



GENDER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICY

**FOR THE
INITIATIVE FOR LEGAL AID
(ILA)**



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

1.1 Introduction

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes that gender equality, diversity and social inclusion are fundamental principles of human rights, good governance, sustainable development and access to justice. As a legal aid and human rights organization operating in the Republic of South Sudan, ILA is committed to promoting an organizational culture and programme environment where every individual is treated with dignity, fairness, respect and equality, irrespective of sex, gender, age, disability, ethnicity, race, religion, language, social origin, marital status, political opinion, economic status or any other status protected under applicable law.

Gender inequality, discrimination, exclusion and unequal access to opportunities remain significant barriers to justice, development and the realization of human rights. These barriers disproportionately affect women, girls, children, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, refugees, returnees, minority groups, older persons, youth and other vulnerable and marginalized populations. ILA acknowledges that these challenges undermine social cohesion, economic empowerment, institutional accountability and equal participation in governance and decision-making processes.

ILA further recognizes that diversity strengthens organizational effectiveness by bringing together individuals with different experiences, knowledge, cultures and perspectives. A diverse and inclusive organization is better positioned to understand community needs, deliver responsive legal aid services, foster innovation and build stronger relationships with stakeholders and the communities it serves.

This Policy establishes the institutional framework through which ILA shall integrate gender equality, diversity and social inclusion (GEDSI) into its governance structures, organizational management, human resource practices, programme implementation, partnerships, service delivery and monitoring systems. It provides clear principles, standards, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms to ensure that equality and inclusion are mainstreamed across all organizational functions and decision-making processes.

ILA is committed to ensuring that all persons have equitable access to employment opportunities, organizational resources, legal aid services, training, leadership opportunities and participation in programme activities. The Organization shall take proactive measures to eliminate discrimination, remove barriers to participation, promote reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities and foster an environment where diversity is respected and valued.

The Organization also recognizes that achieving gender equality and social inclusion requires deliberate institutional action rather than passive commitment. Consequently, ILA shall mainstream GEDSI considerations throughout policy development, strategic planning, budgeting, programme design, project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, procurement, communications, partnership management and organizational learning.

This Policy adopts a rights-based, survivor-centred, participatory and intersectional approach, recognizing that individuals may experience multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination and exclusion. Accordingly, interventions shall be designed to address structural inequalities while promoting equal opportunities, meaningful participation and inclusive decision-making at every level of the Organization.

The successful implementation of this Policy requires the commitment of the Board of Directors, Executive Director, management, employees, volunteers, interns, consultants, partners, contractors and all persons acting on behalf of ILA. Every individual associated with the Organization shares responsibility for upholding the principles contained in this Policy and for contributing to a respectful, inclusive and equitable organizational culture.

Ultimately, this Policy demonstrates ILA's commitment to advancing access to justice, promoting human rights, strengthening institutional governance and contributing to the realization of an inclusive, equitable and peaceful society in South Sudan.

1.2 Background

The Republic of South Sudan continues to face complex social, economic and governance challenges that have disproportionately affected vulnerable and marginalized populations. Years of conflict, displacement, poverty, inequality, limited institutional capacity and unequal access to justice have contributed to persistent barriers preventing many individuals from fully participating in social, economic and political life.

Women and girls continue to encounter unequal access to education, employment, property ownership, leadership positions and justice services. Persons with disabilities frequently experience physical, institutional and communication barriers that limit their participation in public life. Young people often face unemployment and limited opportunities for civic engagement, while older persons, internally displaced persons, refugees, returnees and minority communities remain vulnerable to exclusion and discrimination.

As an organization dedicated to advancing access to justice, human rights and the rule of law, ILA recognizes that legal assistance alone cannot effectively address systemic inequality unless organizational systems themselves reflect the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion. Institutional policies, governance arrangements, employment practices, programme delivery mechanisms and stakeholder engagement processes must all contribute to reducing discrimination and promoting equitable participation.

International human rights instruments, regional legal frameworks and national legislation increasingly require organizations to mainstream gender equality, disability inclusion, diversity and social inclusion across their operations. Development partners similarly expect implementing organizations to demonstrate measurable commitments to equality, inclusion, safeguarding, accountability and non-discrimination throughout the programme cycle.

ILA acknowledges that inclusive institutions produce better governance outcomes, improve public confidence, strengthen accountability and enhance organizational effectiveness. Diverse

leadership contributes to balanced decision-making, inclusive programmes respond more effectively to community needs, and equitable employment practices foster staff motivation, innovation and organizational resilience.

The Organization also recognizes that exclusion may arise from multiple intersecting factors. An individual may experience discrimination based on gender, disability, ethnicity, age, displacement status, language, economic condition or other characteristics simultaneously. Addressing these intersecting inequalities requires comprehensive institutional approaches rather than isolated interventions.

Accordingly, ILA has developed this Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion Policy to establish a unified institutional framework for promoting equality, preventing discrimination, enhancing accessibility and ensuring meaningful participation across all organizational functions. The Policy consolidates the Organization's commitment into a coherent governance framework that guides decision-making, programme implementation, human resource management, partnership development and institutional accountability.

This Policy complements and shall be implemented alongside other ILA governance instruments, including the Human Resource and Administration Policy, Code of Conduct and Ethics Policy, Legal Aid Service Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Risk Management Policy, Procurement and Assets Management Policy, Partnership and Stakeholder Engagement Policy, Data Protection and Privacy Policy, MEAL Policy, ICT Policy, Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Whistleblowing Policy, Finance and Accounting Policy and the Board Governance Charter.

By institutionalizing gender equality, diversity and social inclusion, ILA seeks not only to comply with legal and donor requirements but also to model the values of justice, equality, accountability, participation and respect that underpin its mission and vision.

1.3 Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this Policy is to establish a comprehensive institutional framework for integrating gender equality, diversity and social inclusion into all aspects of the governance, management, programmes and operations of the Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA).

Specifically, this Policy seeks to:

- a. establish clear organizational commitments to gender equality, diversity and social inclusion;
- b. eliminate discrimination, exclusion and unequal treatment in all organizational activities;
- c. promote equal opportunities in recruitment, employment, promotion, leadership development and professional advancement;

- d. mainstream gender equality and social inclusion throughout programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- e. strengthen inclusive governance, decision-making and institutional accountability;
- f. promote meaningful participation of women, men, youth, persons with disabilities, minority communities and other marginalized groups in organizational processes;
- g. ensure equitable access to legal aid services and organizational programmes without discrimination;
- h. establish standards for accessibility and reasonable accommodation;
- i. promote respectful workplace relationships founded on dignity, equality and mutual respect;
- j. strengthen compliance with applicable national legislation, international human rights standards and donor requirements;
- k. establish institutional responsibilities for implementing, monitoring and reporting on GEDSI commitments;
- l. foster an organizational culture that values diversity as a source of innovation, effectiveness and sustainable development; and
- m. contribute to the realization of ILA's mission of promoting access to justice, human rights and the rule of law through inclusive and equitable institutional practices.

The Policy serves as the primary institutional framework governing all gender equality, diversity and social inclusion initiatives undertaken by ILA and shall guide organizational decision.

1.4 Policy Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of this Policy is to establish a comprehensive institutional framework that promotes gender equality, embraces diversity, advances social inclusion, eliminates discrimination, and ensures equitable participation in all aspects of the governance, management, programmes and operations of the Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA).

