



**International  
Standard**

**ISO 53800**

**Guidelines for the promotion and  
implementation of gender equality  
and women's empowerment**

*Lignes directrices relatives à la promotion et à la mise en œuvre  
de l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes et à l'empouvoirement  
des femmes*

**First edition  
2024-05**

STANDARDSISO.COM : Click to view the full PDF of ISO 53800:2024



**COPYRIGHT PROTECTED DOCUMENT**

© ISO 2024

All rights reserved. Unless otherwise specified, or required in the context of its implementation, no part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized otherwise in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, or posting on the internet or an intranet, without prior written permission. Permission can be requested from either ISO at the address below or ISO's member body in the country of the requester.

ISO copyright office  
CP 401 • Ch. de Blandonnet 8  
CH-1214 Vernier, Geneva  
Phone: +41 22 749 01 11  
Email: [copyright@iso.org](mailto:copyright@iso.org)  
Website: [www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org)

Published in Switzerland

# Contents

Page

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Foreword</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>iv</b> |
| <b>Introduction</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>v</b>  |
| <b>1 Scope</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>2 Normative references</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>3 Terms and definitions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>4 Methodology</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>8</b>  |
| 4.1 Overview of the methodology                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 8         |
| 4.2 Steps in the implementation of the methodology                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 9         |
| 4.2.1 General                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 9         |
| 4.2.2 Understanding the document and its terminology                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 10        |
| 4.2.3 Analyse the current situation in regard to gender equality                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 10        |
| 4.2.4 Identify the stakeholders                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 10        |
| 4.2.5 Identify and prioritize issues on gender equality                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 10        |
| 4.2.6 Involve stakeholders with issues                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 10        |
| 4.2.7 Implement a continuous improvement approach (PDCA cycle)                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 10        |
| 4.3 Integrate the approach into the organization's sustainability and social responsibility policy                                                                                                                                                                            | 11        |
| 4.4 Organization's status regarding gender equality                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 11        |
| 4.4.1 General information                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 11        |
| 4.4.2 Identifying stakeholders                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 12        |
| 4.5 Collecting and analysing data on the status of gender equality within the organization                                                                                                                                                                                    | 12        |
| 4.5.1 General                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 12        |
| 4.5.2 Qualitative and quantitative data collection                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 13        |
| 4.5.3 Specific focus on quantitative elements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 14        |
| <b>5 Guidelines on gender equality</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>15</b> |
| 5.1 Internal dimension of the organization                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 15        |
| 5.1.1 Governance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 15        |
| 5.1.2 Labour practices                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 17        |
| 5.1.3 Raising awareness among internal stakeholders                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 18        |
| 5.1.4 Support for internal stakeholders                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 19        |
| 5.2 Activity and investments of the organization                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 20        |
| 5.2.1 Provision of gender responsive goods and services                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 20        |
| 5.2.2 Sustainable procurement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 21        |
| 5.2.3 Gender responsive budgeting                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 22        |
| 5.3 External relations of the organization                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 23        |
| 5.3.1 Outreach to External Stakeholders                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 23        |
| 5.3.2 Setting up partnerships                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 23        |
| 5.4 Internal and external communication                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 24        |
| 5.4.1 Editorial content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 24        |
| 5.4.2 Communication actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 25        |
| <b>Annex A (informative) Guideline for the development of a grievance mechanism to prevent, detect and respond to gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH) internally as well as in engagement with external stakeholders</b> | <b>26</b> |
| <b>Annex B (informative) Indicators of the comparative situation of women and men</b>                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>32</b> |
| <b>Annex C (informative) Good practices and practical examples</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>35</b> |
| <b>Bibliography</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>50</b> |

## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO document should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

ISO draws attention to the possibility that the implementation of this document may involve the use of (a) patent(s). ISO takes no position concerning the evidence, validity or applicability of any claimed patent rights in respect thereof. As of the date of publication of this document, ISO had not received notice of (a) patent(s) which may be required to implement this document. However, implementers are cautioned that this may not represent the latest information, which may be obtained from the patent database available at [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents). ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see [www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html](http://www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html).

This document was prepared by Project Committee ISO/PC 337, *Guidelines for the promotion and implementation of gender equality*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at [www.iso.org/members.html](http://www.iso.org/members.html).

## Introduction

Despite real progress, gender inequalities and gender-based discrimination still remain widespread throughout the world in all areas.

Societal gender role expectations towards female and male behaviour are reflected in the very functioning of organizations, including their culture, processes, and hierarchies. The persistent gender inequalities within organizations mirror the structural discrimination faced by women and girls in society. For example, five out of ten women worldwide are integrated into the labour market, compared with nine out of ten men.<sup>[1]</sup> Still, once employed, women, worldwide, only make 77 cents for every dollar earned by men.<sup>[2]</sup> Women are still in the minority in governing bodies<sup>[3]</sup> and other positions of power. Concurrently, paid and unpaid labour is unequally distributed, with women and girls spending more time than men and boys on unpaid care and domestic work<sup>[4]</sup>. Finally, according to estimates by the World Health Organization, almost one in three women worldwide reports having been the victim of physical or sexual violence in her lifetime, not counting psychological, economic and social forms of violence.<sup>[5]</sup>

Every year, the World Economic Forum publishes the Global Gender Gap Report, an analysis that reveals the context of gender inequality in different regions of the world.<sup>[6]</sup>

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines, definitions, procedures and tools (including a framework, resources, policies, tools and good practices) to public and private organizations to encourage, support and guide them in making sustainable progress in promoting and achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, both internally and externally. It is intended to promote a common understanding on the issue of gender equality and to complement other instruments and initiatives on the subject. Additionally, this document has been developed in a manner consistent with other ISO initiatives and instruments such as ISO 30415. It aims to provide guidance to organizations in fulfilling their obligations in relation to gender equality and the UN's 2030 Agenda (in particular SDG5 on gender equality).<sup>[8]</sup> Beyond that, it addresses the underlying culture and behaviours, and proposes an approach, operational methods and tools for achieving an organization's stated objectives. Recognizing the differences in resources available, the intention of this document is to provide practical guidance for SMEs and small entities, as well as larger organizations, in line with their specific requirements.

While women are generally more disadvantaged in areas such as the labour market, unpaid care work and sexual and gender-based violence, gender-based discrimination can also affect men and boys in certain aspects of life, particularly when they do not conform to traditionally recognized perceptions of gender roles, which can have negative impacts on their lives and health, including their mental health. Therefore, in order to address gender inequality, it is important to identify how particular actions or omissions by the organization affect gender equality. It is only once this has been completed that the gender imbalance can be identified and the appropriate actions to remedy the imbalance be determined. This is an underlying principle of this document.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are not only women's issues but need to be addressed by everyone and every organization. It is seen both as a human rights issue, as well as a prerequisite and indicator of sustainable people-centred development. As such, addressing gender equality is a core pillar of any organization's social responsibility, including its environmental, social and governance (ESG) agenda. All organizations are in a position to take measures to promote gender equality, taking into account the maturity, nature, size and objectives of the organization.

The existence of a positive relationship between gender equality and economic and social development has already been demonstrated. It can be perceived as a lever and a source of better outcomes for the organization, and possibly be integrated in the organization's social responsibility policy (if it exists) or any other relevant policies.

Numerous studies<sup>[9]-[11]</sup> suggest that promoting gender equality has benefits for organizations: reduced employee turnover, quality recruitment, a stronger, more productive and innovative working environment, effective collaboration, leading to better performance and achieving more accurate results. Equitable leadership improves decision-making, and for-profit organizations can boost their profitability (e.g. by broadening their customer base, as well as by identifying new markets and reducing retention costs).

In this document, the objectives of gender equality are based on the understanding that gender is a social construct. The inequalities targeted are not based on biological criteria, but arise from social norms and constructs assimilated or projected onto every individual through socialization processes. However, the document also acknowledges and addresses those inequalities that are experienced as a result of biological criteria, such as sexual and reproductive health.

While recognizing the existence of other gender identities, this document specifically focuses on the inequality resulting from the hierarchical organization of the gender-specific roles assigned to women and men, girls and boys, due to their prominently structural character on a society-wide scale.

STANDARDSISO.COM : Click to view the full PDF of ISO 53800:2024

# Guidelines for the promotion and implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment

## 1 Scope

This document gives guidance on how to promote and implement gender equality and women's empowerment. It provides guidelines for organizations to develop the capabilities to achieve a culture of gender equality and women's empowerment. The guidelines include the framework, resources, policies, tools and good practices for contextualizing, promoting and implementing gender equality.

This document focuses on the inequality resulting from the gender specific roles assigned to women, girls, men and boys and is applicable to all types of organizations (public or private), regardless of their size, location or field of activity.

This document does not address the specific aspects of relations with labour unions or work councils, nor the country-specific regulations and compliance relating to gender diversity.

## 2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

## 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <https://www.electropedia.org/>

### 3.1 workforce

people who provide a service or labour to contribute to public and private business or organizational outcomes

Note 1 to entry: Service or labour comprises paid, voluntary, or legally compulsory contributions, irrespective of their contractual status.

Note 2 to entry: Workforce includes people defined as workers in ISO 26000, as well as volunteers and persons in training.

[SOURCE: ISO 30400:2022, 3.8.1, modified — Notes 1 and 2 to entry have been added.]

### 3.2 gender-based discrimination

intentional or unintentional unfavourable treatment of a person or a social group on the basis of their gender and gender stereotypes assigned in a social and cultural context which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of their rights

Note 1 to entry: Gender based-discrimination can intersect and be cumulative, known as intersectionality, with multiple forms of discrimination

Note 2 to entry: Within organizations, gender-based discrimination can be systemic, meaning that the policies, procedures, practices, routines or organizational culture of any entity, or the combination of these, whether intentionally or not, contributes to less favourable outcomes for the people who are part of them based on gender, more often for women and girls than for men and boys.

### 3.3

#### **gender-inclusive language**

oral and written language not perpetuating gender stereotypes and making women and men in all their diversity visible by proactively and equitably using all available syntactic rules, lexical fields and choices of word enabling the use of feminine and masculine forms when they differ and gender-neutral terms

### 3.4

#### **gender equality**

equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men and girls and boys

Note 1 to entry: Gender equality does not mean that women and men, girls and boys, will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

Note 2 to entry: Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and girls, men and boys, are taken into consideration, recognizing them in all their diversity.

### 3.5

#### **gender**

roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women

Note 1 to entry: In addition to social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, gender also refers to the relations between women and those between men.

Note 2 to entry: These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context or time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context, as are other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, sexual orientation, age and disabilities

Note 3 to entry: Gender in this definition can refer to gender as defined by national legislations or self-identified by individuals.

Note 4 to entry: Gender does not refer to sexual orientation which is another important criteria for socio-cultural analysis.

[SOURCE: UN Women, *Concepts and definitions*, <sup>[13]</sup> modified — part of the definition moved into a note to entry.]

### 3.6

#### **women's empowerment**

process of enabling social, economic, cultural and political conditions for women to take control of their own lives and voices, development and future

Note 1 to entry: The empowerment of women and girls concerns their gaining power and control over their own lives. It involves awareness-raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources and actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality.

Note 2 to entry: This implies that to be empowered they must not only have equal capabilities (such as education and health) and equal access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment), but they must also have agency and ability and control to use these rights, capabilities, resources and opportunities to make choices and decisions (such as is provided through private life/families, leadership opportunities and participation in political institutions).

[SOURCE: UN Women, *Gender Equality Glossary*, <sup>[14]</sup> modified — part of the definition moved into a note to entry.]

### 3.7

#### **organization**

person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its objectives

Note 1 to entry: The concept of organization includes, but is not limited to sole-trader, company, corporation, firm, enterprise, authority, partnership, association, charity or institution, or part or combination thereof, whether incorporating or not, public or private.

Note 2 to entry: This constitutes one of the common terms and core definitions for ISO management system standards given in Annex SL of the Consolidated ISO Supplement to the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. The original definition has been changed by modifying Note 1 to entry.

