



CESVI

**Diversity, Equity and
Inclusion Policy**

February 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY	4
POLICY STATEMENT	5
POLICY OBJECTIVES	5
ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENTS	6
POLICY COMMITMENTS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES	6
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	8
IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH	11
REVIEW OF THE DEI POLICY AND OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES	14
LINK TO OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES	15
LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT	15
CONCLUSION	17
REFERENCES	18
ANNEX 1 – DEI DEFINITIONS	19
ANNEX 2: ORGANIZATION COMMITMENTS	22

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INTRODUCTION

CESVI is entering a crucial phase of organizational evolution that aligns with shifting global humanitarian dynamics and the priorities set forth in its *Global Strategy 2023–2027*. Across the development cooperation and humanitarian aid sector, expectations regarding gender equality, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) have increased significantly. Donors and institutional partners now routinely evaluate DEI capacity as a marker of organizational maturity, ethical grounding and operational credibility (IASC, 2022; OECD-DAC, 2023). These expectations influence not only compliance and reporting, but also eligibility for strategic partnerships, multi-year funding and participation in global initiatives.

At the same time, the broader geopolitical landscape is reshaping how INGOs operate. Escalating conflicts, climate-driven displacement, protracted emergencies and declining humanitarian budgets are placing increased pressure on organizations **to demonstrate added value, localized leadership and rights-based, inclusive approaches to programming** (OCHA, 2024; Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, 2025). INGOs are increasingly expected to strengthen partnership models, invest in long-term resilience and sustainable approaches while ensuring that their internal cultures reflect the same equity and inclusion principles they promote externally.

CESVI's *Global Strategy 2023–2027* positions the organization as a frontrunner committed to *"increasing its impact for a fairer society, for the wellbeing of people in need, for the equality of opportunities for all and everyone, and for promoting the ambitions of the most fragile... by supporting processes of autonomy and empowerment despite increasingly complex contexts."* Achieving this vision requires a clear organizational framework that articulates what diversity, equity and inclusion mean for CESVI, across missions, teams, decision-making structures and programmatic approaches.

The development of *CESVI's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Policy* represents an important step in **strengthening organizational identity, building coherence and enhancing the quality and accountability of programming**. This policy establishes a shared foundation for understanding DEI, sets out organizational commitments and principles and outlines expectations for leadership, staff and teams across CESVI. It articulates a vision in which **inclusion** is not a compliance or donor requirement, but rather a **core expression of CESVI's values and strategic direction**.

This policy is informed by a comprehensive desk review and Key Informant Interviews with participants across headquarters and country missions.

This document provides the conceptual and principled foundation for DEI within CESVI. It clarifies *what* the organization commits to, *why* these commitments matter and the values that underpin CESVI's approach, while aligning with CESVI's broader values and strategic direction. A separate Operational Guidelines document outlines *how* these commitments are applied in practice, across programmatic design, field implementation, monitoring and accountability processes.

This Policy aims to strengthen CESVI as an innovative learning, rights-based and inclusive organization, capable of adapting and navigating complex crises while advancing equity, promoting belonging and enhancing protection for all individuals and communities it serves. It marks the beginning of a longer organizational journey, one that will continue to evolve through reflection, learning, feedback and collaboration across missions.

SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

This Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Policy applies across all levels of CESVI and defines the organization's commitments, expectations and responsibilities across both headquarters (HQ) and field missions. It establishes the minimum standards and guiding principles that underpin CESVI's efforts to strengthen equity, inclusion, gender responsiveness and the wellbeing of all persons engaged with or impacted by its work.

The policy is applicable to all CESVI staff and affiliated personnel, regardless of contract type, position, or geographic location. This includes:

- Board of Directors and CESVI Management;
- National and international staff/collaborators working in Italy and abroad;
- Consultants, volunteers, interns;
- Non-CESVI entities and staff, who have entered into a partnership, subgrant and/or cascading grant agreement with CESVI or supported, financially or otherwise, by CESVI in Italy and abroad;
- Any third parties acting on behalf of CESVI.

The policy also informs expectations for partners and external stakeholders, particularly those receiving CESVI resources or participating in joint programming, ensuring that inclusion and equity principles are reflected throughout the partnership.

This DEI Policy applies to both internal organizational practices and external programmatic work. It establishes a shared organizational vision, aligned with CESVI values and Strategic Plan, that must guide decision-making, behavior, leadership and program delivery across all missions.

The policy is designed to complement, reinforce and operate in alignment with existing CESVI frameworks, including but not limited to:

- CESVI Global Strategy 2023–2027;
- CESVI Code of Conduct and CESVI Ethical Code;
- CESVI Safeguarding Policies (PSEA and Child Safeguarding);
- CESVI Whistleblowing Policy;
- CESVI Human Resources Policy;
- CESVI Policy to Prevent Fraud and Corruption;
- CESVI Protection Mainstreaming Guidelines;
- CESVI Humanitarian Framework: Position Paper on Humanitarian Principles;

All CESVI offices are responsible for ensuring that this policy is adapted to their contexts appropriately, communicated clearly and implemented in a manner that reflects local realities, legal framework and cultural considerations. While operational modalities may differ between missions, the **underlying principles of dignity, fairness, equity, inclusion, participation and non-discrimination remain consistent across the organization.**

The **Annex 1** of this Policy includes DEI definitions, explaining in details key terms used in the document and in the guidelines.