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this Policy are to:

- a. institutionalize gender equality, diversity and social inclusion as core organizational values and strategic priorities;

- b. ensure that all organizational policies, procedures, programmes and activities are developed and implemented in accordance with the principles of equality, fairness, inclusion and respect for human dignity;
- c. eliminate all forms of discrimination, exclusion, harassment, victimization and unequal treatment within the Organization;
- d. provide equal opportunities in recruitment, employment, promotion, remuneration, training, leadership development and career advancement;
- e. strengthen the participation and representation of women, youth, persons with disabilities and marginalized populations in organizational governance, leadership and decision-making processes;
- f. integrate gender equality, diversity and social inclusion considerations throughout programme planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and organizational learning;
- g. ensure equitable access to legal aid services, information, facilities, technology and organizational resources without discrimination;
- h. establish institutional standards for accessibility and reasonable accommodation to enable persons with disabilities to participate fully in organizational activities;
- i. promote an inclusive workplace culture founded on respect, dignity, professionalism, accountability and mutual understanding;
- j. strengthen organizational systems for preventing and responding to discrimination, harassment, bullying, exploitation and abuse;
- k. enhance institutional capacity to identify and address barriers that limit participation by disadvantaged and marginalized groups;
- l. promote evidence-based decision-making through the collection and use of gender-, age- and disability-disaggregated data;
- m. strengthen partnerships that advance equality, diversity and inclusion within the justice sector and broader society;
- n. ensure compliance with applicable national laws, international human rights standards and donor requirements relating to gender equality and social inclusion;
- o. establish clear governance structures, institutional responsibilities and accountability mechanisms for implementing this Policy;

p. promote continuous learning, innovation and organizational improvement in the implementation of GEDSI initiatives; and

q. contribute to a more equitable, inclusive and accessible justice system in South Sudan through inclusive institutional practices and service delivery.

1.5 Scope and Application

1.5.1 Scope

This Policy applies to all governance, administrative, operational and programme functions of the Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA). It establishes minimum institutional standards for integrating gender equality, diversity and social inclusion into every aspect of the Organization's work.

The Policy applies throughout the entire organizational cycle, including strategic planning, governance, financial management, procurement, recruitment, employment, programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation, communications, partnership management, legal aid service delivery and organizational learning.

The provisions of this Policy shall be applied alongside other organizational policies and procedures to ensure a coordinated and consistent institutional approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.

1.5.2 Persons Covered

This Policy applies to:

- a. members of the Board of Directors;
- b. members of Board Committees;
- c. the Executive Director;
- d. senior management;
- e. all permanent employees;
- f. temporary employees;
- g. contract employees;
- h. consultants;
- i. interns;
- j. volunteers;

- k. project staff;
- l. casual workers;
- m. secondees;
- n. individual experts engaged by the Organization;
- o. partner organizations implementing activities on behalf of ILA;
- p. contractors and service providers where applicable under contractual obligations;
- q. suppliers while conducting business with the Organization;
- r. visitors participating in organizational activities; and
- s. any other person representing or acting on behalf of ILA.

Every individual covered by this Policy shall comply with its provisions irrespective of position, contract status or duration of engagement.

1.5.3 Institutional Application

This Policy applies across all organizational functions, including but not limited to:

- a. governance and leadership;
- b. strategic planning;
- c. organizational management;
- d. human resource management;
- e. financial management;
- f. procurement and asset management;
- g. programme design and implementation;
- h. legal aid services;
- i. research and policy advocacy;
- j. community outreach;
- k. monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL);

- l. information and communication technology;
- m. communications and public relations;
- n. partnership development;
- o. volunteer management;
- p. safeguarding and protection;
- q. data management; and
- r. organizational risk management.

1.5.4 Geographical Application

This Policy applies to all offices, projects, field locations, outreach activities, mobile legal aid clinics, training venues and any location where ILA conducts official business or organizational activities.

The Policy shall also apply during:

- a. official travel;
- b. conferences;
- c. workshops;
- d. meetings;
- e. field missions;
- f. online meetings and virtual platforms;
- g. digital communications;
- h. social media engagement undertaken in an official capacity; and
- i. any other activity undertaken under the authority or representation of ILA.

1.5.5 Relationship with Other Policies

This Policy shall be read together with all other governance instruments of the Organization.

Where another organizational policy contains provisions relating to equality, diversity or inclusion, those provisions shall be interpreted consistently with this Policy.

Where inconsistencies arise, the provision that offers greater protection against discrimination, exclusion or unequal treatment shall prevail, unless otherwise required by applicable law.

Nothing contained in this Policy shall diminish or restrict any legal rights available under the Constitution or applicable legislation of the Republic of South Sudan.

1.6 Policy Statement

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) is firmly committed to creating and sustaining an organization that promotes equality, values diversity and ensures meaningful social inclusion in every aspect of its governance, management, programmes and service delivery.

ILA affirms that every individual possesses equal dignity and inherent worth and shall be treated fairly, respectfully and without discrimination.

The Organization shall not tolerate any form of discrimination, exclusion, harassment, intimidation, victimization or unequal treatment based on sex, gender, pregnancy, marital status, disability, age, ethnicity, race, tribe, colour, religion, language, nationality, social origin, political opinion, economic status or any other protected characteristic recognized under applicable law.

ILA recognizes that equality does not necessarily require identical treatment. In appropriate circumstances, the Organization shall adopt equitable measures and reasonable accommodations to address systemic barriers, historical disadvantages and differing individual needs in order to achieve meaningful equality of opportunity and participation.

The Organization shall integrate gender equality, diversity and social inclusion into institutional governance, strategic planning, budgeting, policy development, human resource management, procurement, programme implementation, partnership management, communications and organizational learning.

ILA shall promote inclusive leadership by encouraging equitable participation and representation of women, youth, persons with disabilities and other underrepresented groups in decision-making processes, advisory structures and institutional leadership.

All employment decisions shall be based on merit, competence, integrity and organizational requirements while ensuring equal opportunity and eliminating discriminatory practices throughout the employment lifecycle.

The Organization shall strive to provide accessible workplaces, facilities, communications, technologies and services by identifying and removing barriers that limit participation by persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups.

ILA shall ensure that its legal aid services, community engagement activities and programme interventions are designed and delivered in ways that are inclusive, culturally appropriate, gender-responsive and accessible to all members of society, particularly vulnerable and marginalized populations.

Every individual associated with ILA shares responsibility for fostering an organizational culture characterized by professionalism, mutual respect, inclusion, accountability and zero tolerance for discrimination or harassment. Managers and supervisors shall exercise additional responsibility by promoting inclusive leadership, addressing discriminatory practices promptly and ensuring compliance with this Policy.

The Board of Directors and Executive Management shall provide the leadership, resources and oversight necessary for the effective implementation of this Policy and shall regularly monitor organizational performance in achieving its gender equality, diversity and social inclusion objectives.

ILA further commits to continuous improvement by periodically reviewing institutional practices, collecting and analysing relevant data, consulting stakeholders and implementing corrective measures where necessary to strengthen equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the Organization.

The principles contained in this Policy shall guide all organizational decisions and shall form an integral part of ILA's commitment to promoting access to justice, protecting human rights and advancing sustainable development in the Republic of South Sudan.

making at every level.

1.7 Guiding Principles

The implementation of this Policy shall be guided by the following principles, which shall inform all organizational decisions, policies, programmes, partnerships and institutional practices of the Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA).

1.7.1 Equality

ILA shall uphold the principle that every individual is equal in dignity and rights and shall be entitled to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination. The Organization shall promote equality of opportunity and ensure that all persons are treated fairly in employment, governance, programme implementation and service delivery.

1.7.2 Equity

ILA recognizes that individuals and communities do not always begin from the same position due to historical, structural, social or economic disadvantages. Accordingly, the Organization shall adopt equitable measures that address barriers to participation and provide appropriate support to ensure fair and meaningful access to opportunities and services.

1.7.3 Human Rights-Based Approach

All organizational activities shall be grounded in internationally recognized human rights principles. The Organization shall respect, protect and promote the inherent dignity, freedoms

and rights of every individual while ensuring that programmes and operations contribute to the realization of fundamental human rights.

1.7.4 Non-Discrimination

ILA shall prohibit all forms of direct and indirect discrimination in employment, governance, procurement, partnerships, programme implementation and legal aid service delivery. Decisions shall be based on objective, transparent and lawful criteria rather than personal characteristics unrelated to merit or legitimate organizational requirements.

1.7.5 Respect for Human Dignity

Every individual interacting with ILA shall be treated with courtesy, professionalism, fairness and respect. The Organization shall foster an environment where diversity is appreciated and where all persons feel valued, safe and able to participate without fear of prejudice, intimidation or exclusion.

1.7.6 Diversity

ILA recognizes diversity as an institutional strength that enriches organizational effectiveness, innovation and decision-making. The Organization shall encourage diversity of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, language, educational background, professional experience and other characteristics that contribute to inclusive institutional development.

1.7.7 Social Inclusion

ILA shall actively promote the meaningful participation of marginalized, disadvantaged and underrepresented individuals and communities in organizational processes, programmes and decision-making. The Organization shall identify and remove barriers that limit participation and equal access.

