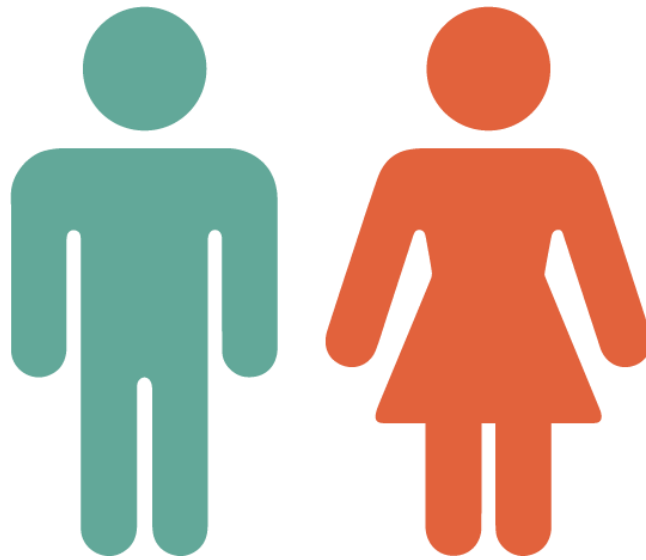


# **Policy on Gender and Equality**



**Approved by: Digni's Board of Directors**

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# Introduction

Digni's view of gender equality is based on the biblical foundation that each individual is created in the image of God, and that human dignity is given by God and is inviolable. (Genesis 1:26-27). In the story of creation, the intention was for men and women to work together as equal partners. We will only reach our goals in development when people work together as equal partners. In the New Testament, Jesus' interaction with the people is filled with dignity and respect, irrespective of the person's gender. God's love and care is unconditional and includes all people without exception, regardless of biological sex, gender, or sexual orientation. God is the God of life and is constantly at work in the world to create a life of fullness, accessible to all. This means that all people should have the same opportunity to live a life without oppression, discrimination, and violation of basic human rights.

Poverty and oppression often affect women and men, girls and boys in different ways economically, socially and politically. Today, large groups of women and girls are still systematically discriminated against, through national laws and through local customs and traditions. Discrimination and oppression reduce the ability of women to participate in public life and increase their vulnerability in society. Women and girls are the largest group of illiterates in the world and comprise the world's largest portion of the poor. Strengthening their position by working for equality is key to creating positive change for all members of society. Any development measure with women at the focus goes far in bringing lasting, positive change to society. Toward this end, Digni must promote the right of girls to education, health care and sexual- and reproductive rights, fight against female genital mutilation, and resist child-marriage. Digni must work to protect and promote equal rights between girls and boys, involving and challenging both men and boys to take up this cause.

Social, cultural and religious norms that define notions of masculinity and femininity differ from context to context. In some contexts, feminine and masculine gender norms and attitudes are restrictive, and counter act equality and human dignity. While acknowledging and respecting religious, theological, and cultural differences related to gender within our network, we all come together to uphold human dignity and human rights. Digni is committed to stand up against discrimination, harassment, social stigma, hate speech, harmful traditional practice, violence, and other gender-related human rights violations, whether it happens within the family, in public, or within our own networks. We recognize the need to address cultural or religious practice and attitudes that contribute to gender-based violence, be it against women and girls or against men and boys. Due to commonly held social norms on gender and sexuality, LGBTI+ people (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and other) are at particularly high risk of experiencing human rights violations such as hate speech, discrimination, and violence. While recognizing cultural, religious and theological differences in different contexts, there is a need to find appropriate and respectful arenas for dialogue within our networks.

## Goal of the policy for gender and equality

The purpose of Digni's gender and equality policy is to give a basic account of Digni's perspectives on gender. It will establish and offer recommendations for the forming of future priorities of the Digni secretariat, expressed in the Digni Statement of Principles – Overall Strategic Plan and The Strategic Action Plan for 2023-2027. The document is normative for Digni's secretariat's work, with the hope that the spirit of the document will infuse every project, program, field development and communications supported within the Digni fellowship of cooperating organisations.