POLICY STATEMENT

CESVI commits to **fostering a diverse, equitable and inclusive organization in which all people, staff, partners and community members are treated with dignity, fairness and respect**. Guided by its *Global Strategy 2023–2027* and its core values of participation, partnership, protection and shared responsibility, **CESVI affirms that diversity and inclusion are fundamental to the quality, relevance and ethical grounding of its work**.

CESVI undertakes to promote diversity, equity and inclusion across all programs and organizational practices; to identify and address barriers to participation; to prevent discrimination, harassment and exclusion; and to strengthen approaches that enhance the safety, wellbeing and meaningful involvement of all individuals. The organization will integrate DEI principles into decision-making, program design, leadership behaviour and organizational culture, ensuring that internal practices increasingly reflect CESVI's external commitments.

DEI within CESVI is understood as a dynamic, evolving process, requiring sustained leadership engagement, organizational learning, collaboration and feedback across teams and missions.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

This Policy establishes CESVI's organizational direction for embedding equity, inclusion and non-discrimination across its programmes, partnerships and ways of working. The objectives reflect both immediate priorities and longer-term goals aligned with CESVI's *Global Strategy 2023–2027*.

Short-Term Objectives

- Establish a shared organizational understanding and common language around diversity, equity and inclusion across all missions and headquarters;
- Provide a clear institutional framework that consolidates existing good practice while addressing gaps and inconsistencies identified across missions;
- Strengthen coherence between CESVI's programmatic commitments to protection, inclusion and accountability and its internal culture and leadership practices;
- Support staff and partners to apply DEI principles consistently in programme design, implementation and decision-making, while allowing for contextual adaptation;
- Lay the foundation for practical operational guidance through accompanying Operational Guidelines and tools.

Long-Term Objectives (Transformative)

- Embed DEI as a core organizational value and way of working, rather than a compliance-driven or project-specific requirement;
- Strengthen CESVI's capacity to design and deliver inclusive, equitable and rights-based programmes that respond effectively to complex and evolving humanitarian contexts;
- Foster organizational culture change that reduces reliance on individual "champions" and promotes shared responsibility, leadership accountability and sustainability;
- Enable the development of more transformative approaches, including gender-transformative and intersectional programming, in line with sector standards and CESVI's strategic ambitions;
- Enhance CESVI's credibility, partnerships and donor engagement by demonstrating principled, coherent and accountable approaches to equity and inclusion.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENTS

CESVI **commits to integrating Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) across all levels of the organization through aligned leadership, clear frameworks and inclusive programmatic practice.** These commitments reflect CESVI's values, its Global Strategy 2023–2027, and its ambition to strengthen protection, accountability and resilience-oriented programming across all missions. The full list of CESVI's organizational commitments is outlined in **Annex 2.**

Policy Ownership, Accountability and Review

CESVI recognizes that Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are inherently linked to **power relations and accountability.** Advancing inclusion requires explicit attention to how power is exercised within decision-making processes, leadership structures, partnerships and resource allocation. Leadership at all levels holds responsibility for ensuring that DEI commitments are reflected not only in discourse, but in **concrete decisions,** including prioritization, allocation of resources, access to opportunities and representation.

CESVI commits to **ensuring organizational accountability** for the implementation and ongoing relevance of this Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Policy. This includes allocating appropriate time, attention and organizational support to enable the meaningful integration of diversity, equity and inclusion into decision-making, programming and coordination processes across contexts. Overall responsibility for policy stewardship rests with CESVI HQ leadership, ensuring alignment with the Global Strategy, coherence across missions and responsiveness to evolving humanitarian and operational realities.

This Policy will be reviewed periodically as part of CESVI's strategic planning, learning and reflection processes. Reviews will draw on operational experience, feedback from country missions and developments in humanitarian standards to ensure that the Policy remains relevant, effective and fit for purpose.

POLICY COMMITMENTS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

CESVI's commitments to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) are grounded in its 2023–2027 Global Strategy, which positions the organization as a frontrunner in promoting autonomy, empowerment and the wellbeing of people in need. These commitments align with international humanitarian standards including the IASC Gender Policy, the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) and the Sphere Protection Principles. DEI is understood as an organizational responsibility that shapes both internal culture and external program quality, requiring coherence between the values CESVI promotes and the systems through which it operates.

CESVI affirms the inherent dignity, rights and worth of all individuals. Non-discrimination is a foundational principle that applies to all interactions with staff, partners and affected populations. **The organization rejects discrimination of any form,** including gender, age, disability, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, displacement status or other identity factors, and **commits to ensuring that all people are treated with respect, fairness and dignity.** These principles underpin both organizational behaviour and programmatic engagement (CESVI, 2023a; CESVI, 2023b; CESVI, 2022).

