Gender policy

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For more information on the topics covered in this document, please contact: educo@educo.org

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Introduction

This Gender Policy reaffirms Educo's firm commitment to gender justice. Promoting just and equitable societies that guarantee the rights and wellbeing of children, as stated in our mission, inevitably leads us to continue advancing gender equality and equal opportunities and rights for women, men and all gender identities regardless of age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, functional diversity, religion or any other personal or social condition or circumstance.

Many reflections and debates have led us to where we are now, to this updated version of the Gender Policy. Many of the partner organisations we work with and alliances and networks we belong to have inspired and challenged us, and we have learnt so much from them. Many of the lessons that as an organisation we have accumulated in the different countries we work in since the creation of a specific gender work unit in 2008 and the inclusion of gender equality in Educo's Strategic Plan 2010-2014 in 2009 have been expressly included.

Equality between women and men and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women are fundamental human rights. This commitment to gender justice is an inescapable aspect for Educo as an organisation based on a rights-based approach and on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This global policy, which puts people at the centre and tackles discrimination and inequalities, must inspire the rest of the institutional policies that together make up part of a broader framework for managing diversity, equity and inclusion. Policies that seek to subvert discriminatory social norms and values and aim to transform existing power systems.

Even today, a significant proportion of the limitations that people face to fully exercise and enjoy their rights are still determined by gender as a consequence of the patriarchal societies we live in. Addressing gender inequalities inevitably leads us to challenge ourselves in all those inequalities generated by a capitalist, neoliberal, colonial and racist patriarchal system. A system that establishes hierarchical and unequal power structures and is characterised by the domination and control of certain individuals or people over others. That is why the transformative ambition of this policy also aims to question, challenge and transform the power systems that generate, reproduce and perpetuate inequalities in our societies and limit the full exercise of the rights of millions of people.

This commitment to transforming unequal gender relations means starting by developing organisational practices capable of generating policies, mechanisms, procedures, structures and work and relationship cultures that do not reproduce inequality, that do not reinforce the values traditionally assigned to femininity and masculinity, and that do not maintain rigidly differentiated roles between women and men. We are committed to feminism in order to generate these much-needed processes of reflection and transformation, which range from the individual to the organisational level.

Lastly, given the diversity of countries and contexts we work in, with such different cultures, religions and cultural codes, this policy, in addition to defining Educo's minimum gender commitments at a global level, aims to establish the

global reference framework from which Educo's country offices can define their own gender action plans in accordance with their own contexts.

Objective

The main objective of this policy is to reaffirm the institutional commitment to gender justice and to promote the transformation of existing ways of being, doing and thinking, with the aim of eliminating gender inequalities that occur in any of the organisation's areas of operation and to ensure that our actions are always oriented towards transformation and the equitable distribution of power, contributing to the enjoyment and enjoyment of rights.

Coverage

This policy is global in scope and applies to:

- The whole Educo staff team (Board of Trustees, management team, employees, volunteers and interns), both at head office and in the country offices.
- Local partner organisations, during the development of activities included in a program or project implemented in collaboration with Educo.
- To all internal, external and networking actions of the organisation.

Justification

Gender inequality, present in all societies, is by far the most widespread and affects by far the largest proportion of children and the world's population, more than any other form of inequality.

Across the world, girls and women still enjoy fewer opportunities for personal development than their male counterparts. Girls and women, in every corner of the world, continue to encounter serious difficulties when it comes to exercising their rights, or are denied them altogether, in health, education, social and political participation, economic wellbeing and freedom from violence, which often puts their lives at risk. Pregnancy rates for girls and adolescent girls as well as maternal mortality rates remain unacceptably high, and unfortunately persistent in some regions of the world. The burdens of unpaid care work primarily shouldered by women, the climate crisis that is having a greater and more intense impact on women, as well as inequalities in inheritance systems and property rights continue to represent a major barrier to their enjoyment of their rights.

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified violence against women and girls and exposed and exacerbated deep structural inequalities. It has also reversed decades of progress in women's participation in the labour market, it has increased the number of women living in extreme poverty, and it has increased the burden of unpaid domestic and care work, all of which exacerbate the risk factors and other causes of violence against women and girls.

At the current rate, it will take an estimated 300 years to end child marriage, 286 years to bridge legal protection gaps and eliminate discriminatory laws, 140 years for women to be equally represented in positions of power and leadership in the workplace, and 47 years to achieve equal representation in national parliaments.[1]

The same heteropatriarchal system that discriminates against girls and women also conditions and limits the lives of boys and men, through gender roles and expectations, pushing and pressuring them to exercise the hegemonic model of masculinity. An exclusionary model of masculinity that dictates and imposes what a real man should be and do, that emphasises values such as self-reliance, superiority over girls and women and over other boys and less masculine men, that encourages violence and that discriminates against those who do not embrace such values. A model of masculinity that pushes them into risky practices that not only expose them to the impact on their own lives and integrity, but also promotes and perpetuates the exercise of violence and domination over the bodies of women and children.

Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls has been and is specifically included in the international development agenda endorsed by the vast majority of countries that signed up first to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and then to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs). Despite having gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women as specific goals, such as MDG3 and SDG5, and therefore

1 Gender equality and empowering women - Sustainable Development (un.org)

having clear mechanisms for their quantification and monitoring, gender equality is still far from being a reality. Not a single country has delivered on the promise of gender equality in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Progress in protecting the rights of women and girls and progress in ending discrimination and all forms of gender-based violence is still too slow. They are also at risk in a context of increasing inequalities across the board, a clear regression of human rights, and women's rights in particular, and increasing political polarisation and hate speech.

Identifying and addressing the structural causes of discrimination, inequalities and different forms of violence forces us to broaden our perspective and to consider not only patriarchy and heteronormativity but also the rest of the systems that generate discrimination and exclusion, such as capitalism, neoliberalism, colonisation, racism and adult centrism, among others. Discrimination systems are all linked and feed into each other.

This gender policy aims to challenge, question and fight against the systems that generate and perpetuate inequalities for millions of people. We are firm believers in feminist principles as an impulse capable of transforming our lives, our communities and societies. We are committed to a transformative, human rights-based approach to gender that integrates intersectionality, diversity and inclusion; that challenges colonial legacies and promotes anti-racism; and that promotes dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution.

Frame of reference

For more than 50 years, development cooperation has designed different policies and strategies to address inequalities between women and men. In the 1970s and 1980s, these were aimed at addressing some of the practical needs of women in the South and were framed within the Women in Development (WID) approach.

From the 1990s onwards, the Gender and Development (GAD) approach was developed to improve women's subordinate position to men and not only to improve their material living conditions. The focus is no longer on how to incorporate women in specific development processes, but rather on the power relations between women and men, seeking to address not only women's practical needs but also their strategic interests. It also advances the recognition that gender inequalities exist in societies in the South as well as in the North, and that their main cause is the existence of a system of patriarchal domination with different expressions depending on the context.

The IV World Conference on Women, which resulted in the Beijing Declaration in 1995, was a milestone in the fight for the rights of girls and women and consolidated five decades of legal advances aimed at ensuring the equality of women and men in law and in practice. In addition to the adoption of the gender approach, two specific strategies to achieve gender equality in development were promoted extensively in the field of cooperation: gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. Likewise, the focus on gender-equitable organisational change became increasingly relevant.

The IV World Conference on Women also provided an opportunity to reflect on the role of men in addressing gender inequality. Since then, boys and men are increasingly being included in gender equality programs in a variety of areas, including the prevention of gender-based violence, the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights, and the sharing of care work responsibilities. Promoting new understandings of masculinity and gender relations provides an important space for addressing gender issues from an inclusive approach. The promotion of girls' and women's empowerment together with boys and men generates a new configuration of "traditional masculinity" that transforms norms, attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate unequal relations between boys and girls, men and women. Engaging men in gender equality is an essential part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and for maintaining momentum in addressing gender inequalities, strengthening human rights and promoting women's empowerment. It is clear that men can and must be part of the solution.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in feminist cooperation, which proposes a comprehensive, holistic and critical approach. A perspective that challenges the binary approach and the consideration of men and women as homogeneous groups of the GAD approach by highlighting the intersection of gender with other inequalities of social class, ethnicity and sexuality. Critical feminist analysis shows how sexism is interconnected with racism, homophobia, classism and other forms of discrimination. The feminist approach goes further and aims, in addition to the equal opportunities and rights pursued by the GAD approach, to fight against systems of oppression and to transform our societies.

The feminist approach has the potential to change not only women's lives, but the lives of all those who want to transform them. It is a potential for transformation and aims to change the world towards equality. Feminism offers a worldview for society as a whole, not just for women.

Objectives and lines of action

No single institutional gender policy can ensure gender equality in the work of an organisation if it is not accompanied by an organisational culture that is first able to identify and transform organisational dynamics that can reinforce and perpetuate gender inequality.

Gender mainstreaming directly challenges and questions our organisational culture, Educo's culture, the set of values, beliefs and attitudes that we share as an organisation, that define our identity as an organisation and that condition both individual and collective behaviour within Educo. Organisational culture is determined by the ways in which we relate to one another, the formal and informal communication mechanisms we have, the way in which we exert influence, the ways in which we exercise power and leadership at Educo, and the ways in which we work with people and partner organisations. It refers to the ways in which we make decisions and also to the ways in which we resolve conflicts.

