

THE GOAL IS GENDER JUSTICE. THE WAY THERE IS FEMINISM. DIAKONIA'S GLOBAL GENDER JUSTICE POLICY

Adopted by the Board of Directors 2021-07-01

1. SCOPE

This policy has been adopted by the Board of Directors of Diakonia. It applies to all Diakonia staff and the Board of Directors. It serves as common ground for strategic direction, describing our position on and commitment to gender justice. It is based on the document 'Feminist Rationale for Diakonia's Gender Justice Work', elaborated upon in our Global Strategy and operationalised through our Global Operational Plan. The policy can function as a source of inspiration for the development of gender policies for our partners.

2. INTRODUCTION

Diakonia has taken the decision to base its work for gender justice on a set of feminist principles. Doing so is partly a matter of acknowledging feminism and feminist actors as key driving forces behind the global struggle for gender justice. Rigorous academic evidence shows that the main factor that determines whether gender equality advances or not in a country is whether there are feminist movements with space to act.¹ Anchoring our work for gender justice in feminist principles is also a matter of aligning Diakonia's work for gender justice with our goal of addressing root causes to poverty and inequality, human rights violations and violence, recognising that feminism implies transforming unfair power relations and roles in society, and other deep-rooted obstacles to gender justice.

One in three women across the world experience violence by a partner, including sexual violence, in their lives². According to the ILGA Report 2020, 67 United Nations member states have laws that criminalise individuals for consensual sexual acts with someone of the same sex, six of which include the death penalty. Only 25 percent of the parliamentarians in the world are women³. Globally, women spend almost three times as much time on unpaid housework as men do⁴. Around 7 million women are admitted to hospitals every year in developing countries, and an estimated 68 000 women die every year from unsafe abortion, according to the World Health Organisation⁵. While the exact statistics may change, these are all pervasive examples of why we need to join forces to fight for gender justice.

Gender justice does not appear automatically when a society develops economically, is democratised, or builds peace. It must be promoted as a goal in itself, acknowledging that the fulfilment of the human rights of girls, women and all persons independent of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics are key components of sustainable development, democracy and peace.

¹ Htun, Mala and Weldon, S. Laurel, 2012, The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975–2005, American Political Science Review Vol. 106, No. 3 August 2012; and Htun, Mala and Weldon, S. Laurel, 2014, Progressive policy change on women's economic and social rights, Background paper for UN Women Progress of the World's Women.

² WHO, 9 March 2021. <https://www.who.int/news/item/09-03-2021-devastatingly-pervasive-1-in-3-women-globally-experience-violence>

³ UN Women, 15 January 2021. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>

⁴ ILO 2018. [wcms_633135.pdf \(ilo.org\)](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/media/wcms_633135.pdf)

⁵ WHO, 25 September 2018. [Preventing unsafe abortion \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/unsafe-abortion)

3. POLICY STATEMENT

Diakonia understands gender justice as a human rights issue and recognises that without gender justice, there can be no democracy, peace, or overcoming poverty and creating sustainable societies.

Our work for gender justice is based on the principle that every person, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics, should have power, knowledge, and resources to contribute to shaping their own life and the society they live in.

We recognise that gendered structures and stereotypes can oppress men and boys as well as women, girls, and non-binary persons. Gender justice is not a women's issue. At the same time, we acknowledge that patriarchal structures and norms systematically subordinate women, girls and LGBTQI persons in all societies. These groups generally face widespread and serious human rights violations and are overrepresented amongst people living in poverty.

Furthermore, gender correlates with other intersecting identities and relations in affecting people's access to power and resources. Gendered injustices can thereby be exacerbated by factors such as age, class, disability, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, religion and others. Diakonia commits to applying an intersectional analysis and the rights-based approach to acknowledge diversity and promote inclusive strategies.

Firmly based on the principles of the human rights conventions of *universality* (all rights apply for all human beings) and *indivisibility* (all rights must be acknowledged), we will seek to address gender injustices including norms around sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics, as well as sexual and reproductive rights, such as the right to legal, safe and free abortion.

Diakonia commits to ensure that all our work contributes towards true and inclusive gender justice. As stated in our global policy, we want to question and counter destructive wielding of power in our surroundings, as well as review our own methods. We work in accordance with feminist principles to identify and counteract patriarchal values in our own work, in religious tradition and in society at large.

We will seek to develop relationships with other actors who help us forward in operating based on feminist principles, and challenge, decline or phase out relationships that hinder us to do so.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

Diakonia's commitment to work for gender justice requires contributions from all parts of our organisation. We need to keep a generous and inclusive conversation, be transparent about challenges, acknowledge different starting points and the ambition to move forward from there. The following sections outline Diakonia's commitments in our different areas of work.

4.1. Program operations

As a Swedish civil society organisation, we have to continuously conduct feminist analyses of local contexts and power relations where we work and be the best possible ally to our partners, not least to feminist and other gender justice organisations in the global south. This includes influencing back donors to support feminist programming. Diakonia shall support gender stand-alone projects and programmes and promote gender mainstreaming in all other projects and programs in a way which concretely contributes to gender justice.

We expect our partners to be strategic allies in our gender justice work, not only the women's rights and feminist organisations but also the organisations made up of all genders, with a strong commitment to promote the rights-based approach, diversity and women's active participation in all their work. Diakonia will be transparent about our own rationale to work based on feminist principles and support partners' capacity building to strengthen their gender justice work.

When Diakonia engages in humanitarian efforts and self-implemented programs, we will ensure that our sourcing of information include a feminist analysis, and that the formulation of objectives, outreach and content of our trainings, and what we highlight in communications and campaigns include an explicit gender perspective.