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.2.1]

### 3.8

#### **gender parity index**

numerical concept concerning the relative equality in terms of numbers and proportions of women and men, girls and boys, is often calculated as the ratio of female-to-male values for a given indicator

Note 1 to entry: When this ratio is reached, gender parity is synonymous with gender balance.

### 3.9

#### **gender balance**

relates to a proportional participation of women and men in all areas of work, programmes, and projects. That participation should be proportional to their share of the population.

Note 1 to entry: In some contexts, such as representation, participation and decision-making bodies, a representation of 40 % to 60 % of both women and men, girls and boys can be considered as gender balance representation. In other contexts, the organization should strive for gender parity [see *gender parity index* (3.8)].

### 3.10

#### **stakeholder**

individual or group that has an interest in any decision or activity of an organization

[SOURCE: ISO 26000:2010, 2.20]

### 3.11

#### **social responsibility**

responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behaviour that:

- contributes to sustainable development, inclusiveness, health and the welfare of society;
- takes into account the expectations of stakeholders;
- is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behaviour;
- is integrated throughout the organization and practised in its relationships

Note 1 to entry: Activities include products, services and processes.

Note 2 to entry: Relationships refer to an organization's activities within its sphere of influence.

Note 3 to entry: Includes activities on members and workforce of organizations.

Note 4 to entry: Social responsibility includes gender equality.

[SOURCE: ISO 26000:2010, 2.18, modified — the word "inclusivity" has been added, as well as Notes 3 and 4 to entry.]

### 3.12

#### **sexism**

any conscious or unconscious act, gesture, body language and representation, spoken or written words, practice or behaviour based upon the idea that a person or a group of persons is inferior because of their sex or gender, which occurs in the public or private sphere, whether in physical or virtual environment, with the purpose or effect of: violating the inherent dignity or rights of a person or a group of persons; or resulting in physical, sexual, psychological or socio-economic harm or suffering to a person or a group of persons; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; or constituting a barrier to the autonomy and full realisation of human rights by a person or a group of persons; or maintaining and reinforcing gender stereotypes

Note 1 to entry: Sexism can include forms of indirect violence (hints, jokes, inappropriate and insistent comments or looks, etc.) or forms of exclusion (informal discussions about work that are not accessible to everyone, etc.).

Note 2 to entry: Sexism and sexist behaviour are perpetrated at the individual, institutional and structural levels, and experienced with detrimental effect at all three levels. At the structural level, sexism constitutes a barrier to gender equality and to the empowerment of women and girls; whereas men and boys are also restricted in their capabilities by sexist stereotypes. Gender stereotypes and inherent biases shape norms, behaviour and expectations, and therefore lead to sexist acts.

Note 3 to entry: Sexism is a part of a continuum of violence, it contributes to create a climate which can constitute favourable ground to violence against women or gender-based discrimination.

[SOURCE: Council of Europe,<sup>[17]</sup> modified — Notes 1, 2 and 3 to entry have been added.]

### 3.13

#### **stereotype**

shared or individual beliefs about personal characteristics, usually pertaining to personality traits and the behaviours of a group of persons

### 3.14

#### **gender stereotype**

socially or culturally preconception ascribing specific and limited attributes, characteristics or roles to an individual simply because they are a woman, man, girl or boy

### 3.15

#### **gender responsiveness**

outcomes that reflect an understanding of gender roles and inequalities and which make an effort to encourage equal participation and equal and fair distribution of benefits

Note 1 to entry: Gender responsiveness is accomplished through gender analysis that informs inclusiveness.

[SOURCE: UNDP, *Gender responsive national communications toolkit*,<sup>[18]</sup> modified — part of the definition moved into a Note to entry.]

### 3.16

#### **gender-responsive budgeting**

planning, programming and budgeting of any public or private organization that contributes to the advancement of gender equality and the fulfilment of women's' right

Note 1 to entry: It entails identifying and reflecting needed interventions to address gender gaps in organization's policies, plans and budgets.

[SOURCE: UNICEF, *Gender equality glossary*,<sup>[19]</sup> modified — part of the definition moved into a note to entry.]

### 3.17

#### **gender equality-based public funding**

attributing public funds with conditionality based on gender equality and actions to promote and achieve gender equality

### 3.18

#### remuneration

direct and indirect financial benefits received by a personal financial planner in exchange for providing the service of personal financial planning to a client

[SOURCE: ISO 22222:2005, 3.19]

### 3.19

#### equal remuneration

rates of remuneration established without discrimination based on gender, taking into account the skills, effort and responsibilities for equivalent working conditions even when the work is not of the same nature

Note 1 to entry: The term remuneration includes the ordinary, basic or minimum wage or salary and any additional emoluments whatsoever payable directly or indirectly, whether in cash or in kind, by the organization to the worker and arising out of the worker's employment.

[SOURCE: ILO, C100,<sup>[21]</sup> modified — part of the definition moved into a note to entry.]

### 3.20

#### bias

unconscious, conscious or systematic tendency, inclination or opinion that is preconceived or unreasoned that hinders impartial judgement.

Note 1 to entry: Bias can be both explicit and implicit

Note 2 to entry: Gender bias is one of its specific form. According to the UNDP's *Gender social norms index (GSNI)*<sup>[22]</sup>, globally, 43 % of the population consider men to be better business leaders than women; 28 % think that university is more important for men than for women; 46 % believe that men have more right to a job than women; 25 % of people still think it's okay for a man to beat his wife. It should be noted that gender bias is prevalent among both men and women.

[SOURCE: ISO 30400:2022, 3.7.2, modified — notes 2 and 3 to entry have been replaced with a new note.]

### 3.21

#### work-life balance

outcome of organizational processes and practises which promote the satisfaction of, but not limited to, personal needs, unpaid work, domestic work, care work, leisure time and social activities, supporting a healthy lifestyle and balanced participation of all in public and private life

### 3.22

#### diversity

characteristics of differences and similarities between people

Note 1 to entry: Diversity includes factors that influence the identities and perspectives that people bring when interacting at work.

Note 2 to entry: Diversity can support the development of workplace environments and practices that foster learning from others by implementing *inclusiveness* (3.23) measures.

Note 3 to entry: Diversity dimensions include the demographic and other personal characteristics of the workforce, such as, but not limited to, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, as well as characteristics related to socio-economic context. These are often identified and agreed upon dimensions, which can be associated with legal requirements in different jurisdictions.

[SOURCE: ISO 30415:2021, 3.7]

### 3.23

#### inclusion

practice of including people in a way that is fair for all, values everyone's differences, and empowers and enables each person to be themselves and achieve their full potential and thrive at work

Note 1 to entry: Organizational policies, processes and practices that are fair and impartially applied can support an inclusive workplace.

Note 2 to entry: This involves the entire workforce having equal and fair access to opportunities and resources to enable their contribution to the organization.

Note 3 to entry: This involves stakeholders from different groups being accepted, welcomed, enabled to use their voice and get involved, and to develop a sense of belonging.

[SOURCE: CIPD,<sup>[23]</sup> modified — added notes to entry.]

### 3.24

#### **sexual and gender-based violence**

##### **GBV**

any harmful act, including sexual harassment, that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life, that is perpetrated against a person's or a group of individuals' consent based on gender

### 3.25

#### **sexual and reproductive health and rights**

state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to all aspects of sexuality and reproduction, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity

Note 1 to entry: Therefore, a positive approach to sexuality and reproduction should recognize the part played by pleasurable sexual relationships, trust and communication in promoting self-esteem and overall well-being. All individuals have a right to make decisions governing their bodies and to access services that support that right.

[SOURCE: Lancet 2018,<sup>[24]</sup> modified — part of the definition moved into a Note to entry.]

### 3.26

#### **sexual harassment**

any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment

Note 1 to entry: It can include a one-off incident or a series of incidents. Sexual harassment can be deliberate, unsolicited or coercive.

[SOURCE: CETS No. 210,<sup>[25]</sup> modified — adapted part of the definition and added a note to entry.]

### 3.27

#### **labour practices**

all the policies and practices relating to work performed by or on behalf of the organization, including subcontracted work, that affect the workforce: recruitment hiring, retention, promotion and retirement, remuneration, turnover, disciplinary action, complaint response system, transfers and reassignment, termination of employment, human resources development, occupational health and safety, and working conditions (working hours, discrimination and safety)

### 3.28

#### **top management**

person or group of people who directs and controls an *organization* (3.7) at the highest level

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.1.1, modified — Notes to entry have been deleted.]

### 3.29

#### **gender mainstreaming**

process of systematically assessing the implications for women and men, girls and boys and incorporating a gender equality and women's empowerment perspective in the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and budgets, in all areas and at all levels in order to promote gender equality and women's empowerment

Note 1 to entry: Gender mainstreaming is a process intended to incorporate a gender equality perspective in all policies, of which the ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.<sup>[26]</sup>

### 3.30

#### **governing body**

person or group of persons who have ultimate accountability for the whole organization

Note 1 to entry: Every organization has one governing body, whether explicitly established or not.

Note 2 to entry: A governing body can be explicitly established in a number of formats including, but not limited to, a board of direction, supervisory board, board of trustees.

Note 3 to entry: Top management plays a role that, depending on the context, reports to and is held accountable by the governing body.

[SOURCE: ISO 37000:2021, 3.3.4, modified — Notes to entry have been modified.]

### 3.31

#### **intersectionality**

combination of one or more diversity dimensions and other personal characteristics that are part of a person's identity

Note 1 to entry: In the context of gender equality and women's empowerment intersectionality is used to describe the interaction of multiple forms of discrimination based on gender, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, age and others. Intersectionality expresses the idea that different personal characteristics / forms of discrimination do not simply add up, but intersect and therefore influence each other, thus creating new forms of discrimination and privilege.

### 3.32

#### **discrimination**

intentional or actual less favourable treatment of a person or a social group on the grounds of gender than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation

Note 1 to entry: Indirect discrimination: an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice putting a person, social group or an organization at a particular disadvantage on grounds of gender than another is, unless that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim, and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.

[SOURCE: Eurofound 2019,<sup>[28]</sup> modified — adapted part of the definition and added a note to entry.]

### 3.33

#### **equality**

state of being equal, especially in status, rights or opportunities

[SOURCE: ISO 30415:2021, 3.9, modified — removed "outcome" from definition.]

### 3.34

#### **social group**

group where members share an innate characteristic, or a common background that cannot be changed, or share a characteristic or belief that is so fundamental to identity or conscience that a person should not be forced to renounce it

### 3.35

#### **sexual abuse**

actual, attempted or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions

Note 1 to entry: Sexual abuse includes for example unwanted kissing, touching, grabbing or rubbing, threats of unwanted sexual act, rape or attempted rape.

Note 2 to entry: This abuse can take place in real life or virtually and include the recording and dissemination of private images without consent. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

Note 3 to entry: All sexual relationships should be based on free, affirmative and reversible consent.

Note 4 to entry: All sexual activity with a child is considered as sexual abuse. A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.<sup>[29]</sup>

### 3.36

#### **sexual exploitation**

any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to threatening or profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another (e.g. transactional sex, solicitation of transactional sex and exploitative relationship)

Note 1 to entry: This can be offering money, gifts, or a job in exchange for sex, withholding due services or blackmailing for sex, or threats of sexual exploitation, and sextortion.

Note 2 to entry: This exploitation can take place in real life or online.

Note 3 to entry: Sexual extortion (sextortion) is sexual corruption (a form of both gender-based violence and corruption). It occurs when people in positions of authority seek to extort sexual favours in exchange for something within their power to grant or withhold.

## **4 Methodology**

### **4.1 Overview of the methodology**

This document provides guidelines on how to address gender equality and women's empowerment in organizations in the following areas:

- a) internal to the organization: governance, relations and working conditions, raising awareness among internal stakeholders and support for internal stakeholders;
- b) activity and investments of the organization: sustainable procurement and gender budgeting;
- c) external relations of the organization: involving stakeholders and establishing partnerships;
- d) internal and external communication: editorial content and communication actions.

