

GEDI POLICY

Gender, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Concordia Social Projects

1. Contextualization

Concordia works every day with children, young people, families and colleagues who come from very different backgrounds and life situations. Our work is rooted in **human dignity, social justice and the belief that every person deserves respect, safety and equal opportunities**.

Over the years, Concordia has grown as an international organisation operating in diverse social, cultural and legal contexts. With this growth comes a responsibility to consciously reflect on power relations, inequalities and exclusion that can exist within organisations and societies. Gender inequality, discrimination and unequal access to opportunities affect not only programme participants, but can also influence workplace cultures and professional relationships.

A GEDI Policy provides a shared framework and common language to address these realities. It helps Concordia to act consistently, transparently and responsibly across all countries and departments. By clearly defining our values, commitments and expectations, this policy strengthens trust, accountability and cooperation within the organisation.

The Policy has been developed by the International People and Culture department with the input of Concordia's international GEDI experts as well as the national offices. The Policy is a living document which can be modified at anytime and is revised every second year by the People and Culture responsible.

Concordia considers this policy beneficial because it:

- supports safe, respectful and inclusive working environments for all colleagues and volunteers,
- strengthens safeguarding and protection of children, young people and adults at risk,
- improves the quality and impact of our programmes,
- encourages reflection, learning and positive change,
- reinforces Concordia's identity as a values-based organisation.

With this GEDI Policy in place, Concordia expects positive change for:

- colleagues and volunteers, who experience fairness, appreciation and psychological safety,
- leaders, who are guided in inclusive and responsible decision-making,
- programme participants, who are met with respect, dignity and equal opportunities.

GEDI is therefore not an additional requirement, but an essential part of how Concordia lives its mission and values in everyday practice.

This policy is also an invitation to reflect on our own attitudes, behaviours and assumptions, and on how each of us contributes, every day, to creating a safe and inclusive Concordia.

2. Purpose and Scope

Concordia Social Projects (hereafter "Concordia") is committed to **promoting Gender Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI)** as core principles across all its work among employees, programme participants and partners. This policy outlines Concordia's commitments, responsibilities and standards to ensure safe, respectful and inclusive environments for all individuals.

This policy applies to all Concordia operations in all seven countries and departments and to all staff members, leaders, board members, volunteers, interns, consultants and partners, irrespective of contractual arrangements.

GEDI is inseparably linked to Safeguarding and the protection of children, young people and adults as well as families at risk. This policy contributes to preventing harm, abuse, exploitation and discrimination in all contexts in which Concordia operates. Therefore this policy must be read and applied in line with Concordia's **Code of Conduct, the Child Protection Policy and the Storytelling Guideline**, which set binding standards for respectful behaviour, professional integrity and the protection of children and adults at risk. Furthermore, the Policy is in line with the UN human rights, the children's convention, the disability convention, women's rights convention, convention against racism and the SDGs.

3. Concordia's Understanding of Diversity

At Concordia, diversity is understood as the recognition and appreciation of the many characteristics that make individuals and groups unique. Diversity includes, but is not limited to:

- gender, gender identity and gender expression,
- sexual orientation,
- age,
- ethnic origin, nationality and migration background,
- religion or belief,
- disability, health status and neurodiversity,
- socio-economic background,
- family status and caregiving responsibilities,
- language,
- education as well as professional and social background;

Concordia recognises that diversity intersects with power structures and inequalities and therefore requires intentional, reflective and inclusive approaches. We recognize and identify power structures and deficits, and we commit ourselves to resolving these in the long term and strengthening the self-advocacy of our programme participants in the long term.

GEDI is a core component of Concordia's safeguarding approach. Discrimination, exclusion and unequal power relations increase the risk of abuse, exploitation and neglect, particularly for children, young people and adults at risk.

Concordia therefore integrates GEDI principles into all safeguarding-related measures, in alignment with the Child Protection Policy and the Code of Conduct, including:

- Prevention of abuse, exploitation and harmful practices
- Recognition and mitigation of power imbalances
- Gender- and diversity-sensitive risk assessments
- Safe, accessible and confidential reporting mechanisms

All persons working with or for Concordia are required to act in accordance with these standards at all times.

4. Our inclusive CORE VALUES

This policy is rooted in Concordia's organisational values:

- **Heart Connection** – We act with empathy, dignity and respect, towards each other and our programme participants.
- **Commitment** – We take responsibility for promoting equality, safeguarding and inclusion in all our actions.

- **Courage** – We actively challenge discrimination, harmful norms and power imbalances.
- **Chances** – We create fair opportunities and reduce barriers so that everyone can develop their potential.

5. Inclusive Leadership

Inclusive Leadership is central to the successful implementation of this GEDI Policy. At Concordia, inclusive leadership means leading with awareness, responsibility and respect for diversity.

