/review with the purpose of measuring WEWORLD's ability to implement its Gender equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy and actions.

## 5.2 COMMITMENTS IN PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

In implementing the Gender equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy, WeWorld commits to be accountable to donors and to communities by:

- **Data Management:** Ensuring inclusive data collection, analysis and utilization of Sex, Age, Disability, Disaggregated Data (SADDD) to ensure equitable representation and informed decision-making.
- **Gender Integration:** Rather than just considering Gender as a cross-cutting theme, the integration of Gender implies the shift in aiming to achieve specific Gender outcomes in collaboration with other sectors. Advancing from Gender mainstreaming to Gender Integration at every phase of the Project Cycle Management, enhances the impact and the relevance of the programs.
- **Human Resources and Finance:** Allocating human and financial resources strategically across all phases of Project Cycle Management to robustly support Gender, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives.
- **Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning:** Maintaining a consistent and continuous effort to monitor, evaluate and enhance the outputs and outcomes related to Gender, Diversity and Inclusion.
- **Capacity Learning:** Implementing comprehensive training for all staff to develop their capabilities in addressing Gender, Diversity and Inclusion throughout project interventions.
- **Accountability:** Strengthening efforts to increase accountability in each intervention, ensuring that Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion commitments are met with transparency.
- **Civil Society Partnership:** Expanding partnerships and networking with grassroots, women-led, LGBTQ+, and disability-focused organizations to ensure meaningful community engagements.

- **Advocacy and Communication:** Support every intervention with a tailored advocacy and communication plan to effectively promote and advance Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion goals.

## 6. FEEDBACK AND REPORTING

All WeWorld staff is encouraged to share any feedback or suggestion related to inclusion and non-discrimination in the work environment and in all the activities carried out.

WeWorld built a permanent form accessible to all staff (ie. Portal) to promote dialogue and exchange of ideas and improvement for the Organization.

In case of any discrimination, violation of the present policy or any other act that may constitute a breach of WeWorld systems and procedures, any party involved with World (including staff and all stakeholder) has access to WeWorld Whistleblowing mechanism, which is accessible and available also on WeWorld web site and operates according to the Whistleblowing Policy and procedures.

## 7. DISSEMINATION AND VALIDITY

The present policy will be disseminated among WeWorld staff and will be included in the induction training package for all new staff.

The document will be published on the Foundation website and included in the Organization core documents.

Any update of the Policy will be approved by the Board of Directors and disseminated and published as above indicated.

## Appendix

*Concerning Gender Equality aspects, WeWorld decided to uphold to the Standard UNI/PdR 125:2022. Therefore, the policy implementation system in relation to Gender Equality will follow the scheme of that Standard, as the Foundation objective is to obtain and maintain the Gender Equality Certification.*

*For this purpose, in early 2024, a Guiding Committee was nominated to supervise the system, to coordinate the implementation and follow up of the improvement plan. A Gender Equality System Referent was appointed to support and supervise on the correct development of the System.*

*Gender Equality System will be monitored and audited at least on a yearly basis, as required by the UNI/PdR 125:2022 Standard.*