1.7.8 Accessibility

ILA shall promote accessible environments, services, communications, information systems and facilities to enable full participation by persons with disabilities and other individuals requiring reasonable accommodation. Accessibility considerations shall be integrated into planning, budgeting and programme implementation.

1.7.9 Participation

The Organization shall encourage inclusive participation in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Individuals and communities affected by organizational decisions shall, where appropriate, be consulted and provided opportunities to contribute meaningfully to decision-making processes.

1.7.10 Accountability

ILA shall establish clear institutional responsibilities and accountability mechanisms to ensure compliance with this Policy. Leaders at every level shall be responsible for promoting equality, addressing discrimination and ensuring effective implementation of GEDSI commitments.

1.7.11 Transparency

Institutional decisions relating to recruitment, promotion, programme implementation, partnerships and resource allocation shall be undertaken through transparent, objective and accountable processes. The Organization shall communicate its commitments and performance openly while respecting confidentiality requirements.

1.7.12 Intersectionality

ILA recognizes that individuals may experience multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination and disadvantage arising from combinations of gender, disability, age, ethnicity, displacement, poverty, religion or other characteristics. Organizational interventions shall therefore consider these intersecting vulnerabilities when designing policies, programmes and services.

1.7.13 Do No Harm

The Organization shall ensure that its policies, programmes and activities do not unintentionally expose individuals or communities to discrimination, exclusion, exploitation, violence or other adverse consequences. Potential risks shall be identified, assessed and mitigated throughout programme implementation.

1.7.14 Survivor-Centred Approach

Where programmes or organizational activities involve survivors of violence, abuse, exploitation or discrimination, ILA shall prioritize the rights, dignity, safety, confidentiality and informed choices of survivors. Support services shall be delivered respectfully and without causing additional harm.

1.7.15 Confidentiality

Personal information relating to employees, beneficiaries, complainants, witnesses and other stakeholders shall be protected in accordance with applicable laws, organizational policies and ethical standards. Confidential information shall only be disclosed where legally required or authorized by the individual concerned.

1.7.16 Integrity and Professionalism

All persons acting on behalf of ILA shall perform their duties honestly, impartially, ethically and professionally while promoting the values contained in this Policy. Personal conduct shall

reinforce public confidence in the Organization's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

1.7.17 Continuous Learning and Improvement

ILA recognizes that achieving gender equality, diversity and social inclusion is an ongoing institutional process. The Organization shall promote innovation, learning, reflection and continuous improvement by regularly reviewing policies, collecting evidence, engaging stakeholders and adopting good practices.

1.8 Organizational Commitment

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) is fully committed to fostering an organizational environment where gender equality, diversity and social inclusion are embedded within governance structures, management systems, organizational culture and programme implementation.

The Organization affirms that promoting equality and inclusion is not solely a human resource function but a shared institutional responsibility that shall influence all decisions, policies and operational practices.

To demonstrate this commitment, ILA shall:

- a. integrate gender equality, diversity and social inclusion into its vision, mission, values and strategic objectives;
- b. ensure that institutional leadership actively promotes equality and inclusive governance;
- c. allocate adequate financial, technical and human resources for implementation of this Policy;
- d. mainstream GEDSI considerations across organizational planning, budgeting, procurement, programme implementation and monitoring;
- e. establish institutional mechanisms to monitor compliance and organizational performance;
- f. ensure that recruitment, promotion, remuneration and professional development processes are based on fairness, transparency and equal opportunity;
- g. provide safe, respectful and inclusive working environments free from discrimination, harassment and intimidation;
- h. promote meaningful participation of women, youth, persons with disabilities and marginalized groups in organizational governance and programme implementation;

- i. strengthen accessibility of organizational facilities, communications and information systems;
- j. build staff capacity through continuous training and professional development on equality, diversity and inclusion;
- k. integrate GEDSI indicators into organizational monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems;
- l. engage partners, suppliers, contractors and stakeholders in advancing shared equality and inclusion objectives;
- m. establish effective complaints and reporting mechanisms that are accessible, confidential and free from retaliation;
- n. support innovation and institutional learning to strengthen inclusive organizational practices; and
- o. periodically review this Policy to ensure its continued relevance, effectiveness and compliance with evolving legal, policy and donor requirements.

Every member of the Board of Directors, management, employee, consultant, volunteer, intern, contractor and partner organization shall contribute to the realization of these commitments through responsible conduct and full compliance with this Policy.

The Board of Directors shall provide strategic oversight for the implementation of this Policy, while the Executive Director shall ensure that adequate systems, resources and institutional arrangements are established to achieve the Policy's objectives.

Senior managers shall integrate GEDSI considerations into departmental planning and performance management, while supervisors shall foster inclusive workplaces characterized by respect, fairness and accountability.

ILA recognizes that organizational commitment must be reflected not only through written policies but also through measurable actions, institutional leadership, resource allocation and demonstrable improvements in organizational performance and service delivery.

1.9 Legal and Policy Framework

This Policy is developed within the framework of applicable international, regional and national legal instruments, as well as ILA's internal governance policies and institutional commitments.

The Organization shall implement this Policy consistently with applicable legal obligations while promoting internationally recognized standards of equality, diversity and human rights.

Without limiting the scope of Chapter Two of this Policy, implementation shall be guided by, among others, the following instruments:

International Instruments

The Organization recognizes and supports the principles contained in:

- a. the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR);
- b. the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR);
- c. the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR);
- d. the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- e. the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD);
- f. the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC);
- g. the International Labour Organization (ILO) Core Conventions;
- h. the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), where relevant to equality and integrity;
- i. the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and
- j. other relevant international human rights and labour standards applicable to the Organization.

Regional Instruments

Implementation shall also be informed by:

- a. the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;
- b. the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol);
- c. relevant African Union declarations and frameworks;
- d. applicable East African Community principles and commitments; and
- e. other regional human rights and governance instruments relevant to equality and inclusion.

National Legal Framework

ILA shall implement this Policy in accordance with applicable laws of the Republic of South Sudan, including:

- a. the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, 2011 (as amended);
- b. the Labour Act and related employment legislation;
- c. legislation relating to persons with disabilities, children and vulnerable groups, where applicable;
- d. laws governing non-governmental organizations;
- e. applicable data protection, occupational safety and administrative laws; and
- f. other relevant legislation enacted from time to time.

Organizational Policy Framework

This Policy complements and shall be implemented together with all other institutional governance documents, including the:

- a. Board Governance Charter;
- b. Human Resource and Administration Policy;
- c. Code of Conduct and Ethics Policy;
- d. Legal Aid Service Policy;
- e. Safeguarding Policy;
- f. Procurement and Assets Management Policy;
- g. Finance and Accounting Policy;
- h. Risk Management Policy;
- i. Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Whistleblowing Policy;
- j. Partnership and Stakeholder Engagement Policy;

- k. Information, Communication and Technology Policy;
- l. Data Protection and Privacy Policy;
- m. Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Policy; and
- n. any other policy, procedure or guideline approved by the Organization.

Where inconsistencies arise between this Policy and another internal policy, the provisions shall be interpreted harmoniously to promote equality, inclusion and compliance with applicable law. Where reconciliation is not possible, the matter shall be referred to the Executive Director or the Board of Directors, as appropriate, for interpretation and guidance.

ILA shall periodically review this Policy to ensure continued alignment with legislative developments, emerging international standards, organizational priorities and donor expectations.

1.10 Definitions and Interpretation

1.10.1 Purpose

This section establishes the meanings of key terms used throughout this Policy to ensure consistency in interpretation and application. Unless the context otherwise requires, the following definitions shall apply.

Where a term is not expressly defined in this Policy, it shall be interpreted in accordance with applicable laws of the Republic of South Sudan, relevant international human rights instruments, and accepted organizational best practices.

1.10.2 Definitions

For the purposes of this Policy:

Accessibility means the design and implementation of environments, facilities, services, information, communication systems, technologies and programmes in a manner that enables all individuals, including persons with disabilities, to participate independently, safely and equally.

Affirmative Action means lawful temporary measures adopted to address historical or systemic inequalities by promoting equitable opportunities for disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.

Board means the Board of Directors of the Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA), being the supreme governing body responsible for the strategic oversight of the Organization.