Gender equity is recognized as central to CESVI's mandate. In line with global standards, CESVI understands gender as a cross-cutting determinant of vulnerability, access to resources and exposure to harm. The organization therefore applies an intersectional lens, acknowledging that gender intersects with factors such as age, disability, displacement, and socioeconomic conditions. Feedback from staff across missions **highlighted the need to strengthen gender-transformative programming and to explore whether a complementary gender-and-age framework or policy may be appropriate as a future step.** This DEI Policy establishes the foundational direction, acknowledging gender under DEI.

Inclusion is defined as creating spaces where individuals, whether staff, partners or persons participating in CESVI programs, feel that they belong, are represented and can participate meaningfully, free from any form of discrimination. CESVI acknowledges that inclusion extends beyond programme participants to the internal working environment, partnerships and decision-making processes. This includes addressing environmental, communication, cultural and attitudinal barriers that hinder full participation, especially for people with disabilities. Inclusion must be intentional, contextually relevant and grounded in the lived realities of staff and communities.

Equity is understood as the commitment to fairness, recognizing that equal treatment does not always result in equal outcomes. CESVI therefore commits to identifying and addressing structural and contextual barriers that limit participation or access to opportunities. While deeper HR reforms fall outside the scope of this policy, CESVI recognizes that internal culture, leadership behaviour and organizational norms must reflect the same equity principles expected in external programming.

Protection, Safeguarding, Do No Harm and survivor-centered approaches are foundational to CESVI's work and its DEI commitments. The organization is committed to ensuring that all interventions avoid causing harm and that individuals who experience violence, discrimination or exploitation receive support grounded in safety, dignity, confidentiality and informed choice. These approaches reflect both humanitarian standards and CESVI's ethical commitments.

Participation and localization are central to DEI. CESVI recognizes that inclusive practice requires meaningful engagement with local actors, community members and people with lived experience of marginalization. This involves strengthening equitable partnerships, sharing power and decision making, and ensuring that programming and organizational decisions reflect local priorities and knowledge.

Supportive Conditions for DEI Implementation

CESVI recognizes that the realization of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion depends not only on principles, but on enabling organizational conditions that allow these commitments to be translated into practice. These include leadership engagement, organizational culture, dedicated resources, and shared learning.

Aligned with the Global Strategy's emphasis on adaptive learning and innovation, CESVI views DEI as an **evolving organizational process** that requires reflection, feedback and continuous improvement. Staff across missions emphasized that inclusion becomes meaningful when **leaders model inclusive behaviour, foster open dialogue and reinforce accountability.** This Policy therefore positions DEI as a shared leadership responsibility across all levels of the organization.

While respecting legal, operational and functional boundaries, CESVI is committed to strengthening **coherence between its internal culture and the values it promotes externally.** This includes leadership conduct, communication, decision-making practices and team dynamics that reflect fairness, transparency, dignity and inclusion. DEI is not treated as an

additional layer of work, but as a way of working that strengthens organizational integrity and programmatic impact across missions.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Effective implementation of this DEI Policy requires shared responsibility across all levels of the organization. While CESVI's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and gender-responsiveness is collective, different actors hold distinct roles that ensure coherence, leadership and accountability. These responsibilities reflect CESVI's values of partnership, shared responsibility, empowerment and internal–external alignment, as outlined in the **Global Strategy 2023–2027**.

CESVI Leadership (HQ, Regional Managers/Heads of Mission)

Senior leadership plays a central role in modelling, championing and sustaining CESVI's commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion. Leaders are responsible for ensuring that the principles outlined in this Policy are reflected in strategic decision-making, organizational culture and programmatic direction across all missions. Leadership engagement is essential to ensuring that DEI is understood not as an optional or technical consideration, but as a core component of how CESVI operates and delivers impact.

Leaders at all levels are expected to demonstrate visible and consistent commitment to DEI principles through their actions, communication and decision-making. This includes promoting continuous learning and reflection, supporting access to mentorship and dialogue, and encouraging teams to engage critically with equity and inclusion in their daily work.

Leadership also plays a key role in supporting contextually appropriate implementation of this Policy. This involves ensuring that mission-level adaptations are conflict-sensitive, rights-based and responsive to local realities, while remaining aligned with CESVI's organizational values and strategic commitments.

Through sustained leadership engagement, CESVI seeks to embed inclusion and equity as shared organizational responsibilities that strengthen credibility, accountability and programmatic quality across all contexts.

Heads of Programme, Coordinators, Project Managers

These roles translate organizational commitments into daily operations. They are responsible for integrating inclusive practice into team management, decision-making, recruitment support processes and program oversight. This includes modelling respectful communication, fostering equitable participation within teams and creating an environment where staff feel safe to raise concerns or contribute ideas.

Managers play a critical role in reinforcing a culture of belonging and ensuring that program design, implementation and monitoring meaningfully reflect DEI principles. They help teams apply intersectional analysis, ensure that risks and barriers are considered throughout the project cycle and support the adaptation of tools and guidance to local contexts without diluting the underlying principles of fairness, non-discrimination and participation.

