



CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT IN SOCIAL JUSTICE (CDSJ)

GENDER EQUALITY, EMPLOYMENT EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION POLICY



CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT
— IN SOCIAL JUSTICE —
A People-Centered Development

1. Title

This instrument shall be known as the **CDSJ Gender Equality, Employment Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy**.

2. Effective Date

This Policy takes effect on the date of approval by the competent governance authority of CDSJ and remains in force until amended or repealed.

3. Purpose

This Policy sets the rules for how CDSJ promotes gender equality, employment equity, diversity, inclusion, fair participation, non-discrimination, and equitable opportunity across its employment practices, workplace culture, leadership structures, programme staffing, and institutional systems.

This Policy is adopted because CDSJ is a social justice institution and must therefore reflect its values not only in public programming but also in its own internal life. An organisation cannot credibly advocate for justice, equality, and dignity while allowing exclusion, gender imbalance, hidden bias, inaccessible systems, discriminatory decisions, or unequal opportunity within its own workplace. At the same time, this Policy is not intended to remain at the level of values alone. It is intended to provide a practical institutional framework that guides recruitment, progression, workplace conduct, representation, accommodation, leadership pathways, and accountability for equity and inclusion. It is also intended to prepare CDSJ for regional growth by establishing internal standards that can be strengthened further through country annexes where required by law.

4. Application

This Policy applies to:

- a. all CDSJ employees, whether permanent, fixed-term, temporary, probationary, or part-time;
- b. all CDSJ governance members;
- c. all interns, consultants, volunteers, associates, and other non-employee personnel to the extent relevant to workplace conduct, inclusion, and institutional access;
- d. all recruitment, promotion, remuneration, development, supervision, discipline, and separation processes;
- e. all CDSJ offices, branches, projects, and future country operations; and
- f. all internal workplace systems, meetings, learning opportunities, leadership processes, and employment-related decision-making.

This Policy also applies to the way CDSJ structures participation and opportunity in internal institutional spaces, even where the issue does not amount to a formal grievance or disciplinary matter.

5. Policy Statement

CDSJ is committed to maintaining a workplace and institutional culture that promotes:

- a. gender equality;
- b. employment equity;
- c. diversity of people, experience, identity, and perspective;
- d. inclusive participation and access;
- e. fair treatment and equal opportunity; and
- f. protection against discrimination, exclusion, bias, and workplace marginalisation.

CDSJ shall not tolerate discrimination, unfair exclusion, or inequitable treatment on the basis of sex, gender, disability, health status, age, family status, social status, nationality, race, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other protected ground recognised by applicable law and human rights standards.

This Policy must be implemented in a practical way through staffing systems, management behaviour, institutional planning, representation practices, and regular review of whether opportunity is being distributed fairly.

6. Guiding Rules

All implementation of this Policy must follow these rules:

- a. equality must be reflected in actual process, not only language;
- b. employment decisions must be based on objective and job-related reasons;
- c. inclusion requires active removal of barriers and not only passive openness;
- d. representation matters, especially in leadership, decision-making, and external-facing spaces;
- e. reasonable accommodation must be considered where barriers affect participation;
- f. diversity must not be used symbolically without real inclusion; and
- g. managers are responsible for equitable practice within their teams.

7. Definitions

For purposes of this Policy:

Gender Equality means the equal dignity, rights, opportunity, participation, and fair treatment of all persons regardless of gender.

Employment Equity means practical steps taken to ensure that employment opportunity, access, progression, and treatment are fair and are not distorted by discrimination, structural exclusion, or unjustifiable imbalance.

Diversity means the presence of different identities, backgrounds, experiences, abilities, perspectives, and lived realities within the organisation.

Inclusion means the active creation of conditions in which people can participate, contribute, lead, and belong without avoidable barriers, exclusion, or humiliation.

Reasonable Accommodation means a practical adjustment made to reduce a barrier affecting a person's fair participation or access, provided the adjustment does not impose disproportionate operational burden on CDSJ.

Discrimination means unfair or prejudicial treatment based on a protected or comparable ground.