By working on the four areas of the organization, using the guidelines proposed in this document it is possible to achieve the following objectives, which are inspired from the UN's Sustainable Development Goal number 5:<sup>[8]</sup>

- raising awareness for, as well as preventing and ending, all forms of gender-based discrimination and promoting the rights of women and girls;
- abolishing gender stereotypes and gender bias in the organization;
- preventing and ending sexual and gender-based violence;
- educating and improving access to education and training, including vocational training;
- protecting health, especially mental health, as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights;
- enhancing women's empowerment, especially economic empowerment;
- increasing participation and equal opportunities for leadership in political and institutional, professional and corporate life.

For each issue, several fields of action are proposed, and organizations should take them into consideration when striving to further promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Moreover, each issue has a varying degree of relevance depending on the organization.

The guidance on each issue includes actions that an organization should consider and expectations of the way in which the organization should behave. When an organization attempts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, it should identify each issue in relation to its key areas.

The actions recommended in this document should be considered within the context of the maturity, or how advanced an organization is, in terms of gender equality. The recommended actions can be used by an organization to facilitate progress towards gender equality. The areas and related actions recommended in these guidelines are to be prioritized according to an organization's maturity, nature, size and objectives. Details of specific implementation methods are left to the discretion of the organization.

Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment within an organization is a journey of transformation. Initially organizations tend to focus on compliance and achieving numerical targets. This is generally followed by training, seminars, and conversations with stakeholders. More mature organizations implement new initiatives that focus on systemic gender inequalities. Fully mature organizations practice gender equality within and across all aspects of the organization. Through the journey, gender equality has become a priority for the organization and is fully integrated.

An approach that helps to identify the issues and manage priorities is described in 4.2. The identification of relevant issues is followed by an assessment of the significance of the impacts caused by the organization. The significance of an impact should be considered both in relation to the stakeholders concerned and to the way in which it affects the matter of gender equality.

[Annex C](#) provides supplementary guidance, good practices and illustrative examples from various countries and organizations.

Application of this document presupposes awareness of applicable legal requirements.

## 4.2 Steps in the implementation of the methodology

### 4.2.1 General

The 6-step methodology shown in [Figure 1](#) is proposed to organizations wishing to adapt and implement this document.

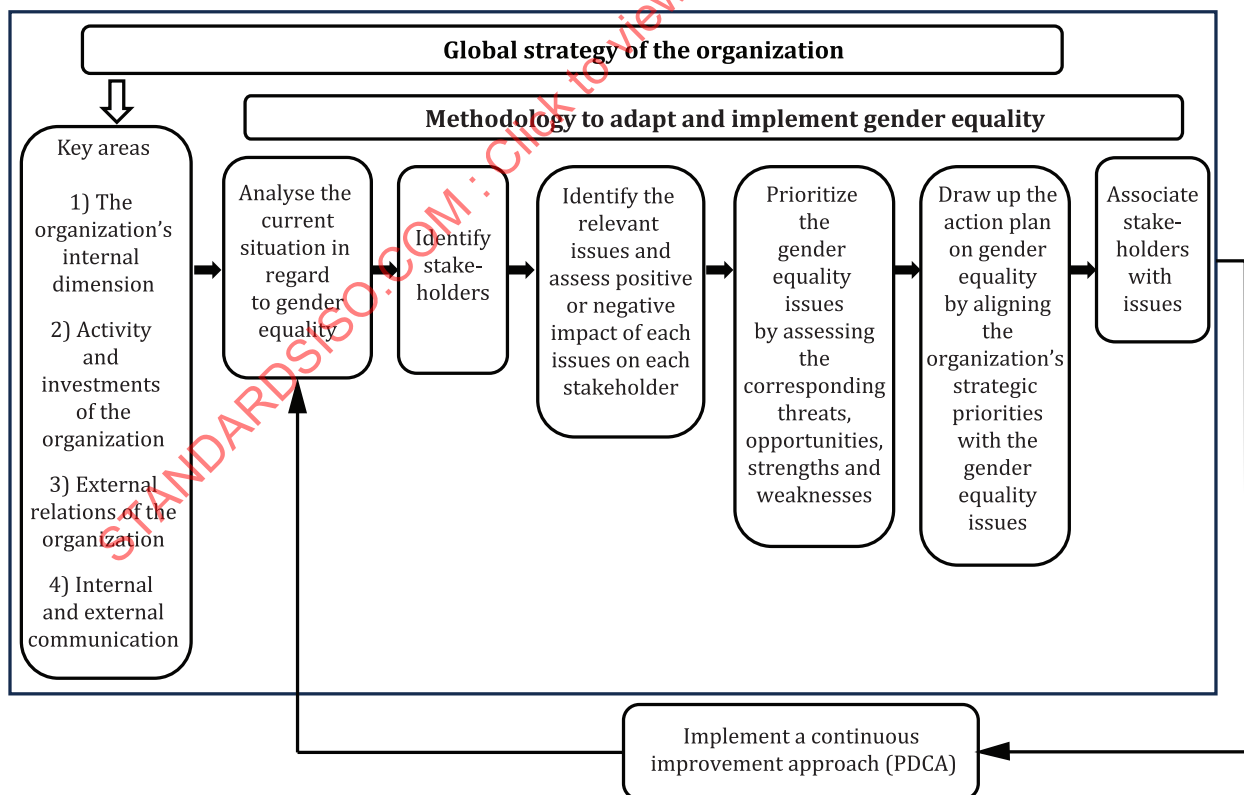


Figure 1 — The steps for the implementation of the methodology

An example of a voluntary initiative to prevent sexual and gender-based violence illustrating the steps of the proposed methodology is presented in [Annex A](#).

#### 4.2.2 Understanding the document and its terminology

[Clause 3](#) of this document introduces the terms and definitions that need to be understood. [Annex C](#) also contains good practices and concrete examples of applications.

#### 4.2.3 Analyse the current situation in regard to gender equality

When an organization decides to implement this document, analysing the current situation is needed in order to decide how gender equality can be incorporated in its strategy. A methodology is proposed in [4.4.1](#).

#### 4.2.4 Identify the stakeholders

Once the current situation has been analysed, it is essential to involve the most relevant stakeholders in order to identify and prioritize actions. A methodology is proposed in [4.4.2](#).

#### 4.2.5 Identify and prioritize issues on gender equality

Identifying and prioritizing issues enables them to be ranked according to their level of priority (strategic nature and timeframe for implementation). The following methodology can be applied:

- Step 1: identify the relevant issues (based on the analysis of the organization and the stakeholders identified) and assess the positive or negative impact of the issues on the stakeholders;
- Step 2: prioritize the issues by assessing the corresponding threats, opportunities, strengths and weaknesses;

To make it easier to prioritize the issues and for a more consistent result, the organization should:

- Consider the relevant indicators of the organization's situation ([Annex B](#)) in relation to gender equality;
- Use tools such as SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunity, threat) or a diversity journey map;
- Step 3: draw up the action plan by aligning the organization's strategic priorities and these priority issues.

[Clause 5](#) as well as [Annexes A](#), [B](#) and [C](#) should be considered when drawing up the action plan.

[Clause 5](#) provides guidelines and recommended actions.

An example of a voluntary initiative to prevent sexual and gender-based violence illustrating the steps of the proposed methodology is presented in [Annex A](#).

[Annex B](#) contains a guide of indicators that can be used by the organization to establish targets in the action plan.

[Annex C](#) contains good practices and practical examples that can be applied.

#### 4.2.6 Involve stakeholders with issues

For each of the chosen core subjects and issues, the organization identifies the positive and/or negative impact on stakeholders, involves the corresponding stakeholders and provides them with the necessary powers and resources.

#### 4.2.7 Implement a continuous improvement approach (PDCA cycle)

To help organizations implement this document, adopting a continuous improvement approach based on the universal PDCA cycle (plan, do, check, act) is recommended.

### 4.3 Integrate the approach into the organization's sustainability and social responsibility policy

The positive link between gender equality and economic and social development has already been demonstrated. Promoting gender equality in an organization's activities and defending it both internally and externally is an important component of corporate social responsibility. It can be perceived as a lever and a source of better outcomes for the organization.

Numerous studies suggest that promoting gender equality and women's empowerment has benefits for organizations: reduced employee turnover, quality recruitment, a stronger, more productive and innovative working environment, effective collaboration, leading to better performance and more accurate results. Equitable top management and/or governing body improves decision-making, and for-profit organizations can boost profitability (e.g. by expanding the customer base, identifying new markets and decreasing retention costs).

### 4.4 Organization's status regarding gender equality

#### 4.4.1 General information

To promote gender equality and women's empowerment, the organization should assess and leverage all stakeholders, its own knowledge and/or external knowledge on gender equality issues and practices. For an organization committed to achieving this, gender equality should be construed as a methodological framework. Gender equality should be considered as transverse and strategic to the organization. It is embedded in its culture, above and beyond actions such as gender parity within top management, setting targets and monitoring indicators.

The organization should:

- identify one or more person(s) inside or outside the organization who will be responsible for assessing the existing situation. This may be the gender focal point for questions related to gender equality, someone who works in human resources or the corporate social responsibility department, a member of a staff representative body (e.g. the works council), or a person from a specialized organization. The number of people, committees or specialized organizations that are agreed upon or contracted for this activity should be in accordance with the size of the organization. The organization's top management and governing bodies should be actively involved. It is recommended that the results of the assessment be reported directly to them;
- conduct this analysis periodically and define its frequency in order to implement a process of continuous improvement;
- determine the scope of the analysis and identify the themes, strategic priorities and stakeholders, in accordance with the recommendations in [Clause 4](#);
- consult with the workforce and/or gender organizations and/or trade union representatives (where applicable);
- keep up to date with the latest qualified publications or news feed with the latest findings in gender equality;
- identify the applicable requirements on gender equality and human rights and evaluate the organization's compliance with them.

Close attention should be paid to the suitability stakeholder sampling (gender parity, etc.).

In addition to their identification and classification, ISO 26000 provides guidance on how an organization should interact with its stakeholders and consideration of their needs and expectations.

#### 4.4.2 Identifying stakeholders

Stakeholders are individuals or groups that have an interest in an organization's decisions or activities. It is important for an organization to understand how individuals or groups are or can be affected by its decisions and activities, to identify its most important stakeholders, through formal or informal relationships.

Organizations can have many stakeholders. Some stakeholders are internal to the organization. They should include, but are not limited to, the organization's members, workforce, contractors or governing bodies. They can also include workers' committees, internal to the organization, and trade unions, external to the organization. Other stakeholders are external to the organization. They can include, but are not limited to, customers, suppliers, the public or local authorities, women's organizations and associations with which the organization interacts or can interact.

To identify stakeholders and gain a better understanding of their ecosystem, the organization should consider the following questions:

- To whom does the organization have legal obligations? To whom are there no legal obligations?
- Who might be positively or negatively affected by the organization's decisions or activities?
- Who is likely to express concern about the decisions and activities of the organization? Who is likely to be impacted, but does not raise concerns?
- Who has been involved in the past when similar concerns needed to be addressed? Who was not involved, but is likely to have these concerns?
- Who can help the organization address specific impacts?
- Who can affect the organization's ability to fulfil its responsibilities?
- Who would be disadvantaged if they were excluded from the engagement?
- Who in the service and/or product value chain is affected? Are they affected differently?

The organization should consider the gender parity, but also other aspects of diversity within the group of identified stakeholders.

#### 4.5 Collecting and analysing data on the status of gender equality within the organization

##### 4.5.1 General

Assessing the current state of gender equality in an organization is the starting point for developing a tailored gender equality action plan with clear objectives and a strategy for continuous improvement. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are useful for carrying out this assessment and setting goals:

- quantitative data, which lends itself to numerical analysis;
- qualitative data, which lends itself to non-numerical analysis, can identify what barriers and opportunities to gender equality exist within the organization, and address why those barriers and opportunities exist.