Technical Advisors and Specialists

Technical units and Specialists such as Protection, Safeguarding, MEAL, Education, Livelihoods, MHPSS, GBV and Emergency, are instrumental in embedding DEI considerations into

programming. Advisors ensure that sector-specific tools, assessments and methodologies reflect gender transformative, inclusive, trauma-informed and conflict-sensitive practices.

Their role includes supporting country teams to contextualize frameworks, strengthening protective behaviours, develop supportive and applicable tools, promoting meaningful participation of diverse groups and ensuring that program standards align with global best practices (IASC, Sphere, CHS) and CESVI's strategic commitments. Technical staff also contribute to organizational learning by documenting good practices, identifying gaps and supporting reflective processes.

Field and Project Teams

Project teams operationalize DEI principles through direct engagement with communities and partners. Their proximity to affected populations gives them essential insight into inclusion gaps, cultural considerations and barriers faced by different groups. Field teams are responsible for applying inclusive approaches in assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and community engagement.

This includes ensuring meaningful participation of women, men, boys, girls, persons with disabilities, older persons and individuals from marginalized groups, while remaining sensitive to power dynamics and local norms. Field teams also contribute to continual improvement by feeding learning back to mission leadership and HQ.

MEAL Teams

MEAL staff support the organization's commitment to accountability and evidence-based decision-making. They integrate DEI-sensitive indicators and participatory monitoring approaches, ensuring that data captures diverse experiences and that findings inform programmatic and organizational adjustments.

They also support the establishment of safe, inclusive feedback mechanisms and strengthen CESVI's commitment to listening, responsiveness and continuous improvement.

Administration and Support Functions (Finance, Logistics, Operations)

Support teams help ensure that operational systems reflect the principles of fairness, accessibility and transparency. Although their work may be less program-facing, their practices directly shape organizational culture and contribute to staff experience, wellbeing and equitable processes.

These teams ensure that procurement, logistics and administrative systems do not create barriers for staff or partners, and that operational decisions are consistent with CESVI's commitments to inclusion, safety and respect.

Human Resources (within appropriate scope)

While formal HR Policy reform falls outside the scope of this DEI Policy, HR departments hold responsibility for ensuring that recruitment, onboarding, staff care and workplace wellbeing processes reflect CESVI's principles of dignity, equity and non-discrimination. HR also contributes to awareness-raising, internal communication and the promotion of respectful workplace culture, aligning with the Global Strategy's commitments to partnership culture, staff wellbeing and internal coherence.

Partners and Local Actors

Consistent with CESVI's commitment to localization and equitable partnerships, partners working with CESVI are expected to uphold the principles outlined in this Policy. This includes fostering respectful engagement, meaningful participation, and inclusive decision-making with communities, ensuring that interventions do not create or reinforce discrimination, exclusion or harm.

All CESVI Staff

Diversity, equity and inclusion are not program-specific tasks; they are organizational commitments that must inform decisions across all departments. **All staff share responsibility for ensuring that their decisions, actions and day-to-day practices reflect CESVI's commitments to dignity, fairness, protection and inclusion.** Regardless of function, whether programmatic, MEAL, finance, logistics, legal&compliance, communication and fund raising, advocacy, administration, security or proposal development, each role influences the organization's ability to deliver equitable, safe, inclusive, accountable and context-appropriate support to affected populations. Just as safeguarding and **Do No Harm** principles apply across all functions, a foundational understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion is essential for ensuring that decisions made at every level contribute to the specific needs, strengths and considerations of the communities involved. To uphold this, staff are expected to engage in basic DEI learning processes, appropriate to role and context, supporting a shared organizational culture rooted in partnership, reflection and responsibility, as reflected in CESVI's *Global Strategy 2023-2027*.

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

The implementation of CESVI's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Policy requires a phased, collaborative and adaptive approach that reflects the organization's diverse operational contexts. CESVI builds on existing mission-level practices and experiences in advancing inclusion, gender equity and participation, which will continue to inform learning, adaptation and the development of operational guidance.

This section outlines **how CESVI will bring the DEI Policy into practice**, across programs, decision-making processes and organizational culture, while maintaining flexibility for contextual adaptation at mission level.

Foundational, Organization-Wide Alignment

DEI implementation begins with establishing core organizational foundations that apply across all missions and functions. These include:

- Shared definitions and conceptual clarity;
- Minimum standards that reflect CESVI's protection-oriented, rights-based and resilience-focused approach;
- Leadership endorsement and visible modelling of inclusive behaviours;
- Alignment between programmatic decision-making and internal organizational values.

Foundational elements will form the basis for contextual adaptation within missions, ensuring both coherence and flexibility.

Communication and awareness-raising are essential to ensuring that Diversity, Equity and Inclusion commitments are understood and translated into practice. CESVI will use a range of **context-appropriate communication and sensitization approaches** to inform staff, partners and, where relevant, targeted community groups about its DEI commitments.