## Digni's approach to gender and equality

Digni's work in protecting and promoting the dignity, rights and equality of women and girls is based on women's rights and gender equality. Gender Equality is also the fifth goal of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the Agenda 2030. However, the gender perspective should permeate and be monitored across all the SDG goals.

Digni focuses on *gender and development* rather than *women in development*. The former stresses that the task at hand is broader than solely focusing on basic human rights and conform to international conventions. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations states that *"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in spirit of brotherhood"*. The Human Rights Conventions, and in particular, the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the UN Children's Rights Convention (CRC) hold central positions in Digni's work for strengthening women and girls in development. It is about changing power relations between women and men, as well as between groups of women and men. Focusing on gender requires that we look at the socially and culturally constructed roles of women *and* men in society – including those of girls and boys – as well as their responsibilities, needs, interests, and capacities and access to resources. Another key focus is on the relationship between the genders. For this work to succeed, it is essential that men of all ages are involved in the promotion of equal rights.

Although Digni focuses on gender and gender relations, it is still necessary to give special attention to women and girls, as they find themselves in a vulnerable and oppressed situation in most societies.

We have three focus areas in our work for equality:

- The individual and society: To expand the focus from the individual woman/man or girl/boy at the local level, to a focus that includes the entire society.
- Structural changes: We must ask which changes are needed structurally to ensure gender justice, i.e. equal rights, equal access to resources, and equal influence for all irrespective of their gender. We must also ask what Digni can do to achieve this.
- Personal attitudes: We must question our own personal attitudes regarding equality and the rights of women and girls. Our efforts to promote equality have to include work on

our own beliefs and values concerning the place of women in society, as well as the challenges related to gender-related human rights violations.

Digni recognises and supports the ongoing efforts to obtain gender equality in the various traditions and cultures. There is a need to continue and strengthen this work, while we uphold the equal value of all human beings and ensure that basic human rights are not neglected in the name of tradition, religion or culture.

## Principles

**Dialogue:** Digni will work to ensure that every activity supported through Digni will promote a dialogue filled with respect between men and women, girls and boys, at every level.

**Participation:** Digni will work to ensure that every activity supported through Digni will promote equal participation in all arenas, including arenas that were previously exclusive to either men or women, or boys or girls.

**Role models:** Digni will work to ensure that Digni and its member organisations act as visible role models for gender equality, for each other and within the geographic areas in which they work. It is important to promote equality and the rights of women and girls in both word and deed. This should be reflected in the work done internally in Norway, as well as when working with partners and projects in other countries.

**Empowerment:** Measures supported through Digni are to work toward strengthening the conditions of men and women, and boys and girls. This may include challenging those in power where the value of human life is not being respected. To achieve this, a greater emphasis on *strategic needs over practical needs* will be necessary. The achievement of results in this field is to be evaluated through self-assessment and through external evaluations with the help of Digni's *Empowerment Assessment Tool*.

**Involving the entire Digni chain of cooperating organisations:** Digni will work to ensure that the consideration of equality and the rights of women and girls will focus on all levels of the organisation, from Digni secretariate to the partner and project level via the member organisations. Digni will encourage that the gender perspective will be mainstreamed at all levels.

**Cultural sensitivity:** How we work on gender and equality have to be adjusted to cultural, traditional, and religious context.

## Responsibility

The board of directors and leadership of Digni are responsible to:

- Ensure that an awareness and competence among Digni’s staff is closely tied with women’s rights, equality and the rights of children.
- Ensure that this awareness and competence is used in composing the members of the board of directors and internally within Digni’s staff, as well as in recruiting and the internal delegating of tasks and responsibilities.
- Work systematically to ensure that Digni’s members and partners have a high competence on women’s rights, equality and the rights of children, and that this is made visible in the activities that are supported through Digni.
- Ensure that this policy is reviewed every four or five years.

## Implementation

**Within the Digni secretariat:** A gender perspective is to be a cross-cutting issue in all activities supported by Digni. This will be evident in capacity building, awareness-raising, assessment of applications and reports, evaluations, advocacy efforts and communication work, as well as other areas. Digni will present results and analysis from the project portfolio on gender and equality in the annual report to Norad.