Analysing quantitative and qualitative data together allows for a clear understanding of an organization's current status on gender equality.

Quantitative and qualitative data collection may be conducted in parallel or sequentially.

The purpose of this overview is not only to collect data on the activities undertaken to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, but also on the effectiveness of the measures taken to enable the organization to set clear gender equality goals and clear time-lines, identify the necessary strategic actions to achieve them, and monitor status and progress.

Organizations should apply best practices and ethical conduct in data collection, storage and use, including ensuring that the data they collect is anonymized. Employees should be informed about anonymity, confidentiality and security processes accordingly.

Data analysis and reporting should be disaggregated by gender and other relevant demographic factors such as age, etc., where possible, in order to identify any differences in experiences.

Data collection can be conducted by parties from within the organization itself or by an independent third party, or, where possible, using national, regional, or local gender equality benchmarks or indicators. Roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined in terms of who is responsible for data collection, analysis and reporting. Parties that are not directly involved in the data collection, analysis and reporting may contribute, if desired, to the data collection by participating in interviews, focus group discussions, etc.

The analysis of the existing situation should be distributed to all the identified stakeholders. It may be a document in its own right or an annex of an existing document (e.g. the comprehensive risk assessment).

#### 4.5.2 Qualitative and quantitative data collection

In this subclause (4.5.2), the data used to analyse the current status of gender equality in an organization is identified independently of the quantitative or qualitative approach and presupposes a methodology combining both approaches.

Standard qualitative data collection techniques include inter alia, interviews, focus groups discussions, review of written material, observations, and surveys. These techniques are useful for probing the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours of stakeholders to determine the effectiveness of the organization's activities and initiatives.

Subclause 4.5.3 focuses specifically on the quantitative data to be collected.

The organization should collect relevant data, including:

- identification of services or people working on issues related to gender equality. Identifying internal and external stakeholders already working for, those tasked with, and those accountable for promoting gender equality [top management, gender focal point(s), human resources, employee representative bodies, occupational health and safety manager, external organizations that interact with the organization, procurement, persons in charge of ethics and compliance, health and safety committee, etc.];
- identification and compilation of the existing internal procedures pertaining to gender equality;
- identification of the existing services provisions dedicated to parental, maternity, paternity and other care leave, and other related services applicable within the organization;
- identification of the existing services provisions encouraging and supporting personal work-life balance;
- status of gender responsiveness in existing material within the organization (general engagement, policies, organizational strategic documents, human resources specific processes and procedures [see ISO 30415 for guidance on diversity and inclusion in human resources processes], feedback survey, annual review of gender focal points, dedicated e-mail account, employee engagement survey, organization's internal and external communications and their content, etc.);
- status of gender responsiveness of external stakeholders (policy statements by public bodies, communications, reports and research papers by associations and non-governmental organizations [NGOs], etc.);
- identification and assessment of existing sustainable procurement processes and procedures, with a specific focus on gender planning and budgeting;
- data assessment on the performance of the reporting and advice unit(s), if any, with respect to gender responsiveness;
- information on data indicating the internal stakeholders' perceptions on the current status of barriers and opportunities on gender equality (work-life balance, relationship between private life and career

development, recruitment, retention, promotion, remuneration [salary, bonuses, profit share, etc.] training, external organizational activities such as procurement, communication, etc.) and their willingness to encourage gender equality and women's empowerment;

- data indicating information about the experience of external stakeholders and their perception of barriers and opportunities on gender equality;
- data on information about the current status of barriers and opportunities to gender equality (work-life balance, relationship between private life and career development, recruitment, retention, promotion, remuneration [salary, bonuses, profit share, etc.], training, external organizational activities such as procurement, communication, etc.);
- data on information about gender based-violence to include: the statistics of gender based-violence within the organization, the internal stakeholders' experiences and perceptions of gender based-violence, and the status and efficacy of any tools used by the organization to prevent and combat gender-based violence;
- data indicating information about the impacts of gender biases, gender-based violence risks, gender-based discrimination, and prejudice on the activities for which the organization has regional and jurisdictional influence and its external stakeholders, as well as the possible benefits of the existing gender equality policy if any;
- identification of the communication actions geared towards external stakeholders related to gender equality.

Based on the aforementioned collected information, identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats pertaining to the existing status of gender equality.

The effectiveness of these actions depends on the establishment of a constructive dialogue with all stakeholders.

The organization can base its indicators on those listed in [Annex B](#).

NOTE The data elements listed here are not exhaustive.

#### 4.5.3 Specific focus on quantitative elements

To analyse the existing situation, the organization should:

- compile the breakdown of professions (jobs, categories, levels, types of contracts, etc.);
- identify the number of gender focal point person(s) in the organization;
- identify the care services in organizations, such as staff welfare and development services, family care services (breastfeeding, day-care, etc.);
- identify the number of training sessions delivered on matters related to gender equality;
- identify the number of stakeholders trained in matters related to gender equality;
- break down the number of workers participating in training by gender (see ISO 30415 for guidance on diversity and inclusion in training);
- analyse the gender balance within jury panels, HR recruitment teams, internal project teams, and consultancy and assessment services;
- identify the number of awareness-raising actions and workshops conducted in the organization on gender equality;
- quantify the number of units/teams in the organization;
- identify the complaints, alerts and reports received about gender-based discrimination and sexual and gender-based violence, including sexual harassment;

- break down current organizational roles, promotions and turnovers by gender;
- assess gender budgeting and quantify financial resources allocated to actions for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment;
- identify the existing percentage differences in wage, compensation and benefits by job category, level and same job position, by gender, on a regular basis (see ISO 30415 for guidance on diversity and inclusion in remuneration and Clause C.7 for a national example);
- identify and quantify any existing partnerships or other joint activities and initiatives with external stakeholders related to gender equality;
- identify the data on communication actions aimed at external stakeholders related to gender equality and women's empowerment (frequency, number of people addressed, etc.).

NOTE This is not an exhaustive list and items are not ranked by order of importance.

The organization can base its indicators on those listed in [Annex B](#).

The organization should give priority to reaching out to and collaborating with a gender-balanced representation of its stakeholders (internal and external) to establish a data-based gender equality assessment of the organization.

This assessment should include an analysis of the methodology applied to collecting, processing and presenting gender equality data. The assessment should also include research on correlation and causal links between gender equality data points and the levels of reliability of these links. The organization should evaluate the quality and transparency of gender data issued by the organization to gender-balanced and monitor it as part of a systemic approach that should encompass data on employment, work life cycles, health at work and working conditions.

## 5 Guidelines on gender equality

### 5.1 Internal dimension of the organization

#### 5.1.1 Governance

##### 5.1.1.1 Description of the issue

Organizational governance is the system by which an organization makes and implements decisions to achieve its objectives. An organization aiming to be socially responsible and sustainable should have an organizational governance system enabling the organization to provide oversight and apply the principles of gender equality. All organizations should put in place processes, systems, structures, or other mechanisms that make it possible to apply gender equality principles and practices.

Effective governance is based on incorporating the principles of gender equality into the decision-making and implementation processes. In addition to these principles, it is advisable that an organization considers gender equality issues and practices when establishing and reviewing its governance system.

The organization should fulfil and formally define this commitment and adopt an integrated approach to implementing it in all its activities and missions.

The meaningful promotion and implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment involves the active participation of the organization's top management and/or governing body.

##### 5.1.1.2 Related actions and expectations

The organization's decision-making processes and structures should enable it to:

- demonstrate its commitment through a gender equality policy that is reviewed annually and made available to the stakeholders;

- ensure active involvement of the organization's top management and/or governing body in promoting and implementing the gender equality policy;
- appoint one or more points of contact on questions related to gender equality [gender focal point(s)];
- allocate and use financial and human resources to implement the gender equality policy and the corresponding action plan;
- create and nurture an environment and culture in which the principles of gender equality are implemented;
- set up a non-discriminatory recruitment and promotion policy that fosters gender equality in all activities;
- offer to women and men the same opportunities to occupy positions of responsibility within the organization;
- ensure gender-balance in the level of authority, responsibility and capacity of people who make decisions on behalf of the organization;
- keep records of the implementation of decisions related to gender equality;
- periodically review and evaluate the organization's governance processes;
- adjust processes according to the outcome of the reviews and communicate changes throughout the organization;
- establish prevention, grievance and dispute resolution mechanisms in a timely manner regarding sexual and gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, at an organizational level;
- set clear and specific gender equality and women's empowerment targets for all units of the organization and establish a realistic timeframe, accountability and incentives for the achieving the target;
- set up gender equality indicators according to the organization's actual situation to provide input for its periodic reviews and the strategic directions;
- report periodically to top management on the organization's status in terms of gender equality (see [5.1](#) and [5.3.2](#)) including information on past achievements, demonstrating awareness of legal and regulatory changes, with the aim of getting management input and their commitment to new improvement actions. The content of the management review document can be:
  - degree of achievement of targets for the previous reporting period;
  - gender equality performance indicators (aligned with those listed in [Annex B](#));
  - list of non-compliances and situations of sexual and gender-based violence, sexual harassment, etc.;
  - changes in the reference standard;
  - legal changes affecting gender equality;
  - proposals for new objectives and continuous improvement actions, including deadlines, the persons responsible and the resources needed to achieve them;
  - gender equality performance indicators to provide input for the organization's periodic review and strategic directions, including quantitative elements (described in [4.5.2](#)) that directly contribute to each gender equality objective;
- larger or more complex organizations may create a diversity advisory council to provide advice to the governing body.

## 5.1.2 Labour practices

### 5.1.2.1 Description of the issue

An organization's labour practices encompass all policies and practices relating to work performed within the organization, by the organization or on behalf of the organization, including subcontracted work.

Labour practices extend beyond an organization's relationship with its direct workforce or the responsibilities that an organization has in a workplace that it directly owns or controls, and may extend to the organization's supply chains, particularly where an organization has significant influence over its suppliers (see [5.1.3](#) and [5.3](#)).

Labour practices include the recruitment, career path, career plans and promotion of workers; disciplinary and grievance procedures; the transfer and relocation of workers; termination of employment; training and skills development; parental, maternity, paternity and other care leave; health and safety; industrial hygiene; and any policy or practice affecting working conditions, in particular, working time and remuneration. Work relations and conditions also include the recognition of employee organizations and employer organizations.