These may include visual materials (such as posters and brochures), internal communications, facilitated discussions, community-based information sessions or digital platforms, adapted to local languages, literacy levels, cultural norms and access considerations. Communication efforts are intended to promote understanding, dialogue and shared ownership of DEI principles. Communication and awareness raising on DEI may be integrated into the broader communication strategy to inform the affected communities about the organizational commitments on accountability, safeguarding and transparency, and the related procedures set to receive any feedback and complaints, including the Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CFM).

Leadership Engagement and Accountability Culture

Leadership at HQ and mission levels plays a critical role in embedding DEI. **Implementation requires leaders to:**

- Model inclusive behaviours in communication, decision-making and team management;
- Actively support the contextualization of the policy in their missions;
- Create safe environments for discussion, feedback and reflection;

- Reinforce inclusion through routine supervision and team practices.

DEI leadership expectations will be aligned with CESVI's values and existing leadership frameworks, without imposing new HR obligations outside the scope of this Policy. The goal is to foster a culture of learning, innovation and accountability, rather than to establish punitive mechanisms.

Mission-Level Contextualization

While CESVI's principles remain constant, inclusion challenges, gender dynamics and barriers differ across contexts. Missions are expected to apply both **context sensitivity** and **conflict sensitivity**, recognizing that while closely related, they address different dimensions of risk, power and impact. Each mission will therefore contextualize the DEI Policy and related operational guidelines through a structured but flexible process. This may include:

- identifying context-specific risks to inclusion, gender equity and accessibility;
- integrating context-sensitive and conflict-sensitive considerations, as well as trauma-informed approaches where required;
- adapting tools and processes to local laws, cultural norms and operational realities;
- exploring ways to involve communities and partners in shaping inclusive practice.

This approach recognizes that DEI cannot be implemented through uniform templates alone. It must be integrated into how missions define needs, plan programs and engage with communities.

Inclusive Program Design and Implementation

DEI principles must be reflected from the earliest stages of program design to monitoring and evaluation. **CESVI will work to ensure that all programs:**

- Identify and address barriers to participation for different groups, with attention to gender, age, disability, displacement status and other intersecting identities;
- Incorporate gender-transformative approaches where possible, moving beyond gender sensitive responses to approaches that address harmful norms and broaden inclusivity;
- Ensure that tools used in assessments, program design and MEAL processes embed DEI considerations in clear, accessible and practical ways;
- Remain conflict-sensitive, culturally respectful and aligned with CESVI's protection and safeguarding commitments.

Programs will be supported through practical tools and guidance, designed to simplify rather than complicate staff workflows.

DEI integration in MEAL

The purpose of the MEAL component is not to enforce compliance through technical indicators, but to **reinforce reflection, adaptation, accountability and shared learning**, strengthening CESVI's culture of inclusion and organizational coherence, without creating parallel reporting or tasks. MEAL system shall:

- Reinforce safe, dignified and inclusive engagement with communities and partners, complementing CESVI's commitments to accountability to the affected people, safeguarding and protection mainstreaming.
- Gather insights from diverse staff, partners and community members, ensuring that learning reflects a range of experiences and identities.
- Identify successes, challenges and emerging needs so missions can reflect on DEI considerations within their own contexts and experiences, with feedback from communities served.

Capacity Strengthening and Shared Responsibility

Consistent with CESVI's values of partnership and shared responsibility, DEI is not the responsibility of technical staff alone. All staff, regardless of role, have influence over whether programs, processes and interactions uphold inclusion, fairness and dignity.

CESVI will introduce foundational DEI learning for all staff, including those working in operations, logistics, finance, administration and project support. This is not to create additional layers of work, but to ensure that routine decisions across all departments reflect inclusive principles in a streamlined and practical way.

Capacity-strengthening efforts will include:

- induction modules and refresher learning for all staff;
- targeted coaching or accompaniment for roles directly involved in program design or community engagement;
- opportunities for cross-mission learning, sharing and reflection;
- integration of DEI concepts into existing training platforms where feasible.

Capacity strengthening will prioritize simplicity, accessibility, contextual relevance and language appropriateness.

Tools, Processes and Integration into Existing Systems

Implementation will be supported by a package of practical tools within the Operational Guidelines. These **tools** are designed to simplify and guide integration rather than add complexity. **They will include:**

- Integration of Protection Mainstreaming in Assessment tools
- Community Assessment (baseline and endline)
- Project Design Assessment;
- Conflict-sensitive considerations, gender-transformative screening tool;
- Trauma-informed care guide and prompts;
- Accessible participation and inclusion tool;

These tools will help embed and streamline DEI considerations into existing CESVI systems (program cycle management, MEAL, safeguarding, protection mainstreaming), in a way that is consistent, aligned with CESVI approaches and avoids duplication.