8. Core Institutional Commitments

CDSJ commits itself to the following institutional rules:

- a. no person may be denied fair employment opportunity on discriminatory grounds;
- b. no person may be excluded from meetings, development, leadership pathways, or institutional participation without a legitimate role-based reason;
- c. staff and governance structures should strive for meaningful gender balance and inclusive representation;
- d. disability, caregiving responsibility, health status, or similar realities must not automatically disqualify a person from opportunity;

- e. institutional systems must be reviewed from time to time to identify structural inequities; and
- f. workplace dignity, belonging, and respectful participation are part of organisational accountability.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

9.1 Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall:

- a. provide oversight of institutional equality and inclusion commitments;
- b. review major structural issues affecting gender equality, employment equity, and inclusion where necessary;
- c. support leadership accountability on representation and fairness; and
- d. consider equity implications in governance and leadership decisions.

9.2 Co-Executive Director – Operations and Technical Services

This office shall:

- a. oversee implementation of this Policy within staffing systems, HR administration, workplace practice, and institutional operations;
- b. ensure that HR policies and decisions align with equity and inclusion commitments;
- c. support review of internal employment patterns where imbalance or exclusion appears; and
- d. ensure that reasonable accommodation and fairness issues are managed properly.

9.3 Co-Executive Director – Programmes and Partnerships

This office shall:

- a. promote implementation of this Policy within programme teams and internal programme leadership structures;
- b. support inclusive representation in programme staffing and external engagement; and
- c. ensure that internal programme opportunities are not distributed unfairly or informally.

9.4 HR Focal Point or HR Officer

The HR focal point or HR officer shall:

- a. support implementation of fair and non-discriminatory HR systems;
- b. maintain records relevant to staffing equity where appropriate;
- c. support reasonable accommodation processes;
- d. flag visible patterns of inequity or exclusion to management; and
- e. support learning and awareness on this Policy.

9.5 Managers and Supervisors

Managers and supervisors shall:

- a. apply employment rules fairly;
- b. avoid favouritism and bias;
- c. support inclusive participation in their teams;
- d. identify and address exclusionary behaviour; and
- e. consider reasonable accommodation where appropriate.

9.6 All Staff and Governance Members

All staff and governance members shall:

- a. treat others with dignity and respect;
- b. avoid discriminatory conduct and exclusionary behaviour;
- c. support inclusive workplace practice; and
- d. raise concerns where unfairness, marginalisation, or discriminatory conduct occurs.

10. Equality and Fair Treatment in Recruitment

All recruitment and selection processes must be conducted in a fair, objective, and non-discriminatory way.

This means:

- a. vacancy notices must not exclude people unfairly;
- b. shortlisting must be based on role-related criteria;
- c. interview panels should be reasonably balanced and fair where practicable;
- d. candidates must not be disadvantaged because of stereotypes, irrelevant personal assumptions, or hidden bias; and
- e. employment decisions must be documented and explainable.

CDSJ should also seek, where reasonably possible, to widen access to opportunity by advertising roles in ways that do not unnecessarily exclude qualified people from different backgrounds or locations.

11. Equality and Fair Treatment in Employment

No employee may be treated unfairly in relation to:

- a. role allocation;
- b. supervision;
- c. remuneration;
- d. access to training;
- e. promotion consideration;
- f. disciplinary action;
- g. leave and flexibility management;
- h. opportunity to represent CDSJ; or
- i. workplace participation,

on the basis of discrimination or hidden bias.

Managers must not allow important work opportunities, exposure, travel, or visibility to be distributed through informal preference networks only.

12. Gender Equality in Leadership and Representation

CDSJ shall actively seek to strengthen gender equality in internal leadership and representation.

This means the organisation should, as far as reasonably possible:

- a. avoid all-male or all-female decision spaces where avoidable;
- b. build leadership pipelines for women and other underrepresented groups;
- c. distribute speaking, representation, and visibility opportunities fairly;
- d. monitor whether internal leadership structures reflect avoidable imbalance; and
- e. address internal practices that repeatedly sideline qualified people from leadership or influence.

This clause does not impose rigid automatic quotas in every instance, but it does require intentional institutional effort.