### 5.1.2.2 Related actions and expectations

The organization should:

- ensure equal opportunities for all employees and for the whole workforce and not discriminate either directly or indirectly in any labour practice. Temporary special measures may be taken to overcome gender-based discrimination, as well as historical and systemic barriers;
- actively seek out workforce candidates, prioritizing the least represented gender, especially promoting the access of women to labour opportunities in the same proportion or, when this is not possible, include at least one candidate of the least represented gender;
- promote, and use gender-responsive language in job descriptions, interviews and the overall selection and promotion process, avoiding unconscious bias;
- implement selection and promotion procedures in which decisions are oriented towards gender balance (preferably taken by a committee with equal representation of women and men), based on objective criteria. Implement affirmative actions as temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto gender equality. These measures can be discontinued and/or implemented for a limited period of time, when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved;
- implement career plans that take into account parental, maternity, paternity and other care leave and favour a successful return to work, analyse on a regular basis if there is a gender pay gap and take corrective measures when needed;
- provide non-discriminatory work relations and conditions with regard to recruitment, pay, access to training, promotion, geographic or professional mobility, working hours, weekly rest periods, holiday time, health and safety, protection and parenthood and the work-life balance. Work relations and conditions also include the recognition of employee organizations and employer organizations, and the value of inclusive workforce participation and collective bargaining where it exists (see ISO 30415:2021, 8.3.2);
- promote work-life balance and flexible work options, when possible, guaranteeing that women and men have equal access to reconcile personal, family and work time without disadvantaging their professional career;
- respect the domestic and family responsibilities of all women and men, in particular by guaranteeing leave, including parental, maternity, paternity and other care leave, a suitably adapted return to work after such leave, and, if possible, child-care and other provisions that can help them to organize their private lives and their work;
- investigate and share results about the gender equality outcomes of the use of artificial intelligence, digital transformation, hybrid forms of work, as well as the challenges of global society, environment and climate. The report should include narratives on how the negative outcomes identified can be addressed through prevention mechanisms for the primary occupational risks;

- maintain ties with workforce on parental, maternity, paternity and other care leave;
- eliminate any arbitrary or discriminatory dismissal practices;
- address the specific occupational health and safety risks according to the specific needs of its male and female workforce and strive to eliminate psychosocial risks due to gender-based discrimination, sexual and gender-based violence, including sexual harassment;
- set up confidential and anonymous units/teams, offering guidance and raising alerts with regard to all questions pertaining to sexual and gender-based discrimination and violence;
- encourage other organizations that are active in its sphere of influence to provide responsible work relations and conditions on questions pertaining to gender equality;
- provide suitable training for its gender focal point, management teams, field managers, occupational health and safety managers, recruitment officers and employee representative bodies in all questions pertaining to gender equality, sexual and gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, gender-based discrimination, sexual and reproductive health and rights, professional gender equality, the detection and support of victims of gender-based discrimination or violence and gender budgeting;
- provide all of the workforce, at all stages of their work experience, access to skills development, training and apprenticeships, and opportunities for career advancement, on an equal and non-discriminatory basis. However, this does not preclude the provision of opportunities, etc. specifically for women or men in situations of actual gender inequality;
- promote and encourage women's access to sectors and positions where they are under-represented;
- implement mentoring programmes to encourage women to take on leadership positions and ensure equal career development;
- implement awareness programmes for management teams to encourage women to hold positions of responsibility and guarantee equal career progression;
- promote the visibility of women in organizations, who have reached leadership positions supporting women networks;
- ensure that their employees feel valued, and that their well-being is a top priority.

### 5.1.3 Raising awareness among internal stakeholders

#### 5.1.3.1 Description of the issue

Raising awareness among internal stakeholders encompasses all the actions undertaken within the organization. These aim to inform them of their rights regarding gender equality and strengthen their knowledge on the subject. Communicate the organization's gender equality policy and actions to implement this policy.

#### 5.1.3.2 Related actions and expectations

The organization should:

- create a virtual or physical space where the rights and responsibilities of its workforce with regard to gender equality are set forth, make online material on gender equality available to all members of the organization. The numbers of the specialized associations and any other information on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence are provided;
- organize regular workshops to reiterate gender equality, discuss gender-based discrimination and raise awareness of actions pertaining to entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship, leadership and participation in public life. The organization should guarantee equal representation, or, when this is not possible, gender-based participation that is representative of the workforce based on gender ratios;

- organize events, for example on national or international days dedicated to subjects related to gender equality and inclusion, such as well-being, empowerment, etc. and women's empowerment;
- appoint a gender advisor to organize the raising of the awareness of internal stakeholders;

NOTE 1 This gender advisor can be the gender focal point mentioned in [5.1.4.2](#).

NOTE 2 The gender advisor has competencies, skills and allocated resources needed to support such an initiative.

- ensure that questions pertaining to rights and combating gender-based stereotypes, gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence are addressed by the employee representative bodies (e.g. the works council, the health, safety and working conditions committee, etc.). The organization informs the internal stakeholders of the civil and criminal legal risks;
- promote the development and signing of gender equality commitment within top management and all the workforce;
- inform all new employees in the organization about its internal gender equality policy;
- establish good practice about how the organization communicates and promotes its gender equality policy at all levels of the organization;
- present its gender equality policy and the state of progress of the corresponding actions taken to all personnel regularly.

It is recommended to do the review on a yearly basis.

Organizations are encouraged to team up with specialized associations in order to raise awareness amongst internal stakeholders.

#### **5.1.4 Support for internal stakeholders**

##### **5.1.4.1 General**

It is the primary responsibility of top-management to provide protection and care policies in the work environment.

##### **5.1.4.2 Description of the issue**

Supporting internal stakeholders extends beyond awareness-raising described in [5.1.3](#) and includes resources for reporting concerns and caring for those who have experienced discriminatory practices, including whistleblowing procedures. This should include training sessions dedicated to developing the knowledge and skills of internal stakeholders in digital interaction, as well as hybrid forms of interaction, with external stakeholders.

##### **5.1.4.3 Related actions and expectations**

The organization should:

- appoint a gender advisor capable of:
  - directing any internal stakeholder towards external cause or purpose driven organizations;
  - alerting the competent bodies of any discriminatory or dangerous situations;
  - listening to victims of sexual and gender-based violence, including sexual harassment;

NOTE 1 A gender advisor and/or gender focal point of an organization refers to a person who usually provides gender expertise and knowledge to improve working results. This person can be internal or external to the organization, is specifically dedicated to gender equality issues, and focuses on the results and outcomes of the organization on these issues.

NOTE 2 A gender equality officer is a person within the organization (social affairs, human resources for instance) whose role is more specifically dedicated to gender equality and equal opportunities for staff. This role is generally part of the person's job.

- deploy an internal grievance mechanism for persons who are victims of sexual and gender-based violence (refer to [Annex A](#));
- protect victims/survivors of sexual or gender-based discrimination or violence within the organization;
- contact external public services, associations or other organizations which tackle sexual and gender-based violence (and provide assisting programmes for perpetrators of such violence);
- promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the workforce by helping people who want to retrain for other job areas that lack gender equality, as part of the company's career development or professional retraining policy;
- set up one or more units/team to provide guidance and keep track of requests;
- set up internal charity and trade union volunteer programmes that contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment, encourage equal participation or, when this is not possible, gender-based participation representative of the personnel and reward the engagement of internal stakeholders in these programmes;
- guarantee equal opportunities for career development;
- support women in accessing managerial positions within the organization, seeking appointments at the organization's board or supervisory authority, and become shareholders for organizations with share capital;
- guarantee equal access for women and men to funding opportunities within their organization.

The organization should collect and analyse data to monitor the organization's performance against these indicators and expectations (see also [4.5.2](#) for recommendations on data collection).

## 5.2 Activity and investments of the organization

### 5.2.1 Provision of gender responsive goods and services

#### 5.2.1.1 Description of the issue

Gender equality can be enhanced for all customers of the organization by ensuring that goods and services that they produce are gender responsive. This includes services provided by government, local authorities, charities and NGOs.

Gender responsive goods and services can be achieved by using standards for manufacturing products and services that have been written in a gender-responsive manner. [\[30\]](#)–[\[31\]](#)

#### 5.2.1.2 Related actions

The organization ensures that all goods and services are gender responsive by:

a) Design:

- 1) Awareness and training: design teams should be educated on gender-responsive standards and principles. This includes conducting workshops and training sessions to familiarize designers with the concept of gender-responsive design;
- 2) Inclusive design: ensure that product design takes into account the diverse needs and preferences of different genders;

- 3) User testing: conduct user testing with individuals from various gender backgrounds to gather feedback and make design improvements.
- b) Manufacturing and operations:
  - 1) Production process: ensure that manufacturing processes do not discriminate against any gender. This can include making sure that production lines or assembly processes are ergonomically designed for a diverse workforce;
  - 2) Quality control: implement gender-neutral quality control measures to ensure that products meet gender-inclusive standards.
- c) Provision and promotion of goods and services:
  - 1) Product presentation: ensure that products are presented in a gender-neutral manner, both online and in physical stores. Avoid using stereotypical images or language;
  - 2) Pricing equality: set fair and equal pricing for all customers/users regardless of gender. Avoid practices like gender-based pricing;
  - 3) Customer assistance: train services teams to provide gender-neutral assistance to customers/users. They should be able to answer questions and make recommendations without imposing stereotypes. For example, when helping customers select products or services, don't assume certain items are only for one gender;
  - 4) Inclusive advertising: create marketing campaigns that are free from gender stereotypes. Show how products or services benefits individuals of all genders;
  - 5) Language and messaging: use inclusive language and messaging in marketing materials. Avoid phrases or slogans that reinforce gender biases. Organizations should emphasize their products and services can be used by anyone.
- d) Quality assurance:
  - 1) Gender-neutral quality standards: develop quality assurance procedures that account for gender inclusivity and monitor adherence to these standards during the production and distribution of goods and services.
- e) Technology and IT:
  - 1) Inclusive software and platforms: ensure that technology, software, and online platforms used by the organization are designed to be user-friendly and inclusive for all genders. This includes considering accessibility features that cater to diverse user needs.

## 5.2.2 Sustainable procurement

### 5.2.2.1 Description of the issue

Sustainable procurement is a powerful instrument when organizations include the need for gender equality. Sustainable procurement consists of purchases whose environmental, social and economic impacts are as positive as possible throughout the life cycle and aims to minimize the negative impacts. The concepts of fair trade, transparency and responsibility along the supply chain are part of sustainable procurement.

### 5.2.2.2 Related actions and expectations

The organization should:

- avoid gender bias and prejudice in all purchasing decisions. All suppliers, including local organizations and small and medium-sized organizations, should benefit from fair trading conditions;
- respect, consider and defend the interests of stakeholders that are affected by its procurement activities;

- apply purchasing criteria pertaining to gender equality and women's empowerment;
- ask suppliers to share their gender equality policies and support those suppliers who do not have such policies. The objective is not to change, but to challenge the supplier to evolve, which can be the main motivation for suppliers (see ISO 26000:2010, 2.19 and ISO 30415:2021, Clause 11);
- invest in goods and services that meet the needs of all the stakeholders, without any gender-based discrimination;
- raise the awareness of suppliers on the question of gender equality by including clauses in its contracts that can be applied as criteria used to assess bids (condition of execution);
- generate directories of supplier companies emphasizing when ownership or legal representation falls on women;
- promote training and interaction with the organization's supply chain on the benefits of adopting gender equality practices.

### 5.2.3 Gender-responsive budgeting

#### 5.2.3.1 Description of the issue

Taking gender, gender equality and women's empowerment objectives into account can be reflected in the management of the organization's budget, its planning, its spending and the funding of its grants to public and private organizations and NGOs. In concrete terms, this consists of examining the ability of women and their projects to gain access to funding on the same terms as men, and ensuring that the organization's income and expenditure do not result in any bias against women, in which case corrective actions are to be taken.

#### 5.2.3.2 Related actions and expectations

The organization should:

- include gender-related specifics in its budget planning process, in particular for public organizations, in every entity of the organization, especially by using gender equality-based public funding;
- train employees in charge of the budget planning and funding processes and raise their awareness of gender-related questions, in order to eliminate any stereotypes and bias (see Clause [C.34](#) for an example of gender impact assessment tool);
- ensure that women have the same opportunities as men to benefit from funding in equivalent situations, and take corrective action and launch proactive programmes whenever unequal access for women to funding is detected;
- support networks and organizations that aim to help and support women to promote projects that are gender-responsive;
- pursue an equal remuneration policy that does not produce any unexplained gender pay gaps for work of equal value;
- ensure that its orders and procurement policy, including calls for tender, are not gender biased and take into account criteria related to gender equality-based public funding;
- use and promote public aid in favour of gender equality, such as funding guarantees or subsidies, for example;
- monitor gender ratio in the committees and bodies in charge of allocating funds, subsidies, financing and investments;
- encourage women and men who approach it for help and funding to seek support from specialized networks in order to guarantee the viability and development of their projects, overcome any structural

obstacles and, thereby, increase their chances of success (Clause [C.27](#) describes an example of women's network);

- sign charters and declarations of commitment in favour of gender equality and women's empowerment;
- have an internal information and statistical data system broken down by gender;
- broadly use indexes and barometers containing gender-based indicators that can help to guide the actions taken in favour of equality.