Learning, Feedback and Adaptive Management

DEI implementation is understood as an ongoing learning process. Missions and HQ will collaborate to **strengthen** an organizational culture that values reflection, adaptation and continuous improvement. **Mechanisms may include:**

- Leadership reinforcement of inclusive, reflective practices
- DEI Focal Points or organizational DEI Committee;
- Cross-mission learning exchanges to create CESVI Community across HQ and field missions;
- Periodic DEI reflection sessions or "learning moments" to reflect on DEI progress, barriers and adaptations;
- Sharing examples of mission-level tools, practices or innovations
- Anonymous staff feedback or surveys;
- Review and updating of tools based on experience.

This reflects the Global Strategy's emphasis on resilience, autonomy, empowerment and adaptability within an increasingly complex humanitarian landscape.

REVIEW OF THE DEI POLICY AND OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

The DEI Policy and accompanying Operational Guidelines will undergo periodic review and refinement as part of CESVI's organizational learning and strategic processes. **The review process will draw on:**

- Mission-level reflection notes and learning summaries related to programmatic implementation
- Programmatic and operational feedback from HQ and country missions
- Input from technical units (Protection, Safeguarding, HR, MEAL)
- Cross-mission exchange and learning mechanisms supporting DEI implementation
- Updates based on global standards related to DEI, protection, gender and inclusion

These reviews ensure that the Policy and Operational Guidelines remain practical, relevant and aligned with CESVI's values, and grounded in fairness, transparency, dignity and inclusion across diverse operational contexts.

LINK TO OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

The **DEI Policy** establishes the organization's overarching commitments, values and expectations. To support consistent and practical implementation across missions, **CESVI** will issue a **complementary set of initial DEI Operational Guidelines**. These Guidelines translate policy principles into actionable and context-adaptable steps, ensuring that inclusion and equity are reflected throughout programme cycles, decision-making processes and day-to-day organizational practices. **The Operational Guidelines will provide:**

- Foundational tools and checklists for integrating DEI into assessments, project proposals, program design, partnership models, community engagement, safeguarding;
- Contextualization considerations enabling missions to adapt tools to cultural, legal and operational realities;
- Practical examples and entry points drawn from field experiences and good practices identified through the KII process;
- Guidance for leadership and managers on modelling inclusion, reinforcing accountability and embedding DEI into team culture;
- Guidance for all staff across functions (programmes, MEAL, logistics, finance, admin, HR, security), ensuring DEI considerations are incorporated holistically, not only by technical specialists but as part of collective responsibility;
- Recommendations for learning, capacity-building and inter-mission collaboration, supporting CESVI's commitment to reflection, innovation and shared responsibility as outlined in the *Global Strategy 2023–2027*.

The **Guidelines serve as a practical companion document** to this Policy and will be updated periodically as CESVI continues to learn from implementation, sector guidance and evolving geopolitical realities. Together, **the Policy and Operational Guidelines form the foundation for CESVI's** organization-wide commitment to dignity, fairness, diversity, belonging and inclusive humanitarian practice.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

CESVI recognizes that the development of this DEI Policy represents an important foundation, but not the full realization of its organizational commitments. The process has been shaped by a combination of desk review and qualitative consultations which also present several limitations. These limitations do not undermine the validity of the findings but highlight areas for continued attention as the Policy and Operational Guidelines evolve.

Limitations

Scope of Data

The synthesis primarily reflects the perspectives of CESVI staff from selected missions and HQ departments. External partner, community and beneficiary perspectives, essential for a comprehensive inclusivity approach, were not included in this phase. These should be considered in future reviews and learning cycles.

Variability of Internal Documentation

Some internal documents, HR frameworks or mission-specific policies were unavailable or inconsistent across missions. This limited the ability to conduct a full comparative analysis of internal systems.

Qualitative Nature of the Data

As with all qualitative methodologies, findings reflect participants' experiences and perspectives at a specific point in time. Efforts were made to triangulate across roles and contexts; however, the sample represents only a portion of CESVI's global workforce.

Policy Boundaries

Certain internal equity issues, including contract structures, labour provisions and maternity/parental entitlements, are shaped by national legal frameworks or beyond the scope of this policy. While highlighted as concerns by participants, these aspects will require attention from HR units and adherence to national legislation.

Future Directions

Strengthening Organizational Coherence

As the policy and operational guidelines are rolled out, CESVI will continue to align DEI commitments with existing organizational frameworks, including Safeguarding, Protection Mainstreaming, MEAL, and the **Global Strategy 2023–2027**, ensuring coherence and reinforcing shared responsibility and partnership culture.

Deepening Contextualization

Field missions are encouraged to adapt the DEI Operational Guidelines to their specific legal, cultural and programmatic environments. Future work should focus on supporting missions in contextualizing tools and embedding inclusive practices within their unique realities.

Expanding Participation

CESVI aims to incorporate broader stakeholder engagement in future policy reviews, including partners, local organizations and affected people. This aligns with the Global Strategy's emphasis on localization, partnership and accountable programming.

Ensuring Iterative Learning

DEI will continue to evolve as a learning process. Periodic reflection sessions, inter-mission exchanges and updates to tools or guidelines, as identified through MEAL and learning mechanisms, will guide refinement over time.