13. Employment Equity and Structural Inclusion

CDSJ recognises that formal equality alone may not correct structural exclusion.

The organisation shall therefore take reasonable steps to examine whether internal systems unintentionally disadvantage people on the basis of:

- a. gender;
- b. disability;
- c. caregiving role;
- d. age or career stage;
- e. rural or class background where it affects access to opportunity;
- f. language or communication barriers; or
- g. other comparable realities relevant to fair participation.

Where a barrier is identified, CDSJ should consider whether a lawful and practical adjustment can reduce the inequity.

14. Diversity and Organisational Culture

CDSJ values diversity not only as a matter of identity, but also as a matter of institutional strength. Diversity improves judgement, credibility, relevance, creativity, and fairness when it is accompanied by real inclusion.

For that reason:

- a. diverse staff must not be expected only to “fit in” to exclusionary norms;
- b. different communication styles, backgrounds, and experiences should be respected within professional boundaries;
- c. diversity must not be tokenised; and
- d. staff must not be made to feel that they belong only symbolically and not substantively.

15. Inclusion in Meetings, Communication, and Decision-Making

Managers and leadership structures must take reasonable steps to ensure that people are able to participate meaningfully in institutional life.

This includes attention to:

- a. how meetings are scheduled;
- b. whether the same voices dominate repeatedly;
- c. whether junior or marginalised staff are silenced or overlooked;
- d. whether communication is unnecessarily exclusive or inaccessible; and
- e. whether staff are able to contribute without humiliation or dismissal.

An inclusive workplace is not created only by policy. It is also shaped by meeting culture, speaking space, informal power, and everyday professional conduct.

16. Reasonable Accommodation

Where a staff member or applicant faces a barrier linked to disability, health condition, caregiving responsibility, or another comparable inclusion issue, CDSJ shall consider whether reasonable accommodation can be provided.

Accommodation may include:

- a. accessible meeting or work arrangements;
- b. temporary schedule adjustment;
- c. work method adjustment;
- d. communication adjustment;
- e. temporary remote or hybrid arrangement where appropriate; or
- f. another practical measure consistent with role needs and institutional capacity.

Accommodation must be considered in good faith. It may be declined only where it is not feasible, not lawful, or would impose disproportionate operational burden.

17. Disability Inclusion

CDSJ shall not discriminate against a person on the basis of disability and shall take reasonable steps to support fair workplace participation.

This includes:

- a. avoiding automatic exclusion based on assumption;
- b. considering reasonable accommodation;
- c. protecting dignity and confidentiality; and
- d. ensuring that disability-related needs are not treated as inconvenience alone.

No staff member may mock, belittle, isolate, or demean another person because of disability or accommodation need.

18. Caregiving, Family Responsibility, and Workplace Fairness

CDSJ recognises that caregiving and family responsibility can affect workplace participation, especially for women and other staff carrying unequal care burdens.

Managers must therefore avoid unfair assumptions such as:

- a. that a caregiver is less committed;
- b. that a person with family responsibilities should automatically be passed over for opportunity; or
- c. that flexibility requested for legitimate care reasons reflects weakness or unreliability.

At the same time, staff remain responsible for meeting work obligations, and flexibility must be managed fairly and operationally.

19. Prohibited Conduct Under this Policy

The following conduct is prohibited:

- a. discriminatory remarks, jokes, or exclusion;
- b. use of stereotypes in staffing decisions;
- c. humiliating or belittling a person because of gender, disability, health status, age, origin, or comparable ground;
- d. exclusion from opportunity or participation without legitimate reason;
- e. retaliation against a person who raises an equity or inclusion concern;
- f. tokenistic inclusion that denies real participation; and
- g. any other conduct that creates an inequitable, exclusionary, or discriminatory workplace environment.

Some such conduct may also fall under the Sexual Harassment Policy, Grievance and Complaints Handling Policy, Disciplinary Policy, or Human Rights Policy depending on the facts.

20. Gender Equality and Inclusion in Learning and Development

Managers must ensure that access to training, mentoring, conferences, representation, and capacity building is not distributed unfairly.