The following objectives and lines of action, which the country offices will include in their planning tools, will undoubtedly contribute to the transformation of our organisational culture, an organisational culture that will allow us to move towards a more coherent, fairer and more equitable organisation.

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Objective 1
To achieve a solid position and a firm commitment to gender equality for all Educo team members through sustained processes of awareness-raising, training, analysis and organisational learning.

Proposed lines of action:

- Facilitate individual and collective spaces for reflection and review of our own individual practices.
- Facilitate collective spaces for reflecting on and reviewing our institutional practices.
- Develop awareness-raising/training actions that generate spaces for debate, discussion and collective learning.
- Provide gender-specific training for staff directly related to their area of work.
- Report information on gender equality issues at the meetings of the Extended Steering Committee and Board of Trustee meetings at least once a year.

Objective 2
Ensure gender mainstreaming in a coherent manner in all institutional strategic documents and defined positions, as well as in the programs and projects developed.

Proposed lines of action:

- Guarantee that Educo's strategic documents and position papers are reviewed to ensure the inclusion of the gender perspective.
- Have tools that facilitate integration of a GAD and intersectional approach in programs and projects.
- Develop and implement a basic menu of specific indicators that can be adapted when preparing a program or project proposal.
- Develop and continuously evaluate operational tools for effective gender mainstreaming.

Objective 3
Ensure that Educo's communication, both internally and externally, integrates a gender perspective.

Proposed lines of action:

- Adopt a code for the use of non-sexist content, language and images that promotes the use of inclusive language, in all its forms (written, image...) that reflects diversity.
- Develop specific transformative communication actions that show the situation of women and promote equality.
- Guarantee an image, language and discourse that promote alternative ways of being a man, away from the stereotypes of hegemonic masculinity.
- Promote transformative education processes.

Objective 4
Ensure that Educo's organisational structure is equitable, inclusive and reflects the diversity of the people in the societies it belongs to.

Proposed lines of action:

- Promote a balanced and representative presence of the Educo team in the organisation both in terms of duties and positions of responsibility.
- Ensure that P&C processes (selection, promotion, remuneration, etc.) are equitable.
- Promote reconciliation and co-responsibility policies and measures for both men and women.
- Promote the creation of safe working environments for all through the effective implementation of safeguarding work plans in all Educo country offices.
- Ensure ownership of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion framework on behalf of the Educo team.

Objective 5
Promote transformative gender policies and approaches in and through collaboration with alliances and networks.

Proposed lines of action:

- Participate in networks and alliances with the feminist movement and with organisations working for gender equality that accompany and challenge us during the process of organisational transformation.
- Promote the adoption of gender-transformative approaches in the alliances, spaces and networks Educo is part of.

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Each and every person who is a part of Educo, from the Board of Trustees to the Management Committee and the entire staff team, shares the responsibility of working towards gender equality. The effective implementation of the Gender Policy and the promotion of continuous improvement actions that enable progress in this direction is a responsibility shared by all departments and areas of the organisation.

While the implementation of the policy is the responsibility of all departments, the Gender Commission is the body responsible for:

- Coordinating implementation of the policy.
- Implementation which will always be carried out in an adapted way, in accordance with global contexts and in response to the situations and specific needs in each territory, both at head office and in the country offices.
- Carry out regular monitoring and evaluation of the policy.
- Lead and coordinate revisions of the policy.
- The Gender Policy will be revised every four years. The updated document, in the event of possible modifications, is submitted to the Steering Committee and subsequently to the Board of Trustees for validation.

Glossary

Organisational Change for Gender Equality

An approach that states that the goal of gender equality can only be achieved by transforming the organisations that act as agents of development. The COpEG methodology makes it easier to highlight the dynamics, routines and ways of functioning that are producing gender inequalities within organisations in order to design specific measures aimed at preventing and eliminating them. This vision is comprehensive, as all institutional spheres are analysed, including values and culture.

Empowering women

Fundamental strategy for generating and consolidating processes of emancipation, development and personal and collective growth. Empowering women means strengthening their capacities and their protagonism as a social group, which implies both individual change (increased self-esteem and decision-making capacity) and collective change (increased participation and organisation). Through their empowerment process, women are in a position to set themselves up as subjects of change, so that they can act to change their situation and organise themselves to change their position in relation to men in the social, political and personal spheres.

Gender-based approach

A vision that seeks to show that the differences between women and men are due to the cultural differences assigned to human beings and not only to their biological determination. This approach questions the stereotypes we are educated with and opens up the possibility of elaborating new contents of socialisation and relationships between people.

Transformative gender approaches

Transformative gender approaches seek to address unbalanced power dynamics and relations, rigid gender norms and roles, harmful practices and unequal formal and informal norms, as well as discriminatory or sexist legislative and policy frameworks that perpetuate gender inequality in order to realise gender equality. To do this, it aims to eradicate systemic forms of gender discrimination by creating or reinforcing equitable gender norms, dynamics and systems that support gender equality.