Link to Operational Guidelines

The DEI Operational Guidelines will provide an initial set of practical, context-adaptable tools to support implementation of this Policy. They will translate the Policy's principles into concrete steps, checklists and considerations that can be applied and then adapted across functions, program cycles and diverse operational contexts.

CONCLUSION

This **DEI Policy** marks an important organizational milestone for CESVI. It reflects the collective insights of staff across missions and headquarters, aligns with the ambitions of the *Global Strategy 2023–2027*, and responds to a rapidly changing humanitarian and development landscape. The policy acknowledges the strong foundations already present across missions, particularly in protection, safeguarding and gender-responsive programming, while also identifying clear gaps, inconsistencies and opportunities for strengthening organizational coherence.

Equity, diversity and inclusion are not static objectives but ongoing organizational processes. They rely on leadership engagement, shared responsibility, and a culture that values learning, reflection and mutual accountability. As highlighted throughout the consultation process, meaningful inclusion requires not only tools and frameworks but also the behaviours, attitudes and practices that support these considerations to become embedded as CESVI culture and way of working.

The DEI Policy establishes the shared vision and principles that guide CESVI's organizational identity. The Operational Guidelines will offer initial or foundational practical steps needed to embed these commitments across teams, missions and functions. Together, they position CESVI to advance its strategic goal of supporting autonomy, empowerment and wellbeing for all individuals, staff, partners and communities alike, despite the challenges of a rapidly evolving global context.

The policy represents a beginning, not an endpoint. Through continuous learning, dialogue, adaptation and leadership commitment, CESVI will continue to strengthen its culture of fairness, dignity, belonging and inclusion.

"This should not be another layer of work, it should become the way we work."

Key Informant Participant

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ANNEX 1 – DEI Definitions

This section outlines the key concepts that build the foundation of CESVI's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Policy. Definitions draw on internationally recognized humanitarian and development standards, including IASC, Sphere, UN Women and grounded in CESVI's *Global Strategy 2023-2027*.

Diversity

Diversity refers to the unique identities, characteristics and experiences that individuals bring, including gender, age, disability, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, nationality, migration status and more (UN Women, 2017).

Equity

Equity means recognizing that people have different needs, barriers and structural constraints, and ensuring fair treatment, opportunities and resources to achieve meaningful equality (OHCHR, 2014; UNDP, 2018).

Inclusion

Inclusion refers to creating environments where all people feel respected, safe, valued and able to participate fully in organizational and programmatic processes (CHS Alliance, 2014). It requires dismantling barriers to participation and building a sense of belonging.

Accessibility

Accessibility refers to ensuring that physical, communication, environmental and attitudinal barriers are addressed so that persons with disabilities and others facing exclusion or discrimination can safely and meaningfully participate (Sphere Association, 2018; Humanity & Inclusion, 2019).

Gender

Gender refers to socially constructed roles, behaviours and expectations attributed to women, men, girls, boys and people of diverse gender identities (IASC, 2017). Gender norms vary across cultures and influence access to resources, protection, power and opportunities.

Sex

Sex refers to biological characteristics such as chromosomes, hormones and reproductive anatomy, typically assigned at birth (WHO, 2020). Sex differences can interact with gender norms to shape health risks, protection concerns and access to services.

Gender Identity

Gender identity refers to a person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth (UN OHCHR, 2012; IASC, 2017).

Gender Expression

Gender expression refers to the external presentation of gender, including appearance, dress, behaviour or speech. Gender expression is shaped by cultural and social norms and may not align with societal expectations of masculinity or femininity (UN Women, 2017).

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation refers to a person's emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to others, such as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual or other orientations (UN OHCHR, 2012). Sexual orientation can intersect with gender and other identity factors to influence vulnerability, stigma and access to services.

Gender-Transformative Approach

Gender-transformative approaches aim to challenge and shift harmful gender norms, unequal power relations and systems that reinforce discrimination. They go beyond gender sensitivity to address root causes of inequality and promote positive changes for all genders, including boys and men (UNICEF, 2020; IASC, 2017). This approach moves beyond reactive responses, shifting to preventative approaches.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality recognizes that individuals experience inequality differently based on the combination of gender, age, race, ability, socioeconomic status and other overlapping identities (UN Women, 2022).

Survivor-Centered Approach

A survivor-centered approach ensures that the rights, needs, wishes, safety and dignity of the survivor guide every decision and action. It is based on the principles of respect, confidentiality, non-discrimination and informed consent (IASC GBV Guidelines, 2015; UNFPA, 2012). This approach emphasizes supporting the survivor's autonomy and choice while avoiding practices that blame, pressure or expose them to additional harm.

Bias (Conscious & Unconscious)

Bias refers to attitudes, stereotypes or preferences, whether intentional or unintentional, that affect understanding, decision-making or behaviour toward individuals or groups (UNDP, 2018).

Context Sensitivity

Context sensitivity refers to understanding and responding appropriately to the social, cultural, political, legal and power dynamics within which CESVI operates. It involves analyzing local norms, identities, inequalities, governance structures and lived realities to ensure that organizational practices and programmes are relevant, respectful and appropriate to the context (OECD-DAC, 2013; IASC, 2022). Context sensitivity supports adaptation to local realities while upholding rights-based and inclusion principles.