Bullying means repeated or persistent unreasonable behaviour directed towards an individual or group that creates an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or offensive working environment.

Child means any person below the age of eighteen (18) years, unless otherwise provided by applicable law.

Confidentiality means the obligation to protect personal or sensitive information from unauthorized access, disclosure or misuse.

Consultant means an individual or firm engaged by ILA to provide professional or technical services under a contractual arrangement.

Contractor means any individual, company or other legal entity engaged by ILA to provide goods, works or services under a contractual agreement.

Direct Discrimination means less favourable treatment of a person based on a protected characteristic such as sex, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, age or other legally protected status.

Disability means a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder an individual's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Discrimination means any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference that has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying equality of opportunity, treatment or participation.

Diversity means the presence and recognition of differences among individuals and groups, including but not limited to gender, age, disability, ethnicity, race, language, culture, religion, nationality, educational background, professional experience and socio-economic status.

Employee means any individual employed by ILA under a permanent, temporary, fixed-term, casual or other employment arrangement.

Equal Opportunity means the principle that all individuals shall have fair and equitable access to employment, participation, services and organizational resources based on objective and lawful criteria.

Equality means the equal enjoyment of rights, opportunities, responsibilities and treatment by all persons without discrimination.

Equity means fairness in the distribution of opportunities, resources and benefits through measures that recognize and address different needs, circumstances and barriers.

Gender means the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expectations and relationships associated with women, men, girls, boys and persons of diverse gender identities within a given society.

Gender Analysis means the systematic assessment of differences in the roles, responsibilities, opportunities, needs and experiences of women, men, girls and boys for the purpose of informing policy and programme decisions.

Gender Equality means the equal enjoyment of rights, opportunities, responsibilities and outcomes by all persons regardless of gender.

Gender Mainstreaming means the systematic integration of gender considerations into policies, programmes, budgets, institutional processes and decision-making at all levels of the Organization.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) means any harmful act directed against an individual based on gender, including physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering.

Harassment means unwanted conduct that violates an individual's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Human Rights-Based Approach means an approach to policy and programme implementation that integrates internationally recognized human rights principles into planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

ILA means the Initiative for Legal Aid, a non-governmental organization established under the laws of the Republic of South Sudan.

Inclusion means the deliberate process of ensuring that all individuals, particularly marginalized and disadvantaged groups, are able to participate fully and equally in organizational activities and decision-making.

Indirect Discrimination means a policy, practice, criterion or procedure that appears neutral but disproportionately disadvantages individuals belonging to a protected group without objective justification.

Intersectionality means the interaction of multiple social identities and characteristics that may result in overlapping forms of discrimination, exclusion or disadvantage.

Intern means a person engaged by ILA for temporary learning, professional development or practical work experience.

Legal Aid Services means legal advice, legal representation, legal information, mediation, advocacy, legal awareness and related services provided by ILA to eligible beneficiaries.

Marginalized Groups means individuals or communities that experience social, economic, political or institutional exclusion due to historical, structural or systemic disadvantages.

Management means the Executive Director and all employees responsible for planning, directing and supervising organizational operations.

Monitoring and Evaluation means the systematic collection, analysis and use of information to assess the performance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of programmes and organizational activities.

Non-Discrimination means the principle that no individual shall be treated unfairly or denied opportunities based on protected characteristics.

Organization means the Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA).

Partner means any organization, institution, government agency, donor, community-based organization, civil society organization or private entity collaborating with ILA in implementing programmes or activities.

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

Protected Characteristics means personal attributes recognized under applicable law or this Policy that shall not form the basis for discrimination, including sex, gender, disability, age, race, ethnicity, religion, language, nationality, marital status and other legally protected characteristics.

Programme means any project, intervention, activity or initiative undertaken by ILA in pursuit of its organizational objectives.

Reasonable Accommodation means appropriate and necessary modifications or adjustments that enable persons with disabilities or others requiring support to participate equally, provided such measures do not impose a disproportionate or undue burden on the Organization.

Retaliation means any adverse action taken against an individual because that person has made a complaint, reported misconduct, participated in an investigation or exercised rights protected under this Policy.

Sex means the biological characteristics distinguishing females and males as recognized by applicable law and scientific understanding.

Sexual Harassment means any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours or other verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

Social Inclusion means the process of improving the participation, opportunities and access to resources, services and decision-making for individuals and groups who are disadvantaged or excluded.

Stakeholder means any individual, community, institution or organization that affects or is affected by the activities of ILA.

Survivor-Centred Approach means an approach that prioritizes the rights, safety, dignity, confidentiality and informed choices of survivors of violence, exploitation, abuse or discrimination.

Volunteer means an individual who provides services to ILA without entering into a formal employment relationship, whether on a short-term or long-term basis.

Workplace means any location, physical or virtual, where official ILA business or organizational activities are conducted, including offices, field locations, project sites, training venues, meetings, conferences, online platforms and official travel.

Young Person or Youth means a person within the age category recognized by applicable national legislation or relevant organizational policy.

Zero Tolerance means the Organization's commitment that discrimination, harassment, bullying, exploitation, retaliation and other prohibited conduct shall not be accepted, condoned or ignored, and shall be addressed promptly through appropriate corrective measures.

1.10.3 Rules of Interpretation

In interpreting this Policy:

- a. words importing the singular shall include the plural and vice versa where the context permits;
- b. words importing one gender shall include all genders;
- c. references to any law shall include amendments, revisions or successor legislation;
- d. references to any organizational policy shall include subsequent amendments approved by the Board of Directors;
- e. headings and titles are provided for convenience only and shall not affect the interpretation of this Policy;
- f. where any provision of this Policy conflicts with applicable law, the applicable law shall prevail to the extent of the inconsistency, and the remaining provisions of this Policy shall continue in full force and effect;
- g. where uncertainty exists regarding the interpretation of any provision, the interpretation that best promotes equality, diversity, social inclusion, human dignity, non-discrimination and the objectives of this Policy shall be preferred;
- h. any matter not expressly addressed in this Policy shall be determined by the Executive Director, subject to applicable law and, where necessary, the guidance or approval of the Board of Directors; and

i. this Policy shall be interpreted harmoniously with other governance instruments of the Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) to ensure consistency, accountability and effective institutional governance.

CHAPTER TWO

INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes that gender equality, diversity and social inclusion are firmly grounded in international human rights law, regional legal instruments, national legislation and internationally accepted principles of good governance. These legal and policy frameworks establish the rights, freedoms and protections to which all individuals are entitled and impose corresponding responsibilities upon governments, institutions and organizations to promote equality, eliminate discrimination and ensure inclusive participation.

As a legal aid and human rights organization operating in the Republic of South Sudan, ILA is committed to conducting its activities in a manner that is consistent with applicable legal obligations and internationally recognized standards. The Organization acknowledges that promoting gender equality and social inclusion is not only an ethical responsibility but also a legal and institutional obligation arising from numerous international conventions, regional treaties, constitutional guarantees and national laws.

This Chapter establishes the legal and policy framework that informs the interpretation and implementation of this Policy. It provides the normative basis upon which ILA shall develop institutional policies, governance systems, employment practices, programme interventions and partnerships. These legal instruments collectively reinforce the principles of equality, non-discrimination, accessibility, participation, accountability and respect for human dignity.

ILA shall ensure that all organizational policies, programmes and operational decisions are aligned, to the greatest extent possible, with applicable international human rights standards, regional commitments, national legislation and donor compliance requirements. Where organizational practices exceed minimum legal standards in promoting equality and inclusion, the higher institutional standard shall be maintained, provided it does not conflict with applicable law.

The Organization further recognizes that the legal framework governing gender equality, diversity and social inclusion continues to evolve. Accordingly, this Policy shall be periodically reviewed to ensure continued alignment with legislative developments, judicial interpretations, international best practices and emerging donor expectations.

Nothing in this Chapter shall be interpreted as limiting the application of other applicable legal instruments or organizational policies that provide greater protection for equality, human rights or social inclusion.

2.2 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, forms the cornerstone of the modern international human rights framework. Although not a treaty, the UDHR has become a foundational instrument that informs international law, constitutional interpretation and human rights practice worldwide.