The gender transformative approach challenges unequal gender relations and discriminatory norms and practices, which are often biased in favour of men. It also aims to change norms and practices that discriminate against men.

Feminist approach

A critical vision that demonstrates and explains the subordination of women in a well-founded and evidence-based way, that characterises and conceptualises the power relations between the sexes, builds a critical, liberating and emancipatory political project with an anti-sexist essence, generates critical awareness in the dominated gender in order to transform the system and elaborates strategies for collective political action.

The feminist approach we are committed to involves analysing inequalities from a multidimensional and intersectional perspective, going beyond gender analysis and addressing the causes of structural inequalities in a more comprehensive way.

Gender and Development (GAD)

An approach based on the recognition of the power relations and conflict that exist between women and men in order to address the subordination of women. It locates their disadvantage not only in themselves, but as a consequence of unequal social relations between men and women, in which women are at a disadvantage with regard to access to and control of development resources and benefits. This concept emerged from the Women in Development (WID) approach.

Intersectional approach

Intersectionality is a category of analysis to refer to the components that converge in the same case, multiplying disadvantages and discriminations. This approach makes it possible to look at problems from a holistic perspective, avoiding simplifying the conclusions and, therefore, the approach to this reality.

Under the intersectionality lens, for example, any person can suffer discrimination on the basis of being a child, being a woman, being from an indigenous ethnic group, having a disability or living in poverty; and all of the above-mentioned possibilities of inequality can coexist in a single person, putting him or her at greater risk of vulnerability. This is also referred to as multiple discrimination.

Women in Development Approach (WID)

An approach that emerged in the 1970s that aims to integrate women functionally into a development strategy, based on the assumption that their participation is necessary for development. It addresses the subordination they are subjected to due to their exclusion from the market and places them at the centre of the development problem, as their exclusion means that half of the human resources are left out of the productive processes. A limitation of this approach is that by seeking only the development of women, it often increases their workload without increasing their access to resources and leaves untouched the mechanisms that structure inequality.

Gender equity

Justice in the treatment of women and men, according to their respective needs, cultural, ethnic, social, class or other differences. Equity is a means of achieving equality. This can include equal or different treatments, although considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities, and thus include measures designed to compensate for women's historical and social disadvantages.

Feminism

Feminism is a political, social, academic, economic and cultural movement that fights against sexism and for the expansion of women's rights and autonomy as individuals. It seeks to create awareness and conditions to transform social relations, achieve equality between people and eliminate any form of discrimination or violence against women.

Feminism does not seek the superiority of women over men, but advocates equality between the sexes in all areas of life, including social, political, cultural, economic and other spheres.

Gender equality

Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men, girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men are the same, but that rights, responsibilities and opportunities do not depend on the sex they were born with. Gender equality is the opposite of gender inequality, not gender difference, and aims to promote the full participation of women and men in society. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into account and that the diversity of different groups of women and men is recognised.

Gender justice

This is understood as full equality between all people in all areas of life. Gender justice aims to eliminate inequalities between women and men that occur in the family, the community, the market and the state. Gender justice involves the fair distribution of resources and social power in society; it refers to fairness in the treatment of men and women according to their respective needs and the implementation of specific measures designed to compensate for women's disadvantages.

Patriarchy

A social organisation system characterised by male supremacy in which key positions of power in the political, economic, social, religious and other areas are generally in the hands of men. In a broad sense, it could be defined as the manifestation of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of this dominance over women in society in general. Uses, customs, traditions, family norms, social habits, prejudices, symbolism and even laws ensure the transmission and perpetuation of this system of domination between generations.

Gender roles

A set of social and behavioural norms generally perceived as appropriate for men and women in a given social group or system, and which determine the responsibilities and tasks historically assigned to them. Traditionally, the roles assigned to women and men have placed women and men in different positions of power and social value, so working for human development must involve challenging this distribution in order to eliminate power imbalances.

Heteropatriarchal system

This is a system for social organisation and social relations characterised by the supremacy of the masculine and heterosexuality and based on the acceptance of a single universal family model, traditionally composed of a heterosexual couple and their possible children, as well as on the perpetuation, distribution and social legitimisation of a series of roles for men and women, which continue to be reproduced in our societies today.

Gender mainstreaming

A strategy that proposes to address gender equality not only in a sectoral way, but by integrating it into the "mainstream" of organisations. It involves defining specific measures aimed at addressing gender inequalities in all spheres of action and areas of an organisation.

Le machisme tue. L'éducation sauve des vies
L'éducation autonomise les femmes
Le machisme se soigne par l'éducation
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