Conflict Sensitivity / Do No Harm

Conflict sensitivity refers to the ability to understand how interventions interact with existing or emerging conflict dynamics and to act in ways that avoid exacerbating tensions, divisions or harm. Grounded in the Do No Harm principle, it requires identifying potential dividers and connectors and adapting actions to minimize negative impacts while strengthening social cohesion and equity where possible (Anderson, 1999; CDA Collaborative Learning, 2013; IASC, 2022).

Participation

Participation refers to the meaningful engagement of affected people, including women, youth, persons with disabilities and marginalized groups, in decisions that affect them, aligning with CHS and humanitarian accountability standards (CHS Alliance, 2014).

Localization

Localization refers to shifting power, leadership and resources toward national and community actors, ensuring humanitarian responses are led by those impacted (IASC, 2023; OCHA, 2024).

Trauma-Informed Approach

A trauma-informed approach recognizes the widespread impact of trauma and integrates principles of safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment into all organizational and programmatic actions (IASC, 2007; WHO, 2021).

Psychological Safety

Psychological safety refers to the perception that individuals can express ideas, ask questions or raise concerns without fear of retaliation, exclusion or harm (Edmondson, 2019). Within CESVI, psychological safety is essential for inclusive teams, ethical leadership and organizational learning. CESVI also seeks to foster conditions that support psychological safety in **participatory programmatic spaces**, such as consultations, dialogue processes or feedback mechanisms, while remaining attentive to protection risks, power imbalances and contextual sensitivities.

Innovative Learning (CESVI Global Strategy)

Innovative learning refers to CESVI's commitment to reflective practice, experimentation, creativity and continuous improvement in alignment with its Strategic Intent to foster autonomy, empowerment and adaptive organizational culture (CESVI, 2023).

ANNEX 2: ORGANIZATION COMMITMENTS

Commitment to Safe, Dignified and Equitable Programming

CESVI integrates inclusion, gender equity, accessibility and protection principles throughout the programme cycle. All programmes must proactively identify barriers to participation and ensure equitable access to services and opportunities, in line with global humanitarian frameworks (IASC, 2022; Sphere Association, 2023). Programmes are expected to reflect contextual realities, apply conflict-sensitive and trauma-informed, survivor-centered approaches and ensure participation of women, men, girls, boys and gender-diverse individuals in ways that uphold safety and dignity.

Commitment to Leadership Engagement and Accountability

CESVI recognizes that leadership is central to advancing DEI. Senior leadership, managers, program and mission head's and coordinators across missions are responsible for modelling inclusive practice, supporting staff to apply DEI principles and integrating inclusive decision-making into daily operations. Leadership accountability includes transparent communication, ethical behaviour and the integration of DEI values into supervision and resource allocation, consistent with the Global Strategy's call to strengthen internal coherence and partnership culture (CESVI, 2023a).

Commitment to Strengthening Staff Capacities

CESVI commits to supporting staff and partners with the tools, training and capacity development necessary to integrate DEI into their roles. Training will be context-specific, culturally informed and aligned with programmatic realities. Tools will be designed to simplify, not complicate, processes, providing foundational guidance while allowing missions to adapt materials to their local context and specific needs.

Commitment to Participation and Localization

Consistent with global commitments to localization and equitable partnerships, **CESVI** recognizes the expertise and leadership of local actors and communities (ICVA, 2024; Development Initiatives, 2024).

CESVI commits to strengthening local ownership, increasing participation of national staff in decision-making processes, and fostering mutual learning across missions. Programmes and policies must reflect local needs, cultural norms and community priorities while upholding nondiscrimination and protection standards in order to promote sustainable change.

Commitment to Coherence Between Internal and External Practice

CESVI acknowledges that effective inclusion externally depends on inclusive practice internally. While HR processes remain governed by national laws and internal systems, CESVI commits to continued reflection and improvement to ensure organizational practices align with the values it promotes programmatically. This coherence includes fostering fairness, transparency, respectful communication and a culture of belonging, without overstepping the operational limits of this policy or infringing on HR regulatory frameworks (CESVI, 2023b; CESVI, 2022).

Commitment to Continuous Learning, Adaptation and Innovation

In line with the Global Strategy's emphasis on innovation and learning, CESVI views DEI as a living, evolving process. **The organization commits to:**

- integrating lessons learned from missions, partners and affected populations;

CESVI Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy

- establishing feedback loops to inform policy implementation;
- documenting emerging practices and adjusting approaches over time; and
- promoting a culture of curiosity, reflective practice and adaptive leadership.

Commitment to Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)

CESVI commits to equitable, accessible and safe mechanisms for feedback, participation and accountability. These commitments align with the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) and ensure that DEI principles meaningfully shape programme design, service delivery and evaluation. Participation of women, girls, men, boys and marginalized groups will guide CESVI's decisions, reinforcing rights-based practice and strengthening community trust.



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