ILA recognizes the UDHR as a guiding framework for promoting equality, justice, human dignity and the protection of fundamental freedoms. The Organization affirms that all persons are born free and equal in dignity and rights and are entitled to enjoy these rights without distinction of any kind.

In implementing this Policy, ILA shall be guided by the principles embodied in the UDHR, including:

- a. equality before the law;
- b. respect for inherent human dignity;
- c. freedom from discrimination;
- d. equal protection of the law;
- e. equal access to justice;
- f. freedom of thought, conscience and religion;
- g. freedom of expression and association;
- h. the right to participate in public affairs;
- i. the right to work under just and favourable conditions;
- j. equal remuneration for work of equal value;
- k. the right to education;
- l. protection of family life;

m. access to social protection; and

n. respect for the rights and freedoms of every individual.

Consistent with these principles, ILA shall ensure that its governance structures, employment practices, programme implementation and legal aid services uphold the dignity and equality of every individual without discrimination.

The Organization shall also promote awareness of human rights principles among employees, volunteers, partners and beneficiaries through education, training, advocacy and community engagement initiatives.

Where appropriate, ILA shall advocate for the realization of the rights contained in the UDHR through legal aid services, policy advocacy, public legal education and strategic engagement with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

2.3 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is the principal international treaty dedicated to promoting women's rights and eliminating discrimination against women in all areas of public and private life.

ILA recognizes CEDAW as a fundamental international standard for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. The Organization affirms that discrimination against women undermines equality, human dignity, sustainable development and access to justice and therefore shall not be tolerated in any aspect of its operations.

In accordance with the principles reflected in CEDAW, ILA shall:

- a. promote equal rights and opportunities for women and men in employment, leadership, governance and programme participation;
- b. eliminate direct and indirect discrimination against women within organizational policies and practices;
- c. ensure equal access to recruitment, promotion, remuneration, training and professional development;
- d. promote women's meaningful participation in organizational decision-making and leadership structures;
- e. integrate gender equality considerations into strategic planning, budgeting, programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;

- f. adopt gender-responsive institutional policies and procedures that address structural barriers affecting women and girls;
- g. ensure that legal aid services are accessible, responsive and sensitive to the needs of women and girls;
- h. promote equal participation of women in community consultations, advocacy initiatives and stakeholder engagement activities;
- i. support measures that prevent and respond to gender-based violence, discrimination and harmful practices;
- j. strengthen organizational capacity to identify and address gender inequalities through evidence-based planning and continuous learning;
- k. collect and utilize sex-disaggregated data to support informed decision-making and institutional accountability; and
- l. foster a workplace culture founded upon equality, mutual respect, professionalism and zero tolerance for gender-based discrimination.

ILA further recognizes that women and girls may experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination arising from disability, poverty, displacement, ethnicity, age or other social characteristics. Accordingly, organizational interventions shall adopt an intersectional approach that recognizes and responds to these overlapping vulnerabilities.

The Organization shall also encourage the active participation of men and boys as partners in advancing gender equality, recognizing that sustainable social transformation requires the engagement of all members of society in challenging discriminatory attitudes, harmful stereotypes and unequal power relations.

Gender equality shall therefore remain a cross-cutting institutional priority that informs governance, leadership, human resource management, programme implementation, partnership development and organizational accountability.

2.4 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) establishes comprehensive international standards for the protection, promotion and realization of the rights of persons with disabilities. It recognizes that disability is not merely an individual condition but often results from the interaction between impairments and social, environmental and institutional barriers that restrict equal participation.

ILA recognizes that persons with disabilities have the same inherent dignity, rights and freedoms as all other individuals and shall not be subjected to discrimination, exclusion or unequal treatment. The Organization is committed to promoting disability inclusion across its governance

structures, employment practices, programmes, legal aid services and community engagement activities.

In implementing this Policy, ILA shall be guided by the principles reflected in the CRPD, including:

- a. respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy and independence of persons with disabilities;
- b. non-discrimination;
- c. full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
- d. respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity;
- e. equality of opportunity;
- f. accessibility;
- g. equality between men and women; and
- h. respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities.

ILA shall implement disability-inclusive practices by:

- a. ensuring that persons with disabilities have equal opportunities in recruitment, employment, leadership development and participation in organizational activities;
- b. removing physical, communication and institutional barriers that prevent equal participation;
- c. providing reasonable accommodation where necessary to enable effective participation;
- d. ensuring that legal aid services are accessible to persons with disabilities, including through appropriate communication methods and support mechanisms;
- e. promoting inclusive programme design that considers the needs, experiences and perspectives of persons with disabilities;
- f. consulting persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in matters affecting them;
- g. ensuring that organizational information and communications are provided in accessible formats where reasonably possible;

- h. integrating disability considerations into monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning systems;
- i. collecting relevant disability-disaggregated data to inform programme planning and institutional decision-making;
- j. training staff and partners on disability inclusion and accessibility principles; and
- k. promoting awareness and advocacy to challenge stigma, discrimination and misconceptions relating to disability.

ILA recognizes that persons with disabilities may face heightened risks of poverty, exclusion, violence, exploitation and limited access to justice. Accordingly, the Organization shall prioritize inclusive approaches that enable persons with disabilities to access legal information, representation, dispute resolution mechanisms and human rights protection.

The Organization shall ensure that disability inclusion is not treated as a separate or isolated issue but as an integral component of all organizational policies, programmes and operational decisions.

2.5 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) establishes international standards for the protection and promotion of the rights of children and recognizes children as rights holders entitled to special protection due to their age, vulnerability and developmental needs.

ILA recognizes that children require particular attention in organizational policies, programmes and legal aid services. The Organization is committed to ensuring that all actions involving children are guided by the best interests of the child, respect for their dignity and protection from all forms of harm, exploitation, abuse and discrimination.

In accordance with the principles of the CRC, ILA shall promote:

- a. non-discrimination and equal protection of all children regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, nationality, social status or other characteristics;
- b. the best interests of the child as a primary consideration in decisions affecting children;
- c. the right of children to survival, development, protection and participation;
- d. respect for children's views and meaningful participation in matters affecting them, considering their age and maturity;
- e. protection of children from violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect and harmful practices;

- f. equal access to justice and legal protection for children;
- g. child-sensitive approaches in legal aid services and community interventions; and
- h. confidentiality and privacy protections for children receiving support from ILA.

In implementing this Policy, ILA shall:

- a. ensure that programmes involving children are designed and implemented in accordance with child protection principles;
- b. provide child-friendly legal information and support where appropriate;
- c. ensure that staff, volunteers, consultants and partners working with children understand their safeguarding responsibilities;
- d. prohibit any form of exploitation, abuse, harassment or harmful conduct involving children;
- e. establish appropriate referral pathways for children requiring specialized protection or support services;
- f. ensure that children's personal information is protected and handled responsibly;
- g. consider the specific needs of girls, children with disabilities, displaced children and other vulnerable groups of children;
- h. promote child participation where decisions directly affect children's rights and interests; and
- i. coordinate with relevant authorities and service providers to strengthen child protection mechanisms.

ILA recognizes that children may experience multiple vulnerabilities arising from conflict, displacement, poverty, disability, gender inequality and social exclusion. Therefore, child-focused interventions shall adopt an inclusive and rights-based approach that addresses these intersecting risks.

The Organization shall ensure that the rights and protection of children remain central to all legal aid, advocacy, community awareness and institutional activities involving children.

2.6 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights provides the regional human rights framework for the protection and promotion of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights throughout Africa.

ILA recognizes the African Charter as an important regional instrument supporting the principles of equality, human dignity, non-discrimination, participation and social justice. The Charter reinforces the responsibility of institutions and communities to respect and protect human rights while promoting inclusive development.

In implementing this Policy, ILA shall uphold the principles contained in the African Charter, including:

- a. recognition of the inherent dignity of every person;
- b. equality of individuals before the law;
- c. prohibition of discrimination;
- d. protection of vulnerable and marginalized groups;
- e. respect for cultural identity and diversity;
- f. protection of women's rights;
- g. protection of children's rights;
- h. promotion of social and economic rights;
- i. access to justice and legal protection;
- j. participation in public and community affairs; and
- k. accountability for violations of human rights.