Inclusive leaders recognise that people have different experiences, needs and barriers. They actively create environments where everyone feels safe to speak up, participate and contribute. Inclusive leadership is based on listening, reflection and fairness.

Inclusive leadership also means accepting that we do not always have all the answers, and being open to learning, feedback and change.

At Concordia, inclusive leadership means that leaders:

- act as role models for respectful, non-discriminatory behaviour,
- promote equality, inclusion and safeguarding in daily decisions and actions,
- are aware of power dynamics and address them responsibly,
- encourage diverse perspectives and participation,
- respond seriously and appropriately to concerns, complaints or reports,
- ensure that the Code of Conduct, the Child Protection Policy and this GEDI Policy are understood and applied.

Leaders at all levels have a special responsibility to ensure that GEDI principles are not only written in policies, but lived in practice. This includes supporting team members, addressing harmful behaviour, enabling learning and fostering trust. Inclusive leadership strengthens Concordia as an organisation and contributes to safe, respectful and empowering environments for both colleagues, volunteers and programme participants. Concordia recognises that inclusive leadership is essential to the effective implementation of GEDI principles. Leaders at all levels are expected to model inclusive behaviour, promote respect and equity, address power imbalances, and create safe environments where diverse perspectives are welcomed and valued. Inclusive leaders actively listen, encourage participation, provide clear and fair guidance, and respond constructively to concerns related to discrimination, exclusion or safeguarding risks.

6. Concordia's Commitments

Concordia's commitments translate our values into clear standards for behaviour, decision-making and organisational practice.

- Concordia commits to upholding gender equality and addressing gender-based discrimination, violence and harmful practices in all programmes and internal processes.
- Concordia commits to integrating safeguarding and GEDI principles to protect children, young people and adults at risk from abuse, exploitation and neglect.
- Concordia commits to ensuring zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Concordia commits to preventing harassment through awareness, training and clear behavioural standards.
- Concordia commits to providing safe and confidential reporting mechanisms.
- Concordia commits to ensuring reasonable accessibility for persons with disabilities and others facing barriers, in line with organisational capacities and local contexts.

- Concordia commits to promote inclusive and respectful language in all internal and external communication and ensures information is shared in accessible and culturally appropriate ways.
- Concordia commits to taking all allegations seriously and responding promptly and appropriately.
- Concordia commits to promoting equity by recognising structural disadvantages and responding with appropriate, differentiated measures.
- Concordia commits to fostering inclusive organisational cultures where all individuals feel safe, respected and valued.
- Concordia commits to applying an intersectional perspective that recognises overlapping forms of discrimination and vulnerability.
- Concordia commits to inclusive and fair recruitment, retention, development and leadership practices.
- Concordia commits to meaningful participation of children, young people and adults from diverse backgrounds in decisions affecting them.
- Concordia commits to continuous learning, reflection and accountability regarding GEDI and safeguarding across all countries of operation.
- Concordia commits to use inclusive language in texts, both in-house and externally.
- Concordia commits to working with partners who share and respect these principles.

7. Gender, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

7.1 Gender

Concordia recognises that gender inequality is a root cause of many protection risks. Gender-sensitive and gender-transformative approaches are integrated into programmes and organisational practices, addressing power relations and social norms.

7.2 Equity

The difference between equality and equity lies in how fairness is achieved.

Equity means fair treatment according to needs and circumstances. Concordia actively works to remove barriers faced by marginalised groups and ensures access to protection, services and opportunities. That's why we agreed to choose the term equity instead of equality.

Equality means that everyone is treated the same and receives the same resources or opportunities, regardless of their starting point or circumstances.

7.3 Diversity

Diversity strengthens Concordia's work. Different perspectives, experiences and identities are actively valued and reflected in teams, leadership and programmes.

7.4 Inclusion

Inclusion is an active and continuous process. Concordia ensures safe spaces, accessible communication and participation for all, particularly for those at higher risk of exclusion or harm.

8. Anti-Discrimination and anti-harassment

Concordia maintains zero tolerance for discrimination or harassment in any form. Discrimination and harassment undermine dignity, safety and inclusion and is incompatible with Concordia's values and GEDI principles.

Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- sexual harassment,
- gender-based harassment,
- verbal, physical or psychological harassment,

- harassment based on gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, religion, age or any other personal characteristic;

All forms of harassment are strictly prohibited and constitute a violation of Concordia's Code of Conduct. This applies to interactions between staff and volunteers towards children and programme participants, and in all professional contexts, including online spaces.

Any individual who experiences or witnesses harassment is encouraged to report it in accordance with established procedures.