**Member organisations and partners:** Gender equality and women’s rights is a cross-cutting issue for all activities supported with funds from Digni. In applications, reports and the evaluation of projects, Digni’s members and their partners will be asked to give an account of how their projects have or will have affected the life situations of men and women, boys and girls. They are also requested to, as far as possible, submit gender disaggregated data in Digni’s *Global Results Framework*.

# Definitions

## ***Equality***

Refers to equal recognition and value of all people, irrespective of gender, respecting the similarities and differences that are found. Equality means that they have the same opportunities, access to resources, and rights.

## ***Empowerment***

Empowerment is about people taking control over their lives: setting their own agendas, gaining skills, building self-confidence, solving problems, and developing self-reliance. No person or organisation can empower others, but individuals and groups can empower themselves to make choices or to speak out. However, organisations can support processes that nurture self-empowerment of individuals and groups to strengthen their position in society, their individual and collective resources, agency, and power.

## ***Biological sex***

The physiological sex that a person is born with.

## ***Gender***

The socially and culturally constructed norms and roles of behaviour and attributes that characterise what society considers appropriate for males and females. What is considered feminine gender and masculine gender, as well as the potential to exceed those expectations, differ between contexts and change over time.

## ***Discrimination and exclusion***

Restrictions and undesirable differential treatment based on biological sex, gender or other social, financial, religious or cultural factors that hinder equal treatment or equal access and control over opportunities, resources and power.

## ***Obtaining gender equality (for men and women, boys and girls)***

Gender equality between men and women does not imply that women and men have to become the same, but that rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether a person is born male or female. Gender equity means fairness of treatment for men and women according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different, but considered necessary to obtain equal rights, benefits, obligations, and opportunities.

## ***Practical needs (for men and women, boys and girls)***

Fundamental needs defined by men and women, boys and girls, in a given context, such as the access to health, education, nutrition.

## ***Strategic needs (for men and women, boys and girls)***

Long-term and often non-material needs tied to the structural oppression of women and girls (and in some instances of men and boys) that can change the balance of power between the genders in a given context. Strategic needs often include structural changes in a society, such as legislative change, changing norms, and increased participation in decision-making.

### ***Gender analysis***

A systematic collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated information with the purpose to assess the contextual implications of an intervention on men and women or boys and girls. Gender analysis can utilise a variety of methods to understand the relationships between men and women, their access to resources, their roles and activities, and the constraints they face relative to each other. When conducting a gender analysis there is a need to recognise where and how gender relates to other factors, such as race, ethnicity, culture, class, age, disability, religion and minority status. Such an intersectional approach is important to understand the different patterns of activities, involvement, behaviour and power that women and men have in economic, social and legal structures.

### ***Gender mainstreaming***

A strategy for integrating a gender perspective at every level and in every measure implemented by an organisation or society. The goal is that men and women, boys and girls will benefit from a measure, and to avoid reinforcing existing inequalities between the genders, but instead work to strengthen everyone's position in society irrespective of gender.

### ***Gender perspective***

To have an awareness of the different needs and experiences of men and women, boys and girls. Based on this awareness, to understand how differences in roles and gender relationships can result in differences in power relationships, status, privileges and opportunities.

## **Sources**

[https://es.unesco.org/system/files/definitions\\_and\\_key\\_gender-related\\_concepts\\_2018.pdf](https://es.unesco.org/system/files/definitions_and_key_gender-related_concepts_2018.pdf)

Learning gender mainstreaming through practice. DIGNI's Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Programme: [http://digni.no/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/WEGE\\_DIGITAL\\_KUN\\_WEB.pdf](http://digni.no/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/WEGE_DIGITAL_KUN_WEB.pdf)

Digni's Policy on Sexual Misconduct.

SMC's Gender Equality Policy, Swedish Mission Council:  
<https://ihs.smc.global/documents/7E68B425-67C1-4412-BEEE-E2F36A77CB73/Policy%20for%20gender%20equality.pdf>