ILA shall apply these principles by:

- a. promoting equal access to legal aid services regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, religion, social status or other characteristics;
- b. supporting vulnerable individuals and communities facing barriers to justice;
- c. incorporating human rights standards into legal education, advocacy and community outreach programmes;
- d. promoting respect for diversity and peaceful coexistence among communities;

- e. supporting mechanisms that enhance accountability and protection of human rights;
- f. ensuring that organizational practices respect cultural diversity while upholding fundamental human rights principles;
- g. promoting inclusive participation of affected communities in programme development and implementation; and
- h. strengthening partnerships with institutions working to advance human rights and social inclusion.

The Organization acknowledges that Africa's diverse social and cultural contexts require approaches that are both rights-based and sensitive to local realities. Accordingly, ILA shall promote solutions that respect cultural diversity while ensuring that cultural practices do not undermine equality, dignity or fundamental human rights.

Through its legal aid, advocacy and institutional activities, ILA shall contribute to the advancement of the African human rights agenda by promoting access to justice, equality before the law and protection of marginalized populations.

2.7 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, commonly known as the Maputo Protocol, establishes comprehensive regional standards for the promotion and protection of women's rights in Africa. It recognizes the historical and structural inequalities affecting women and calls for affirmative measures to achieve substantive equality between women and men.

ILA recognizes that advancing women's rights is essential to achieving gender equality, social inclusion, sustainable development and access to justice. The Organization acknowledges that women and girls may experience discrimination, violence, economic exclusion, limited participation in decision-making and unequal access to legal protection due to social, cultural, institutional and economic barriers.

In implementing this Policy, ILA shall be guided by the principles of the Maputo Protocol, including:

- a. recognition and protection of women's dignity and human rights;
- b. elimination of discrimination against women;
- c. promotion of equality between women and men;
- d. protection of women and girls from violence and harmful practices;

- e. promotion of women's participation in political, social and economic decision-making;
- f. protection of women's rights to education, health, property, employment and economic opportunities;
- g. protection of vulnerable groups of women, including displaced women, women with disabilities and survivors of violence; and
- h. promotion of accountability for violations of women's rights.

ILA shall implement the principles of the Maputo Protocol through the following measures:

a. Promotion of Women's Access to Justice

ILA shall ensure that women and girls have equitable access to legal aid services, legal information, representation and justice mechanisms. The Organization shall identify and address barriers that prevent women from accessing justice, including financial, geographical, social, cultural and informational barriers.

b. Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence

ILA shall support efforts to prevent, respond to and eliminate gender-based violence through:

- legal assistance and representation;
- community legal awareness;
- referrals to appropriate support services;
- survivor-centred approaches;
- advocacy for stronger protection mechanisms; and
- collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

c. Women's Participation and Leadership

ILA shall promote women's meaningful participation in:

- organizational leadership;
- governance structures;
- programme planning;
- community consultations;
- stakeholder engagement; and
- decision-making processes.

The Organization shall encourage measures that strengthen women's leadership capacity and remove barriers affecting women's advancement.

d. Protection Against Discrimination

ILA shall ensure that organizational policies, employment practices and programme activities do not discriminate against women. Recruitment, promotion, remuneration, training and professional development opportunities shall be provided on the basis of fairness, competence and equal opportunity.

e. Gender-Responsive Programming

ILA shall integrate gender considerations into programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. All interventions shall consider the different experiences, needs and vulnerabilities of women, men, girls and boys.

The Organization recognizes that women's rights are interconnected with broader social, economic and political rights. Accordingly, ILA shall adopt approaches that address underlying inequalities while promoting women's empowerment and participation.

2.8 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, provide a global framework for addressing poverty, inequality, exclusion, human rights challenges and sustainable development.

ILA recognizes that gender equality, diversity and social inclusion are essential components of sustainable development and are directly connected to several SDGs, particularly:

2.8.1 Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality

SDG 5 calls for the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. ILA shall contribute to this objective by:

- a. promoting equal opportunities within the Organization;
- b. addressing gender-based discrimination;
- c. supporting women's access to justice;
- d. promoting women's participation in leadership and decision-making;
- e. strengthening gender-responsive programming; and
- f. supporting initiatives that challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes.

2.8.2 Sustainable Development Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities

SDG 10 promotes the reduction of inequalities within and among societies. ILA shall contribute by:

- a. promoting inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable groups;
- b. improving access to justice for disadvantaged populations;
- c. reducing barriers affecting participation;
- d. promoting equal opportunities;
- e. supporting inclusive governance practices; and
- f. ensuring that organizational programmes reach persons who experience exclusion.

2.8.3 Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

SDG 16 promotes peaceful societies, access to justice and accountable institutions. This aligns directly with ILA's mandate. The Organization shall contribute through:

- a. expanding access to legal aid services;
- b. strengthening legal empowerment;
- c. supporting human rights protection;
- d. promoting accountability and transparency;
- e. ensuring inclusive justice systems; and
- f. supporting vulnerable persons in accessing legal remedies.

2.8.4 Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education

ILA recognizes the importance of education and awareness in promoting equality and inclusion. The Organization shall contribute through legal awareness programmes, community education and capacity-building initiatives.

2.8.5 Sustainable Development Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals

ILA shall promote partnerships with government institutions, civil society organizations, communities, donors and other stakeholders to advance shared GEDSI objectives.

The Organization shall integrate relevant SDG principles into strategic planning, programme design, monitoring frameworks and institutional reporting.

2.9 South Sudan Transitional Constitution

The Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, 2011 (as amended), establishes fundamental principles relating to equality, human rights, citizenship, dignity and non-discrimination. It provides the constitutional foundation for protecting individual rights and promoting inclusive governance.

ILA recognizes the Constitution as the supreme legal framework governing the protection of rights and freedoms within South Sudan. The Organization shall conduct its activities consistently with constitutional principles relating to equality, justice and human dignity.

Relevant constitutional principles guiding this Policy include:

2.9.1 Equality Before the Law

ILA recognizes that all persons are entitled to equal protection of the law without discrimination. The Organization shall ensure that its employment practices, programmes and legal aid services promote equal treatment and equal access.

2.9.2 Prohibition of Discrimination

ILA shall not permit discrimination based on characteristics including gender, race, ethnicity, religion, language, disability, social status or other prohibited grounds.

The Organization shall establish institutional measures to identify and address discriminatory practices within its operations.

2.9.3 Protection of Women's Rights

ILA recognizes constitutional commitments relating to women's participation, dignity, protection and equality. The Organization shall promote women's empowerment and equal participation in institutional and community processes.

2.9.4 Rights of Children

ILA shall uphold constitutional protections relating to children and shall ensure that children involved in its programmes are treated with dignity, respect and appropriate protection.

2.9.5 Protection of Persons with Disabilities and Vulnerable Groups

ILA shall promote inclusive approaches that recognize the rights and needs of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable populations.

2.9.6 Access to Justice and Legal Protection

As a legal aid organization, ILA shall contribute to constitutional principles by promoting access to legal information, representation and justice services, particularly for persons who face barriers due to poverty, vulnerability or exclusion.

2.9.7 Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion

ILA recognizes South Sudan's cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity and shall promote peaceful coexistence, respect for diversity and inclusive participation in accordance with constitutional values.

The Organization shall ensure that its internal governance systems and external programmes reflect constitutional principles of equality, dignity, justice and inclusion.

2.10 Labour Act and Other National Laws

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes that national legislation provides the legal foundation for regulating employment relationships, protecting individual rights, preventing discrimination and promoting fair and inclusive institutional practices.

As an organization operating in the Republic of South Sudan, ILA shall ensure that its human resource management systems, employment practices, workplace standards and organizational procedures comply with applicable national laws while promoting higher standards of equality, fairness and inclusion.

2.10.1 Labour and Employment Framework

ILA shall implement this Policy consistently with applicable labour laws and regulations governing:

- a. equal employment opportunities;
- b. fair recruitment and selection processes;
- c. non-discrimination in employment;
- d. fair remuneration and benefits;
- e. safe and healthy working conditions;
- f. protection of employees' dignity and rights;
- g. maternity and family-related protections;
- h. prevention of workplace harassment and abuse;

- i. termination and separation procedures; and
- j. dispute resolution mechanisms.

The Organization shall ensure that employment decisions are based on competence, qualifications, performance, integrity and legitimate organizational requirements rather than discriminatory considerations.