### 5.3 External relations of the organization

#### 5.3.1 Outreach to External Stakeholders

##### 5.3.1.1 Description of the issue

Raising the awareness of external stakeholders covers all the actions taken in an organization to inform the external stakeholders of the rights and to make them think about and express themselves on the subject of gender equality.

##### 5.3.1.2 Related actions and expectations

The organization should:

- monitor the actions taken by external stakeholders in favour of gender equality;
- analyse gender inequality risks and gender equality possibilities when engaging with external stakeholders, take appropriate actions to avoid and/or mitigate risks, and to promote gender equality possibilities;
- inform external stakeholders of its gender equality policy, strategies and/or other relevant documents that express commitment for gender equality and prevention of stereotypes, discrimination and sexual and gender-based violence;
- reflect organizational gender equality and women's empowerment commitments in contractual arrangements with external stakeholders as relevant;
- in engagement with/investments into actors in a dependency situation to the organization (such as local communities, supply chain actors), set-up grievance mechanism for external stakeholders to prevent/protect, detect and respond to gender-based violence in relation to the organizations operational work;
- communicate gender equality and women's empowerment commitments, and grievance mechanism, in a manner which reaches intended users;
- promote role models that go beyond gender stereotypes and expand traditional roles assigned to women and men;
- discuss and raise awareness of all relevant external stakeholders (such as schools, higher education establishments, etc.) of the gender equality, diversity and inclusion in its professions and activities.

#### 5.3.2 Setting up partnerships

##### 5.3.2.1 Description of the issue

Partnerships include all the informal, formal, occasional or long-term agreements between two or more organizations. Partnerships can be established with local, national or international organizations that work to promote gender equality and supply chain partners. There are various forms of partnerships: tacit agreements, charters, conventions, sponsorship, etc.

A partnership reflects the shared vision of the organizations and their desire to work together to achieve the same goal. Partnerships also demonstrate the commitment of an organization and its capacity to involve other external stakeholders.

Partnerships are one of the keys to the successful implementation of an action plan on gender equality and women's empowerment in an organization.

#### 5.3.2.2 Related actions and expectations

The organization should:

- analyse the existing situation of its external stakeholders and environment (see [5.3](#));
- identify any existing local resources, actions and networks involved in gender equality;
- identify the stakeholders capable of providing the gender equality knowledge and skills that the organization does not possess, in line with the identification and prioritization of its issues;
- determine the strategic benefits achieved by the partnership;
- provide the human, financial and organizational resources essential to set up, develop and monitor the partnership;
- draw up the specifications of the actions and expected achievements of the partnership;
- conduct an annual review of the partnership and an analysis of the actions taken.

### 5.4 Internal and external communication

#### 5.4.1 Editorial content

##### 5.4.1.1 Description of the issue

Language can accentuate gender stereotypes or, on the contrary, favour inclusion. Gender-inclusive language offers a means of oral and written expression that is non-discriminatory by excluding stereotypes and perpetuation of gender bias. In all graphics, syntax and pictorial representation necessary for the equal representation of women and men, girls and boys. Since language has the power to change cultural and social attitudes, the use of gender-inclusive language is a means of promoting gender equality and combating prejudice.

Editorial content includes all the organization's means of communication: printed and digital materials (web sites, magazines, practical guides, presentations, etc.), internal and external communications, oral communication, etc.

##### 5.4.1.2 Related actions and expectations

The organization should:

- alternately use gender-inclusive language, non-sexist (generic) language and gender-neutral terms (for which words do not vary according to gender) and gendered articles specifically in all kind of internal and external communications related to promotion, hiring and research of work positions equally opened for women and men;
- prefer the use of lists of persons in alphabetical order rather than hierarchical order, and present the person's complete identity (first name, name, job position, etc.);
- ensure gender parity in communication and gender balance representation among speakers;
- use images that respect and promote gender equality and women's empowerment;
- allow equal speaking times or, when this is not possible, guarantee gender-balanced participation;

- promote role models that go beyond gender stereotypes and expand traditional roles assigned to women and men in all its forms of communication.

## 5.4.2 Communication actions

### 5.4.2.1 Description of the issue

An organization's communication actions include all the internal and external content and events produced or organized by the organization. Organizations can make their commitments and values known to their stakeholders through communication actions.

### 5.4.2.2 Related actions and expectations

The organization should:

- set up an editorial review committee to guarantee communications that are free of stereotypes and train the members of this committee in these questions, or train the communication unit in gender-inclusive communications free of gender biases;
- define regular intervals suitable to the organization's contexts (preferably every year), for its internal and external communication plan on gender equality and women's empowerment, or include issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment in the existing communication plans;
- develop a non-sexist and without stereotypes communication in accordance with the organization's gender equality policy;
- inform all the internal and external stakeholders of the organization's gender equality policy, through accessible media and formats;
- disseminate and communicate the initiatives and results among stakeholders and the general public, creating awareness and valuing good practices on gender equality;
- organize events and workshops, in particular on national or international days dedicated to subjects related to gender equality and women's empowerment;
- highlight the variety of the internal and external stakeholders on a regular basis (e.g. in an information newsletter);
- take part in events in which the audience and the speakers are at least diverse, and preferably equal;
- give a gender equality welcome kit to all new stakeholders (e.g. the internal policy in favour of equality, information on specialized organizations, the support provided by the organization that enables the stakeholders to maintain their work-life balance, etc.);
- create a virtual or physical space where the rights of its employees with regard to equality are set forth, and the numbers of the specialized associations and any other information on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence are provided;
- guarantee the parity of the names given to its physical and virtual spaces;
- organize or participate in awards and competitions that reward persons or organizations whose work or personal initiative promotes gender equality;
- take actions to encourage women's empowerment to work and progress in professions and activities that are predominantly masculine, and men's representation in professions and activities that are predominantly female with the aim of promoting gender equality, including in respect of remuneration and career progression within that profession or activity.

**NOTE** Therefore, actions to encourage male participation in traditional women's industries are to be assessed for their effectiveness in promoting gender equality and ensure they do not reinforce any existing gender inequalities. Some research indicates that men employed in traditionally feminine fields average higher salaries than their female colleagues and are often promoted more quickly and with less experience than their female colleagues.<sup>[32]</sup>

## **Annex A** (informative)

### **Guideline for the development of a grievance mechanism to prevent, detect and respond to gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH) internally as well as in engagement with external stakeholders**

#### **A.1 General**

An organization should have a grievance mechanism in place to prevent, detect and respond to risks of gender-based violence, including sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (hereafter referred to as gender-based violence or GBV). Depending on organizational activities such mechanisms may be put in place to deal with both internal and/or external cases.

In the following clauses, one can find guidance on what grievance mechanisms are about, why they are useful, and how to develop and implement them.

#### **A.2 What is a grievance mechanism?**

A grievance mechanism is an accessible procedure or process that provides a clear and transparent framework for addressing grievances related to the organization and its workforce.

A well-defined and communicated grievance mechanism contributes to the detection, prevention, and resolution of GBV, and the establishment of a safe work environment.

An organization may need an internal grievance mechanism for its own workforce and possibly one for external stakeholders. Grievance procedures should be tailored to meet the needs of each organization, according to the sector, country, culture, workforce composition and its activities. There is no prescribed form or blueprint solution for grievance mechanisms.

#### **A.3 Why is a grievance mechanism necessary?**

There are several positive outcomes that a GBV grievance mechanism can bring about:

- Identify, manage, and monitor potential adverse impacts and risks in a timely manner, as well as positively address internal and external concern.
- Provide a platform to raise concern and communicate through an established and formal process and receive a formal response of the organization.
- Clarify organizational arrangements to record, review, escalate and resolve complaints and grievances through a systematic and transparent process.
- Provide a safe and inclusive working space where everyone can thrive regardless of their gender.
- Prevent and eradicate gender-based violence against women in the workplace and to address reported situations of violence in a timely, efficient and expeditious manner.
- Avoid the potential for issues to escalate, be repeated or result in conflict or legal disputes.
- Strengthen performance and ensure compliance with codes, policies and principles as applicable to workforce and contractors.

- Ensure alignment with international principles and standards.
- Refine and strengthen existing processes and agreements, for example, with partners and business relationships, to ensure they are in line with organizational expectations on protection against GBV.
- Integrate GBV grievance management reporting systems with other reporting systems (when in place).
- For small organizations, where resource constraints make it difficult to run a self-standing grievance mechanism, participate in an effective external mechanism led for example by an industry association or a multi-stakeholder group, such as a commodity roundtable which has developed its own GBV grievance mechanism, is a potentially useful step.

## **A.4 Approaches**

### **A.4.1 Victim/survivor-centred approach**

A survivor-centred approach entails to detail information about a variety of safe and confidential spaces for workforce and bystanders to have access to information and support, to raise concerns and make complaints that assures confidentiality and protection.<sup>[33]</sup> Cases are to be recorded, investigated/acted upon by a trained individual, follow-up support provided and monitored. Victim/Survivor-centred approach – an approach in which the victim/survivor's wishes, safety, integrity and well-being remain a priority in all matters and procedures.

### **A.4.2 By-stander intervention**

In a study on grievance mechanism on sexual harassment by the Harvard Review<sup>[34]</sup> it was found that sexual harassment procedures should include bystander interventions as a necessary response to predatory sexual behaviour. Most policies place responsibility for reporting harassment exclusively on the target, which puts them in a vulnerable position. Mandating bystander intervention can relieve the target of their sole responsibility of creating a healthier organizational culture on all members of the organization.

### **A.4.3 Penalties and discipline**

It is crucial that penalties and discipline are proportionate to the identified misconduct. Extreme penalties and disciplinary measures can reduce people's willingness to report GBV. Similarly, minor penalties or disciplinary responses to large breaches of the policy can undermine the workplace message on preventing SEAH.

### **A.4.4 Referral mechanism**

Set up a referral mechanism which can include a predefined list of organizations or institutions who can provide psychosocial, legal, financial, and medical support services for the victim/survivor of GBV. Women's organization often have a good overview of what types of support exist and where to get it, sometimes women's organizations provide such support mechanism. What is central is that the organizations have a victim/survivor-based approach.

## **A.5 Actions to set up a grievance mechanism**

### **A.5.1 General principles**

When it comes to setting up a GBV grievance mechanism it is particularly important to acknowledge the barriers to reporting. Culture and context often hinder survivors/victims from reporting but also fear of retaliation, which makes the victim/survivor-based approach the most important feature of a GBV grievance mechanism, it is therefore highly important to have several channels of reporting such as (but not limited to) in-person reporting, digital, anonymous etc.

Some of the key principles which provide an effective grievance mechanism are:

- transparency;

- impartiality;
- confidentiality;
- accessibility and/or predictability (timely/clear time frame);
- legitimacy;
- equality;
- no repeat victimization.

When it comes to setting up a grievance mechanism some organizations suggest separating the function for internal grievances and those that are external.

#### **A.5.2 Analysis of the existing situation**

As part of the global analysis of the existing status of the organization (refer to [Clause 5](#)), a specific assessment regarding gender-based violence is necessary in order to identify risks of GBV.

#### **A.5.3 Identifying and prioritizing stakeholders**

Various internal stakeholders can be involved in an initiative to prevent/protect against GBV within an organization:

- male and female members of the workforce;
- management teams;
- members of the works council, if any;
- experts in GBV, including sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment;
- the occupational health and social services when existing in the organization;
- union representatives;
- etc.

External stakeholders can be involved in an initiative to prevent/protect against GBV in the sphere of influence of the organization:

- representatives of organizations with whom the organization is engaging (such as service providers, sub-contractors, business partners, etc.);
- representatives of local decision-makers;
- representatives of local communities;
- etc.

#### **A.5.4 Clarifying roles and responsibilities**

The roles and responsibilities of internal and external stakeholders need to be clarified in relation to the GBV grievance mechanism but taking into consideration the asymmetric power relations between peers and subordinates.