4.2. Training and capacity building

Continuously strengthening the capacity of Diakonia staff to apply feminist principles, conduct constructive dialogue with partners and carry out gender responsive budgeting is key to transformative work for gender justice. Diakonia will ensure specialised staff positions to oversee, help implement and develop our work for gender justice as well as a global gender working group with staff from all regions holding a key role in developing Diakonia's gender work externally as well as internally.

4.3. Budgeting and administration

Political will must be translated into budgets. Gender responsive budgeting and reporting promotes accountability and transparency. Diakonia will strategically allocate resources to our work for gender justice, including both stand-alone gender work as well as gender mainstreaming, to find, reduce and close gender gaps. We are committed to increasing resources for feminist and women's rights organisations and organisations for equal rights for persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions and sex characteristics. Diakonia will also further gender justice in procurement processes and our anti-corruption work.

4.4. Policy and advocacy

Diakonia will work to ensure that all policy messages and advocacy efforts are based on a feminist gender analysis and aim at improving gender equality. This will include addressing root causes to discrimination and never just ascribing vulnerability or marginalization to girls, women and persons of different sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions and sex characteristics; as well as being an ally to feminist and women's rights organizations by making their work more visible and demand politics that support their participation and space to act. We will support gender mainstreaming of the advocacy work of partner organisations who aim to influence policies and institutions that shape conditions for people living in poverty and oppression.

4.5. Communications

When we communicate, we are straightforward, true and courageous. An intersectional gender perspective and feminist analysis shall always be present in all communication done by Diakonia, both internally and externally, in our Tone of Voice and in our strategies for different target groups.

4.6. Human resources

Diakonia shall build diverse teams with people from different genders and sexualities, ethnic, religious, social and cultural backgrounds, including people with disabilities. This is in line with the feminist and human rights-based principle of non-discrimination as well as enriching our perspectives and capacity as a development actor. Our employment conditions, salaries, recruitment and promotion processes shall be free from discrimination. Discussions on attitudes,

experiences and commitment relating to feminist principles and gender justice work shall be included in recruitment, on-boarding, promotion and performance review processes.

The Diakonia Policy on Protection from Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse, as well as the Code of Conduct reflect further commitments of Diakonia to safeguard staff and rightsholders from gender-based violence and harmful behaviours. The Complaints and Incident Response Mechanism is an important tool to deal with breaches and hold the responsible accountable.

5. MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The Secretary General holds the overall responsibility and works together with the other members of the Extended Management Team of Diakonia to ensure that feminist principles and gender mainstreaming as laid out in this policy are applied in a transformative way in all of Diakonia's work. The members of the Extended Management Team are responsible for clearly communicating to all staff members the obligation to incorporate this policy into their work. All directors will promote an organisational culture based on respect and inclusion, free from discrimination and violence, and strive to incorporate feminist principles in their leadership.

--- END OF POLICY ---

ANNEX 1

6. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The compliance with this policy shall be monitored as part of Diakonia's accountability framework. The gender justice policy is expected to be reviewed every 5 years. Suggestions for improvement should be considered when updating the policy including through broad consultations with Diakonia staff and partner organisations. The policy may be reviewed more frequently in case of significant contextual or organizational changes. The Secretary General will be responsible for conducting future policy reviews and any changes in content must be adopted by the Board of Directors of Diakonia.

7. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Feminism

Feminism is a movement for the social, cultural, political, and economic equality of all genders. It starts from an analysis of patriarchal norms and structures. There are different strands of feminism, but all of them recognise the existence of unfair power relations based on sex and gender, and aim to eliminate discrimination based on gender.

Gender

Gender refers to social and cultural expectations of the roles and behaviours of persons, based on their sex. Gender norms determine how people are perceived and how they are expected to think and act. Gender norms are institutionalized through education systems, political and economic systems, legislation, media, culture and traditions, and more. They can change over time and vary greatly within and across cultures.

Gender equality and Gender justice

These two concepts have very similar meaning. Diakonia is moving towards using 'gender justice'. By including the word 'justice', we want to communicate our rights-based approach. Gender equality is about ensuring equal treatment and opportunities for people to enjoy their human rights including by contributing to and benefitting from economic, social, cultural, and political development. Gender equality does not mean that women, men and non-binary people will become the same but that a person's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on their gender.

Gender mainstreaming

A method to ensure that all interventions contribute to increased gender equality. It requires an assessment of the implications for all genders of any planned action including legislation, policies, procedures or programmes. Mainstreaming can be considered transformative when there are clear effects of using the method, for example changes in access to power or when gender stereotypes and norms are challenged.

LGBTQI / LGBT+

LGBTQI stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual, Queer, and Intersex. LGBT+ can also be used. It stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual plus. The "plus" is a way to include a plurality of other groups, such as asexual, intersex and queer.

Non-binary

A person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many non-binary people also identify as transgender, not all do. The term should only be used if someone self-identifies as non-binary.

SOGIESC

An acronym for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics. It is increasingly used to avoid exclusions that the LGBTQI acronym can imply.

More relevant terms can be found in the [Diakonia Gender Dictionary](#).

8. OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- Diakonia's [A Feminist Rationale for our Gender Justice work](#)
- Diakonia's [Gender Mainstreaming Toolbox](#)
- Diakonia's tool "[How to do advocacy with a gender perspective](#)"
- Diakonia's [Global Policy](#)
- Diakonia's [Human Resources Policy](#)
- Diakonia's [Policy on Prevention of Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse](#)
- Diakonia's [Tonality Platform](#)
- Diakonia's [Code of Conduct](#)