2.10.2 Equal Employment Opportunity

ILA shall promote equal employment opportunities by ensuring that recruitment, appointment, promotion, training and career development processes are transparent, objective and inclusive.

The Organization shall:

- a. provide equal access to employment opportunities;
- b. ensure job advertisements do not contain discriminatory requirements;
- c. encourage applications from qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds;
- d. promote gender balance where reasonably possible;
- e. consider reasonable accommodation for applicants and employees with disabilities;
- f. maintain fair and transparent selection procedures; and
- g. prevent discrimination throughout the employment lifecycle.

2.10.3 Workplace Protection and Employee Welfare

ILA shall establish and maintain a workplace environment that protects employees from discrimination, harassment, exploitation, intimidation and abuse.

The Organization shall provide mechanisms for employees to report concerns and shall ensure that complaints are handled fairly, confidentially and without retaliation.

2.10.4 Other Relevant National Legal Frameworks

In addition to labour legislation, ILA shall consider and comply with other applicable national laws and regulatory frameworks relevant to gender equality, diversity and social inclusion, including:

- a. laws relating to non-governmental organizations and civil society operations;
- b. laws protecting children and vulnerable persons;

- c. laws relating to disability rights and inclusion;
- d. laws governing personal data protection and privacy;
- e. laws relating to education, health and social protection where relevant;
- f. laws addressing violence, exploitation, abuse and discrimination;
- g. laws regulating access to justice and legal representation; and
- h. other relevant legislation enacted or amended from time to time.

2.10.5 Compliance Responsibility

The Executive Director, Human Resource Unit, programme managers and all departmental heads shall ensure that organizational practices comply with applicable national laws and the requirements of this Policy.

Where legal requirements change, ILA shall review relevant policies and procedures to ensure continued compliance.

2.11 Humanitarian Principles

ILA recognizes that humanitarian principles provide essential guidance for organizations operating in contexts affected by conflict, displacement, poverty, vulnerability and social inequality. These principles are particularly relevant to South Sudan, where communities may experience significant barriers to protection, justice and essential services.

The Organization shall ensure that humanitarian principles are integrated into its legal aid services, community engagement activities, protection interventions and institutional practices.

2.11.1 Humanity

ILA shall uphold the principle of humanity by recognizing the dignity and worth of every individual and seeking to alleviate suffering, protect rights and promote access to justice.

All services shall be provided with respect, compassion and without discrimination.

2.11.2 Impartiality

ILA shall provide assistance based on need and vulnerability without discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, disability, social status or other characteristics.

Priority shall be given to individuals and communities facing the greatest barriers to justice and protection.

2.11.3 Neutrality

ILA shall maintain neutrality in humanitarian and conflict-related contexts by providing legal assistance and protection services based on rights and needs rather than political interests or affiliations.

Neutrality shall not prevent the Organization from advocating for human rights, accountability and access to justice.

2.11.4 Independence

ILA shall maintain institutional independence in decision-making, programme implementation and service delivery while complying with applicable laws and contractual obligations.

The Organization shall ensure that external relationships do not compromise its commitment to equality, inclusion, impartiality and human rights.

2.11.5 Do No Harm Principle

ILA shall ensure that programmes and activities do not unintentionally increase risks, reinforce discrimination or create barriers for vulnerable groups.

Before implementing activities, the Organization shall consider:

- a. potential impacts on different groups;
- b. risks affecting women, children and persons with disabilities;
- c. community dynamics;
- d. protection concerns;
- e. confidentiality requirements; and
- f. possible unintended consequences.

2.11.6 Protection and Inclusion in Humanitarian Settings

ILA recognizes that humanitarian crises often intensify existing inequalities. Women, children, persons with disabilities, displaced persons and marginalized communities may face increased risks of violence, exploitation and exclusion.

Accordingly, ILA shall:

- a. ensure inclusive access to legal aid services;
- b. prioritize vulnerable groups facing barriers to justice;
- c. integrate protection principles into programme design;
- d. promote safe and accessible service delivery;
- e. engage communities in identifying solutions;
- f. establish referral mechanisms where specialized support is required; and
- g. collect information necessary to understand and address inclusion gaps.

2.12 Donor Compliance Standards

ILA recognizes that institutional donors increasingly require implementing organizations to demonstrate strong commitments to gender equality, diversity, social inclusion, safeguarding, accountability and responsible governance.

As a recipient or potential recipient of donor funding, ILA shall ensure that its programmes and institutional systems comply with applicable donor requirements while maintaining alignment with its mission, values and legal obligations.

2.12.1 Commitment to Donor Standards

ILA shall seek to align its GEDSI practices with recognized donor standards, including those relating to:

- a. gender-responsive programming;
- b. protection against discrimination;
- c. safeguarding and prevention of exploitation and abuse;
- d. disability inclusion;
- e. accountability to affected populations;
- f. ethical conduct;
- g. transparency and responsible resource management;
- h. monitoring and evaluation;

- i. data protection and responsible information management; and
- j. risk management.

2.12.2 Gender and Inclusion Requirements

Where required by donors, ILA shall incorporate GEDSI considerations into:

- a. project proposals;
- b. logical frameworks;
- c. budgets;
- d. implementation plans;
- e. monitoring frameworks;
- f. evaluation processes;
- g. reporting mechanisms; and
- h. sustainability strategies.

2.12.3 Accountability to Affected Populations

ILA shall promote accountability by ensuring that communities and beneficiaries:

- a. receive accessible information about programmes and services;
- b. have opportunities to provide feedback;
- c. can raise complaints safely and confidentially;
- d. participate in programme design and evaluation where appropriate; and
- e. receive responses to concerns raised.

2.12.4 Partner Compliance

ILA shall require implementing partners, contractors and service providers to respect the principles contained in this Policy and applicable donor requirements.

Partnership agreements shall, where appropriate, include obligations relating to:

- a. non-discrimination;

- b. safeguarding;
- c. inclusion;
- d. ethical conduct;
- e. reporting obligations; and
- f. compliance monitoring.

2.12.5 Monitoring Donor Compliance

ILA shall establish systems to monitor compliance with donor requirements through:

- a. programme monitoring;
- b. internal reviews;
- c. audits;
- d. partner assessments;
- e. reporting mechanisms; and
- f. corrective action plans where deficiencies are identified.

The Organization shall maintain accurate records demonstrating its commitment to GEDSI principles and donor compliance.

CHAPTER THREE

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF GENDER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

3.1 Equality

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes equality as a fundamental human right and a core institutional value necessary for the promotion of justice, human dignity and sustainable development. Equality requires that all individuals are treated with fairness, respect and dignity and are provided with equal opportunities to participate in organizational activities, access services and contribute to decision-making processes.

ILA shall ensure that equality is integrated into all aspects of institutional governance, employment practices, programme implementation, legal aid service delivery and stakeholder engagement.

The Organization recognizes that equality involves both **formal equality** and **substantive equality**. Formal equality requires that individuals are not subjected to unequal treatment based on prohibited grounds, while substantive equality requires proactive measures to address existing barriers, disadvantages and structural inequalities that prevent individuals from enjoying their rights equally.

Accordingly, ILA shall:

- a. ensure equal treatment of all individuals without discrimination;
- b. promote equal access to employment opportunities, leadership positions, training and professional development;
- c. ensure equal access to legal aid services and organizational programmes;
- d. identify and address institutional practices that may create unequal outcomes;
- e. promote equitable participation of women, persons with disabilities, youth and marginalized communities;
- f. integrate equality considerations into policies, procedures and decision-making processes;
- g. monitor institutional practices to identify and correct inequalities; and
- h. ensure that equality principles are reflected in partnerships and external engagements.

ILA recognizes that achieving equality may require targeted interventions to support individuals or groups who have historically experienced disadvantage. Such measures shall not be considered discriminatory where they are designed to achieve genuine equality of opportunity and participation.

3.2 Equity

ILA recognizes that equality does not always mean treating everyone identically. Individuals and communities may have different circumstances, needs, challenges and barriers that require different forms of support to achieve fair outcomes.

Equity refers to the provision of appropriate measures, resources and opportunities based on individual and group circumstances to address disadvantage and promote meaningful participation.