9. Responsibilities and Implementation

- The Senior Leadership of Concordia, the People and Culture responsible and the CEOs are responsible for the implementation and oversight of this policy.
- Leaders ensure that GEDI and safeguarding principles are applied within their teams.
- All staff and affiliated persons are responsible for complying with this policy.

This includes reflecting on one's own behaviour, language and decisions, treating others with respect (including not telling jokes, which are not funny for other colleagues), speaking up when witnessing harmful behaviour, and seeking guidance when unsure.

- Training and awareness-raising activities support effective implementation.

10. Reporting and Consequences

Failure to comply with this GEDI Policy, the Code of Conduct or the Child Protection Policy will result in disciplinary measures in accordance with applicable national laws, standards and Concordia's internal regulations, depending on the severity of the violation.

This may include corrective measures, suspension, termination of contracts or partnerships, or referral to relevant authorities where required.

All reports will be handled confidentially, respectfully and in line with safeguarding principles. Additional to this policy, Concordia develops a procedure how to handle allegations and how to intervene in case of breach of the GEDI policy. Concordia commits to ensuring that no individual who raises a concern or reports a potential violation in good faith will face retaliation or negative consequences.

Annex 1 – Implementation plan – UNDER DEVELOPMENT

Annex 2- Glossary

Ableism

Discrimination, prejudice or social bias against persons with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior.

Accessibility

The design of environments, services, communication and systems so that they can be accessed, understood and used by all people, including persons with disabilities.

Assistive Technology

Devices, software or equipment that help persons with disabilities perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible, such as screen readers, hearing aids or mobility aids.

(Unconscious) Bias

Unconscious bias refers to automatic assumptions, attitudes or stereotypes that influence our understanding, actions and decisions without us being aware of them. These biases are shaped by personal experiences, cultural norms and social environments.

Cisgender

A term describing people whose gender identity corresponds with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Disability

An evolving concept that results from the interaction between individuals with impairments and attitudinal, environmental or institutional barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Disability (Social Model)

A framework that understands disability as the result of the interaction between individuals with impairments and societal barriers such as inaccessible environments, discriminatory attitudes or exclusionary systems, rather than as a problem located solely in the individual.

Disability (Medical Model)

An approach that views disability primarily as a medical condition or deficit located within the individual that should be treated, cured or managed.

Discrimination

Unfair or unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on personal characteristics or identity.

Diversity

The presence of differences and similarities among individuals and groups, including but not limited to gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation and socio-economic background.

Empowerment

A process through which individuals or groups gain the confidence, resources, skills and opportunities to make decisions, influence their own lives and participate fully in society.

Gender

Socially constructed roles, behaviours, identities and expectations associated with being female, male or gender-diverse, which vary across cultures and contexts.

Gender-based Violence (GBV)

Any harmful act directed at a person because of their gender or gender identity, including physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence.

Gender-blind approach

An approach which ignores gender differences.

Gender equality

The state in which people of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

Gender expression

The way a person expresses their gender through appearance, behaviour, clothing or speech.

Gender identity

A person's deeply felt internal sense of their own gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth.

Gender Mainstreaming

The systematic integration of gender perspectives into policies, programmes and decision-making processes to promote gender equality and prevent discrimination.

Gender-responsive approach

An approach which addresses gender-specific needs.

Gender-sensitive approach

An approach which recognises gender differences.

Gender transformative approach

An approach which changes the system itself.

Harassment

Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

Inclusion

The active and intentional creation of environments in which all individuals feel respected, valued and able to participate meaningfully.

Intersectionality

A framework recognising that individuals may experience multiple, overlapping and interconnected forms of discrimination or disadvantage based on different aspects of their identity.

LGBTQIA+

An umbrella term referring to people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and other diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

Non-binary

A gender identity that does not fit exclusively into the categories of female or male.

Persons with Disabilities (PWD)

Individuals who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Psychological safety

An environment in which individuals feel safe to speak up, ask questions and express concerns without fear of negative consequences.

Reasonable Accommodation

Necessary and appropriate adjustments that enable persons with disabilities or other specific needs to participate on an equal basis without imposing disproportionate burden on the organisation.

Self-advocacy

The ability of individuals, including persons with disabilities, to speak up for their own rights, needs and interests and to make informed decisions about their lives.

Sex

Biological characteristics such as chromosomes, hormones and reproductive anatomy, typically assigned at birth.

Sexual Orientation

An individual's emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction to others.

Stereotypes

Generalised and simplified beliefs or assumptions about a group of people that attribute the same characteristics, roles or behaviours to all members of that group.

Stigmatisation

The process of labelling or treating individuals or groups as socially unacceptable or inferior based on certain characteristics, which can lead to discrimination, exclusion or loss of dignity.

Structural Discrimination

Patterns of discrimination embedded in institutions, policies or social systems that systematically disadvantage certain groups while privileging others.