The following questions should be considered:

- a. who is repeatedly chosen for opportunity;
- b. whether the same visible staff always benefit;
- c. whether women and underrepresented staff are being prepared for leadership; and
- d. whether structural barriers are limiting access to development.

A development system that repeatedly favours already-visible staff can quietly reproduce inequality even without explicit discrimination.

21. Data, Monitoring, and Internal Review

CDSJ may review internal staffing patterns from time to time in order to understand whether gender, grade distribution, representation, role access, or opportunity allocation reveals avoidable inequity.

This may include review of:

- a. staffing distribution by grade;
- b. promotion patterns;
- c. leadership composition;
- d. training participation;
- e. recruitment outcomes; and
- f. grievance patterns related to unfair treatment or exclusion.

Such review must be used to improve systems and not to stigmatise individuals.

22. Awareness and Organisational Learning

CDSJ should periodically promote awareness and practical reflection on:

- a. gender equality in the workplace;
- b. diversity and inclusion;
- c. bias and fair decision-making;
- d. respectful workplace conduct; and
- e. structural barriers affecting participation.

This may be done through induction, management learning, policy orientation, team learning, or other appropriate internal methods.

23. Complaints, Grievances, and Redress

Any person who believes they have experienced unfair treatment, discrimination, exclusion, inequitable opportunity denial, or retaliatory conduct under this Policy may raise the matter through:

- a. the line manager where appropriate;
- b. the next-level manager;
- c. the HR focal point or HR officer;
- d. the Grievance and Complaints Handling Policy; or
- e. another relevant internal policy route depending on the nature of the issue.

Where the matter involves repeated exclusion, discriminatory conduct, humiliation, or serious rights concerns, CDSJ must treat it as a real institutional issue and not merely as interpersonal discomfort.

24. Confidentiality and Sensitive Handling

Concerns raised under this Policy must be handled respectfully and with appropriate confidentiality.

Information should be shared only where necessary for:

- a. support;
- b. review;
- c. corrective action;
- d. HR administration; or
- e. lawful institutional response.

A person who raises an inclusion or discrimination concern must not be exposed casually to gossip, humiliation, or informal retaliation.

25. Non-Retaliation

No person may be punished, isolated, disadvantaged, or denied opportunity because they:

- a. raised a good-faith concern under this Policy;
- b. requested reasonable accommodation;
- c. supported another person raising a concern; or
- d. participated in review of an equity-related matter.

Retaliation is a separate policy breach and may itself justify disciplinary or governance action.

26. Misuse and Bad-Faith Conduct

This Policy must be used in good faith.

Knowingly false allegations, malicious misuse of accommodation mechanisms, or deliberate distortion of equity processes may be addressed under the appropriate disciplinary or grievance process. However, the mere fact that a concern is uncomfortable or contested does not make it false or malicious.

27. Country Operations Clause

This Policy applies across all CDSJ operations.

Where a country of operation requires additional statutory employment equity measures, disability accommodation rules, anti-discrimination protections, inclusion reporting duties, or affirmative action measures, CDSJ shall issue a country annex. The annex may add requirements but may not reduce the minimum fairness, dignity, and inclusion standards in this Policy unless mandatory local law requires a different arrangement.

28. Related Instruments

This Policy shall be read together with:

- the Constitution of CDSJ;
- the CDSJ Policy Framework;
- the Board Governance and Oversight Charter;
- Human Resources Policy;
- Recruitment and Selection Policy;
- Employee Wellness, Mental Health, and Psychosocial Support Policy;
- HIV and AIDS in the Workplace Policy;
- Grievance and Complaints Handling Policy;

- Disciplinary Policy;
- Human Rights Policy;
- Sexual Harassment Policy;
- Safeguarding Policy;
- PSEAH Policy;
- Records Management and Document Retention Policy; and
- any approved inclusion review tools, reasonable accommodation records, or country annexes.

29. Review

This Policy must be reviewed at least once every three years, or earlier if required by legal change, workforce review findings, repeated workplace equity concerns, governance direction, or country expansion.

30. Approval

Approved by: Adv. Motlatsi J Mofolo
Approving Authority: Director and Boards Ex-Officio
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