The primary responsibility of the implementation of a GBV grievance mechanism is with the top management. However, the initiative can also be driven by any or all the stakeholders.

### A.5.5 Identifying and prioritizing the issues

Several issues have to be identified and prioritized in order to highlight the subject of sexual and gender-based violence and to create a common culture:

- risk assessment;
- awareness-raising;
- training;
- communication and information;
- creation of a whistleblowing, reporting and investigation procedure (see ISO 37002);
- a procedure to address the claims made.

### A.5.6 Steps for a grievance mechanism for internal stakeholders

The following 4-step process is suggested:

- a) Planning:
  - 1) Consult with workforce (e.g. focus group discussions on how such grievance mechanism should look so it is accessible, confidential, easy to use etc. and how it should be communicated, where and using what tools);
  - 2) Decide on the best model.
- b) Creating content:
  - 1) Write protocols (e.g. step by step approach, from report received, how an investigation is carried out and by who, ensuring a victim/survivor-based approach);
  - 2) Offer support services (e.g. a referral mechanism is in place, with pre-identified support services);
  - 3) Manage information (e.g. who will get access to what information at what time and how is information safely stored, considering a victim/survivor-based approach).
- c) Implementing:
  - 1) Build workforce knowledge (e.g. what is, why it is important to identify, act and proactively counter GBV, what is the grievance mechanism, and how it works);
  - 2) Build key players capabilities (e.g. members of the workforce who receive complaints and investigate). Refer to [A.6.2](#) for the specificities of training.
- d) Monitoring:
  - 1) Measure attitudes and practices (e.g. with surveys);
  - 2) Measure effectiveness (e.g. use focus groups, track cases and how they are solved);
  - 3) Consider business benefits;
  - 4) Measure workforce satisfaction (e.g. workforce satisfaction surveys).

### A.5.7 Steps for grievance mechanism for external stakeholders

The following 4-step process is suggested:

- a) Planning:
  - 1) Hire a GBV specialist (e.g. consider locally based expert);

- 2) Conduct a GBV/ context assessment (e.g. to understand contextual specific risks and solutions);
  - 3) Build mutually beneficial GBV partnerships (e.g. consult with and cooperate with locally based women's organizations or groups).
- b) Designing:
- 1) Consult with local communities (relevant in particular for construction sites, e.g. engage in focus group discussions and undertake individual interviews with local leaders, formal and informal, women's groups, women's organizations);
  - 2) Decide on the best model;
  - 3) Write protocols (e.g. step by step approach, from report received, how an investigation is carried out and by who, ensuring a victim/survivor-based approach).
- c) Implementing:
- 1) Communicate policy and grievance mechanism (e.g. considering written/oral communication, language, pictures and similar);
  - 2) Build capacity (e.g. in local leaders (formal and informal), of own workforce involved in handling the grievance). Refer to [A.6.2](#) for the specificities of training;
  - 3) Handle reports.
- d) Monitoring:
- 1) Measure community satisfaction (e.g. focus groups, interviews);
  - 2) Check workforce awareness (e.g. focus groups questionnaire);
  - 3) Assess partner performance (e.g. subcontracted partners, organizations engaged).

## A.6 Plan, do, check and act

### A.6.1 General

After carrying out the risk assessment and the actions described in Clause [A.5](#), a plan for the prevention and management of harassment at work should be implemented, evaluating the work environments for sexist attitudes, behaviours or situations, where lack of respect may have occurred.

To identify the most effective preventive actions to be taken, the conditions of the workplace, the organizational context, the type of user, the activities and services provided should be assessed.

The organization can set up a working group, which includes, for example, the company management, workers representation and the personnel most at risk to allow the identification, implementation as well as the monitoring and evaluation of actions and measures necessary to ensure programme effectiveness.

Possible actions that can be implemented are:

- a) structural and technological measures (e.g. installation of alarm systems, suitable lighting systems, systems for entering access codes to limit the entry of strangers to workplaces, maintenance of good condition of structures and equipment);
- b) organizational measures: interviews with all parties involved, and analysis of the cases that have occurred;
- c) management of episodes of violence: data collection, event recording, analysis of the events that have occurred;
- d) psychological management of episodes of violence: support activities for workers/planners, use of professionals;

e) training and information of workforce.

### A.6.2 Training

Actions can be planned and taken on several themes:

- First, raising the awareness of male and female members of the workforce: this effort can take the form of conventional awareness-raising sessions with, for example, interactive quizzes, role-playing, establishing forum theatre within the organization, online modules, etc.
- Next, training is necessary for the key players who may have to deal with cases of sexual or gender-based violence, human resources managers, members of the works council, experts in sexual harassment and sexist behaviour and top management teams. This training can be extended to include the occupational health and social services. The training should address the legal requirements and propose models of action.
- After the training, a whistleblowing, reporting and investigation procedure can be set up in coordination with the workforce representatives. This system can include the creation of units/teams (depending on the size of the organization) managed by a trained and well-informed person or a trained and well-informed group of people, or the provision of a dedicated telephone number or e-mail account that guarantees the confidentiality of information provided by victims/survivors and witnesses. In addition, systematic questions on sexual and gender-based violence can be included in the template used for the organization's annual reviews with the workforce.
- Finally, a procedure should be defined and structurally implemented to address the claims made. By way of example, it may use interview guidelines for the victims/survivors, the offenders and the witnesses, and a scale of sanctions depending on the event (sexual harassment — serious misconduct — dismissal). During the whole process, especially during interviews, repeated victimization should be avoided.
- The organization should take measures to protect the victims/survivors during the internal investigation. For example, systematic consultation of the occupational health service and the transfer of the presumed offender to another department. The organization can also refer the victims/survivors to external resources to provide support with legal formalities and psychosocial care (e.g. psychologists or specialized associations). A "contact box" of external resources can be used.

### A.7 Include the initiative in the organization's social responsibility policy

Providing information on the initiative to prevent sexual and gender-based violence allows it to be included in the organization's social responsibility policy. Internal tools can be used to communicate this information, such as the organization's rules and regulations, which contain the articles of law and the sanctions, the welcome handbook, which explains the policy on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, internal memos, the intranet site, etc.

Posters, videos, exhibitions, card games and board games can also be used and distributed. Media and formats used for dissemination should be accessible for all.

In addition, the organization can publish external communication materials based on, for example, information on the commitments made by the organization.

Special internal and external events can be organized, such as workshops dedicated to the subject.

## **Annex B** (informative)

### **Indicators of the comparative situation of women and men**

#### **B.1 General conditions of use**

##### **B.1.1 Headcount**

Figures by gender:

- breakdown by professional category on the basis of the work contracts (permanent or fixed-term contracts);
- breakdown by department, job position, level of responsibility and educational level;
- average age by professional category.

##### **B.1.2 Duration and organization of work**

Figures by gender:

- breakdown of the headcount by working hours: full-time, part-time (between 20 and 30 hours and other forms of part-time working);
- breakdown of the headcount by the working organization: shift work, night work, variable working hours, unusual work, including weekend work;
- participation in unions activities, by gender.

##### **B.1.3 Data on parental, maternity, paternity and other care leave**

Figures by gender:

- breakdown by professional category;
- according to the quantity and type of leave lasting longer than six months: time savings account, parental, maternity, paternity and other care leave, study leave, sabbatical leave.

##### **B.1.4 Data on arrivals and departures**

Figures by gender:

- breakdown of recruits by professional category and type of employment contract;
- breakdown of departures by professional category and reason: retirement, resignation, end of fixed-term contract, (reason of end of contract: care giving tasks/domestic tasks; better job/position in another organization; gender-based violence situation), dismissal;
- breakdown by job application and steps of selection process;
- breakdown by first year leavers.

##### **B.1.5 Position in the company**

Figures by gender showing the breakdown of the headcount by professional category.

### **B.1.6 Promotion**

Figures by gender:

- number of applications for promotions by professional category;
- number of promotions by professional category;
- average length of time between two promotions.

### **B.1.7 Years of service**

Figures by gender:

- average years of service in the company by professional category;
- average years of service in the professional category.

## **B.2 Remuneration**

Figures by gender and breakdown by professional category according to:

- the range of remuneration (including on complementary or variable components such as bonuses or payments in kind);
- average or median monthly remuneration;
- amount of additional wage or benefits by gender;
- number of women in the 10 highest earners;
- adjusted gender pay gap.

## **B.3 Training**

Figures by gender and breakdown by professional category according to:

- average number of hours of training by male and female employee per year;
- average number of hours in training of employees in gender equality per year in topics such as gender-inclusive language, gender bias, etc.;
- breakdown by type of training: learning a new job, retraining, skills-building, leadership training and programmes;
- gender breakdown of number of applications for training.

## **B.4 Working conditions**

General data by gender and breakdown by job position according to:

- participation in internal committees by gender;
- gender breakdown of number of applications for participating in internal committees;
- exposure to occupational risks;
- arduous work, including repetitive tasks.

## B.5 Leave

Indicators on the relationship between work and family responsibilities:

- existence of additional income paid by the organization for parental, maternity, paternity and other care leave;
- health and accident caring leave (by gender);
- figures by professional category of the number of days of parental, maternity, paternity and other care leave taken in comparison with the theoretical number of days of leave.

## B.6 Organization of working hours in the company

Indicators on the relationship between work and family responsibilities:

- Existence of work organization options that make it easier to organize work and family life;
- Figures by gender and by professional category:
  - number of female and male that work part-time;
  - number of female and male employees who work part-time by choice;
  - number of female and male employees who worked part-time by choice, then returned to full-time work;
  - number of female and male workforce who work extra hours monthly;
- Local services:
  - participation of the organization and its committee in the provision of child-care services.

## B.7 Sexual harassment

- Existence of procedure for the prevention of sexual harassment (see [Annex A](#) for guidelines on developing a grievance mechanism to prevent, detect and respond to gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH) internally as well as in engagement with external stakeholders).
- Sexual harassment complaints/ investigations, number of occurrences of sexual harassment (reported, confirmed, investigated, resolved) and the associated (labour) legal consequences.

NOTE To facilitate the management of indicators, the organization can use a balanced scorecard that considers:

- the current value of the indicator,
- benchmark values (if available, such as national, sectoral or local) that can help the organization to set targets,
- the value of the planned improvement objective.

## **Annex C** (informative)

### **Good practices and practical examples**

#### **C.1 General**

This annex has been developed to provide practical examples from around the world, that have been anonymised, and that can help users to understand how the guidelines in this document can be implemented in a variety of organizations. It has been cross-referenced and organized into useful topics, recognizing that not all the challenges and expectations of all the organizations in different geographies have been covered.

#### **C.2 Involving men and boys in the drive for equality**

On International Women's Day (8 March) a high school distinguished itself through its pupils' strong commitment to a movement that encourages men to get involved, declare their solidarity and call themselves into question with regard to gender equality, which is an indispensable step towards a common initiative in favour of equality. The school's pupils and staff produced a mural of their photos spelling out the movement's slogan, which was exhibited in the school and on its website.

#### **C.3 Example of the implementation and monitoring of the strategic plan<sup>[36]</sup>**

- a) Written instructions on the implementation and monitoring, where applicable.
- b) General and specific training, at all levels, including those against prejudices and stereotypes related to gender.

#### **C.4 Example of internal and external communication<sup>[36]</sup>**

- a) Prepare and disseminate to its interested parties (stakeholders) a communication plan relating to its commitment on gender equality issues (or more generally on diversity, equity and inclusion [DEI] issues).
- b) Base their internal and external communication (marketing, advertising) on responsibility (avoiding the gender stereotype in advertising actions, ensuring a periodic review of marketing materials and strategies, committing to spread a positive image of women and girls, using a language respectful of gender differences).
- c) Identify the interested parties with whom to establish communication regarding gender equality issues, especially in the workplace.
- d) Ensure that communication is consistent with the principles of the policy and with the objectives established and implemented by means of the strategic plan.
- e) Align internal and external communication with corporate values and culture.

#### **C.5 Examples in planning<sup>[36]</sup>**

- a) Identification of company processes related to the identified issues concerning gender equality;
- b) Identification of strengths and weaknesses with respect to the issues;
- c) Definition of objectives;

- d) Definition of the actions decided to fill the gaps;
- e) Definition, frequency and responsibility for monitoring the defined key performance indicators (KPIs, see point 5 of Reference [32]).

The strategic plan is shared by the management and kept updated over time. Depending on the size of the organization, the strategic plan may be more or less complex, also taking into account the need to define the frequency of periodic monitoring of the applicable KPIs, as set out in point 5 of Reference [32].

## C.6 Women empowerment principles (WEP): 7 principles

Policy is about commitment, and the United Nations, through Global Compact and UN Women created the women empowerment principles (WEP), [37] a good framework that can be adopted by organizations. The principles are:

- top management and/or governing body promote gender equality;
- equal opportunity, inclusion, and non-discrimination;
- health, safety and freedom from violence;
- education and training;
- enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices;
- community leadership and engagement;
- transparency, measuring and reporting.

## C.7 Example of a national "Professional equality index"

All companies with at least 50 employees calculate and publish their professional gender equality index every year. This national "100-points professional equality index" is calculated according to four or five indicators (depending on whether the company has more or fewer than 250 employees):

- the pay gap between women and men;
- the difference in the breakdown of individual pay rises;
- the difference in the breakdown of promotions (only in companies with more than 250 employees);
- the number of female employees who receive a pay rise on their return from maternity leave;
- gender parity amongst the 10 highest-paid employees

If the index is below 75 points, the company is asked to take corrective measures to achieve a score of at least 75 points within three years.

The number of cases of discrimination and labour violence sanctioned with respect to those reported can also be an interesting indicator.

Other countries can have similar gender pay reporting processes.

## C.8 Promotion of gender equality and diversity with an award

As an important component of corporate social responsibility, organizations can exhibit an organizational management of excellence to promote gender equality in their activities and internal and external advocacy.

For example, an award [38] exists which has different categories: directory management; innovation; SME management; management for digital transformation and management of gender equality, diversity and care (MGEDC).

Regarding the MGEDC category, it aims to define an application framework, a guide that allows organizations to manage the elimination of gender gaps (with respect to opportunities to access and control jointly economic, social, cultural, and political resources) among other sources of discrimination.

The evaluation takes into consideration four criteria:

- a) leadership,
- b) culture,
- c) management system and
- d) results.

The objective is to highlight that organizations who implement and promote (on a voluntary basis) gender equality and diversity can apply for the award and be recognized for their actions.

### C.9 Organization salary record

All companies, regardless of their size, should record company remuneration of all employees, to guarantee the obligation of equal remuneration for work of equal value.

The salary record should include:

- all employees, including top management and governing bodies;
- gender-disaggregated data for average and median values of base salary and other compensation and benefit components in each professional group, category or level in the company;
- the reference time period will generally be the calendar year;
- it should be accessible for employees' representatives, governmental authorities and for remuneration audits that check the obligation for equal pay.

Moreover, all companies with at least 50 employees, should be obliged to carry out a salary audit, including a job evaluation to secure equal pay for equal work and justify any pay gap higher than the legally established, if it applies.

### C.10 Women-only job openings in organizations

Companies with a predominantly male workforce, often because they are engaged in activities normally associated with men, such as engineering and technology companies, have set aside a percentage of vacancies for women as a way of ensuring that part of their workforce is filled by women. For example, one organization set a target of 50 % of its Fellows Programme vacancies for women, after its recruitment team noted that the majority of these vacancies were filled by men.

The percentage is set according to organizational and market realities and the goals that have been set for gender equality.

In addition to setting quotas or percentages, the organization should ensure that it creates a safe, empowering and fulfilling experience for people because numbers alone do not guarantee true equality and inclusion.

### C.11 Installation of breastfeeding rooms in an organization

A company offers a support programme for breastfeeding/expressing breast milk in the organization when they return to work after maternity leave. This programme involves several actions:

- the supply of breastfeeding rooms in accordance with the regulations in effect, and advice on which equipment to use;
- additional breaks for breastfeeding;

- an online schedule on the organization's intranet site to enable breastfeeding employees to book slots in the room;
- training the management teams in the benefits of the programme;
- documentation on breastfeeding for pregnant employees.

Organizations that have implemented this type of programme have observed a drop-in absenteeism amongst women returning from maternity leave. Women who are able to benefit from this type of programme have expressed their satisfaction in being able to reconcile their family time and work time.

Organizations with external visitors can also provide breastfeeding rooms for them.

## C.12 Toilets

Everybody should have adequate toilet provision, but toilet provision for women is often inferior to that provided for men. Women often get fewer appliances (WCs) than men (WCs and urinals). Women take longer than men to urinate, and they sometimes also have menstruation to deal with. This frequently results in queues at women's toilets, when there are no queues at men's toilets. This inequality applies to most types of building, including theatres, sports facilities, shopping centres, and workplaces.

This is not only discriminatory, it can cause great distress to women who need to use the toilet quickly and can restrict both their social and work lives.

The provision of toilets should be based on the requirements for the users to be able to use them hygienically, easily, practically and discreetly with limited or no waiting.

Organizations should consider appropriate ways to address this, such as:

- equitable/proportionate space and number of appliances,
- provision of period products,
- disposal facilities in all toilets,
- gender-neutral toilets.

## C.13 Menstruation and period poverty: examples of possible actions

The cost of period products is considerable. Students, people in insecure job situations and homeless often chose to spend their money on other essentials. Worldwide, nearly 500 million women cannot afford regular sanitary protection. This lack of sanitary protection can also lead women to limit their activities or even miss days at work or at school during their periods.

Organizations can combat this period poverty by providing period products, organizing collections for other people or making donations to organizations that are active in this field. Three local authorities have launched actions:

- With the support of a specialized association, a city organized a collection and distributed the collected products to vulnerable persons in partnership with various NGOs. A bar in the town, which had already installed a period product dispenser for its customers, also joined the action by providing a permanent collection box for donations.
- A collection campaign in another city also distributed almost 22 000 period products through some 40 associations. The collection was supported by numerous events, including exhibitions and conferences that provided information on period poverty.

Employees who suffer from painful periods are entitled to one paid day of leave per month. This arrangement is based purely on trust, since the employees do not have to consult a doctor. In March 2021, five of the 17 women who work in the company took this day of leave.

### C.14 Improving parental leave during and after the leave

As maternity is often perceived and documented as a disadvantage for women in recruitment and promotion processes, equalizing number of days of absence for maternity and for paternity leave can place female and male employees in similar positions with regards to impacts of parenthood on work life cycles.

- Relax the rules on the return of maternity leave. For example, organizations allow their workforce returning from maternity leave to work part-time for up to 6 months after they return and provide permanent reduced hours/part time working options for parental, maternity, paternity and other care leave returners. The organization can also make follow-up and career development plans for those returning from parental leave to ensure that their time away from the organization and other contextual changes do not hinder their performance, development and professional growth.
- Propose psychological support programmes for parents during and returning from parental, maternity, paternity and other care leave to ensure that mothers can feel welcomed by the company and safe with the return to activities.

### C.15 Implementation of a mentoring programme to guarantee equal career development

Due to social roles and cultural differences, men and women may have different opportunities and needs to develop their professional careers and be promoted. Thus, implementing specific mentoring for women can be effective.

For example, an organization has put in place a mentoring programme where they manage a mentoring scheme, finding suitable mentors for employees and encouraging them to find specific mentors according to their specific needs at different steps of their career.

As part of the programme, mentors receive training and both mentors and mentees receive guidance booklets on their role and the nature of the relationship. Mentors do not necessarily have to be from within the organization. Mentoring programmes such as these can encourage women to share difficulties, overcome insecurities in the work environment and ensure equal development among male and female employees. These programs can also address male employees' unpreparedness and resistance to welcoming and developing more women in the organization.

The structure, topics and methodologies for these programmes should be established based on the realities that women have indicated through diagnostics and mapping, to ensure that they do not replicate gender stereotypes, assume needs and burden women with the task of training to reach leadership positions and grow professionally when in many cases, they do not advance professionally due to biases, structures or decisions of the organization and the leaders, not for lack of empowerment or knowledge.

### C.16 Good practices on remote working

Any organizational transformation (digital, ecological transition, remote working, etc.) can reinforce professional inequalities between women and men, or create new ones, but can also be a vector for more equality. The implementation of remote working shows how an organization can be more sensitive to gender, by considering equality in a transversal way, as an element of method at each step of the process.

- a) Ensure that gender equality is mentioned as a main objective in the introduction of the remote working agreement.
- b) Promote gender equality in the decision-making about the remote working agreement. In order to make sure that the persons in charge of remote working agreement will consider gender equality, awareness campaigns can be organized.
- c) Ensure that gender equality is a key factor in every step of the remote working agreement creation:
  - collect and analyse gendered data on the impact of remote working,

- ensure conditions to have access to remote working are based on the tasks achieved and not on the type of profession,
  - ensure conditions to have access to remote working are not likely to discriminate against designated groups (i.e. forbidding remote working for part-time work can result in an indirect discrimination as women are disproportionality represented in this group).
- d) Provide equal access to digital tools and equal training to remote working software.
- e) Ensure that the worker have suitable places to work, whether at home or from other places.
- f) Include in the remote working agreement additional allowance of remote working days for parental, maternity, paternity and other care leave, parental leave and for people who menstruate, and for people with caring responsibilities. This possibility should not interfere with medical leave or any other situation provided for by law but can be used as an extension of pre-existing legal provisions.
- g) Create specific training and workshops for stakeholders (i.e. managers, union representative, etc.) to ensure that the impact of remote working does not disproportionately affect work life balance and gender equality.
- h) Provide training in order to raise awareness about gender-based violence at work and specific violence that can occur in remote working situation (i.e. online sexual harassment, domestic violence, domestic work distribution among family members, etc.).

### C.17 Training programme example — Micaela<sup>[39]</sup>

Micaela's training programme was created in order to transform the historical and cultural dynamics that reproduce the patriarchal system and gender socialization, thus it is a key strategy that allows reviewing daily practices and the building of relationships within organizations and families.

This programme is addressed to the public sector (authorities and employees) of the Federal and regional States, its central administration, justice administration, parliaments and public enterprises with the aim of raising awareness about all kinds of gender-based violence established in national and international laws and conventions, also, to provide practical tools to tackle and accompany victims and to design policies and strategic actions to prevent gender based violence in the workplaces.

As the implementation of Micaela's training programme raised interest among the general public, it was extended to the private sector: enterprises, associations, and other private organizations even when it was not mandatory for them. Since then, thousands of employees, leaders, enterprises owners, business women and men, and even interested citizens have been trained within this programme; this enabled them to elaborate gender policies and action plans within their organizations, create protocols to prevent and tackle gender-based violence situations, and also, to review its practices and culture patterns towards a gender equality transformation. A real gender equality transformation implies an increasing involvement and action of all the citizens and organizations, reviewing the cultural patterns and conditions that sustain and reproduce inequality and gender-based violence.

### C.18 Education in equality: from awareness-raising to training

Education plays an essential role in teaching gender equality between girls and boys. An educational approach should be developed to raise awareness and inform children of the importance of gender equality from the earliest age possible. Schools are places that develop knowledge of life, of which gender equality is a part. All those working in education should be trained in gender equality to ensure success. Curricular and extra-curricular activities should also enable girls and boys to integrate knowledge and learning that are socially and culturally assigned to one sex or the other, for example, mixed sports activities in the early years, equal value given to sports practised by girls and boys (e.g. football, ballet), manual work, workshop work, domestic work, among other activities. Parents should also actively participate alongside teachers.

Education in equality can offer a means of empowering girls and women and of teaching respect, and a means of prevention in the fight against sexual and gender-based violence. Learning how to respect gender equality should lead to the notion of gender parity and of sharing between women and men.