ILA shall apply an equity-based approach by:

- a. identifying barriers affecting different groups and individuals;

- b. providing reasonable support to enable equal participation;
- c. considering different needs in programme design and implementation;
- d. ensuring that vulnerable and marginalized groups receive appropriate attention;
- e. allocating resources in ways that promote fair access and outcomes;
- f. recognizing historical and structural disadvantages affecting certain groups; and
- g. avoiding approaches that unintentionally reinforce existing inequalities.

Examples of equity measures may include:

- reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities;
- targeted outreach to underserved communities;
- accessible communication methods;
- flexible arrangements where appropriate;
- additional support for vulnerable beneficiaries; and
- capacity-building initiatives for underrepresented groups.

ILA shall ensure that equity measures are based on objective assessments of need and are implemented transparently, fairly and consistently.

3.3 Human Rights-Based Approach

ILA shall implement this Policy through a human rights-based approach that places human dignity, equality, participation and accountability at the centre of organizational decision-making.

A human rights-based approach recognizes that individuals are rights holders entitled to protection and participation, while institutions have corresponding responsibilities to respect, protect and promote those rights.

Under this approach, ILA shall:

- a. recognize all beneficiaries, employees and stakeholders as rights holders;
- b. ensure that programmes address underlying causes of discrimination and exclusion;
- c. promote participation of affected communities in decisions affecting them;
- d. strengthen accountability mechanisms for rights violations;
- e. ensure transparency in organizational decisions;

- f. promote empowerment through legal awareness and access to justice;
- g. prioritize vulnerable and marginalized populations;
- h. ensure that interventions comply with international human rights standards; and
- i. address power imbalances that contribute to exclusion or inequality.

The human rights-based approach shall guide ILA's legal aid services, advocacy initiatives, organizational management and partnerships.

3.4 Non-Discrimination

ILA maintains a zero-tolerance approach towards discrimination in all forms. The Organization shall ensure that no person is disadvantaged, excluded or treated unfairly because of personal characteristics protected under applicable law or this Policy.

Discrimination may be direct, indirect, intentional or unintentional and may occur through actions, decisions, policies, practices or institutional systems.

ILA prohibits discrimination based on, including but not limited to:

- a. sex;
- b. gender;
- c. pregnancy or parental status;
- d. disability;
- e. age;
- f. ethnicity;
- g. tribe or cultural background;
- h. religion or belief;
- i. language;
- j. nationality;
- k. social origin;
- l. marital status;

- m. economic status;
- n. political opinion;
- o. health status where protected by law; or
- p. any other legally protected characteristic.

ILA shall prevent discrimination by:

- a. developing fair and transparent policies;
- b. providing equal opportunities;
- c. training staff on non-discrimination principles;
- d. investigating complaints promptly and fairly;
- e. taking corrective action where discrimination occurs;
- f. monitoring organizational practices; and
- g. promoting an inclusive workplace culture.

No employee, manager, volunteer, consultant, partner or representative of ILA shall engage in discriminatory conduct.

3.5 Participation

ILA recognizes meaningful participation as a fundamental element of inclusive governance, effective programming and sustainable development.

Participation requires that individuals and communities affected by organizational decisions have opportunities to contribute, express their views and influence outcomes.

ILA shall promote inclusive participation by:

- a. consulting beneficiaries and communities during programme design;
- b. ensuring that women, persons with disabilities and marginalized groups participate in decision-making processes;
- c. creating safe spaces for individuals to express concerns and provide feedback;
- d. ensuring that information is accessible and understandable;

- e. considering community perspectives during monitoring and evaluation;
- f. engaging stakeholders in identifying solutions to challenges;
- g. encouraging participation in organizational learning processes; and
- h. ensuring that participation is meaningful rather than merely symbolic.

ILA shall pay particular attention to individuals whose voices are often excluded due to social, economic, cultural or physical barriers.

3.6 Accountability

ILA recognizes accountability as essential to achieving gender equality, diversity and social inclusion. The Organization shall establish systems that ensure responsibilities are clearly assigned, commitments are monitored and failures are addressed.

Accountability under this Policy applies to:

- the Board of Directors;
- management;
- employees;
- volunteers;
- consultants;
- partners;
- contractors; and
- all persons acting on behalf of ILA.

ILA shall promote accountability through:

- a. clear institutional responsibilities;
- b. monitoring and reporting mechanisms;
- c. performance indicators;
- d. complaints and feedback mechanisms;
- e. investigations of misconduct;
- f. corrective actions;
- g. transparent decision-making;
- h. regular policy reviews; and

- i. continuous improvement processes.

Managers and supervisors shall have particular responsibility for ensuring that equality and inclusion principles are implemented within their areas of responsibility.

3.7 Inclusion

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes inclusion as a fundamental principle that requires the active identification and removal of barriers preventing individuals and communities from participating fully and equally in organizational activities, accessing justice services and enjoying their rights.

Social exclusion may arise from multiple factors, including poverty, disability, gender inequality, displacement, ethnicity, age, geographical location, language barriers, social stigma or institutional practices. ILA acknowledges that achieving meaningful inclusion requires deliberate actions to ensure that all individuals, particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups, are able to participate and benefit from organizational interventions.

ILA shall promote inclusion by ensuring that:

- a. all organizational programmes and services are designed to reach diverse groups of beneficiaries;
- b. barriers preventing participation are identified, assessed and addressed;
- c. marginalized and vulnerable groups are consulted and included in decision-making processes;
- d. organizational facilities, information and communication systems are accessible;
- e. legal aid services are provided without discrimination;
- f. programme activities consider the specific needs and circumstances of different groups;
- g. staff and partners understand and apply inclusive practices;
- h. organizational policies and procedures promote equal participation;
- i. communities are empowered to participate in identifying solutions to justice and social challenges; and
- j. inclusion outcomes are monitored and evaluated.

ILA shall particularly promote the inclusion of:

- women and girls;
- children;
- persons with disabilities;
- internally displaced persons;
- refugees and returnees;
- youth;
- older persons;
- minority communities;
- survivors of violence;
- persons living in poverty; and
- other groups facing barriers to justice and participation.

The Organization recognizes that inclusion is an ongoing institutional responsibility requiring continuous assessment, adaptation and learning. Therefore, ILA shall regularly review its policies, programmes and practices to identify opportunities for strengthening inclusion.

3.8 Accessibility

ILA recognizes accessibility as an essential requirement for achieving equality and inclusion. Accessibility means ensuring that physical environments, information, communication systems, services and organizational processes can be accessed and used by all persons, including persons with disabilities and individuals facing other barriers.

The Organization shall integrate accessibility considerations into institutional planning, programme implementation, service delivery and organizational management.

ILA shall promote accessibility through:

a. Physical Accessibility

ILA shall seek to ensure that offices, meeting spaces, training venues and service locations are accessible to persons with disabilities and individuals with mobility challenges.

Where possible, the Organization shall consider:

- accessible entrances;
- appropriate pathways;
- suitable seating arrangements;
- accessible sanitation facilities;
- safe movement within facilities; and
- reasonable modifications to existing infrastructure.

b. Information Accessibility

ILA shall promote access to information by ensuring that organizational communications, legal information materials and programme resources are provided in formats that are understandable and accessible to different audiences.

This may include:

- simplified language;
- translation into relevant languages;
- alternative formats;
- visual communication methods; and
- appropriate support for persons with communication barriers.

c. Communication Accessibility

ILA shall ensure that communication methods consider the needs of individuals with different abilities and backgrounds.

Where necessary, the Organization shall provide:

- interpretation support;
- sign language assistance where feasible;
- culturally appropriate communication;
- accessible digital communication; and
- other reasonable communication adjustments.

d. Digital Accessibility

ILA shall promote accessible use of technology, websites, digital platforms and information systems by considering the needs of persons with disabilities and users with different levels of technological access.

e. Programme Accessibility

All programmes and legal aid services shall consider accessibility from the planning stage. Programme managers shall assess whether activities, locations, materials and communication methods enable equal participation.

f. Accessibility in Procurement

ILA shall consider accessibility requirements when procuring goods, services, equipment and infrastructure. Procurement decisions shall, where practicable, promote inclusive solutions.

g. Monitoring Accessibility

ILA shall periodically assess accessibility practices and implement improvements where barriers are identified.

3.9 Intersectionality

ILA recognizes that individuals may experience multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination and disadvantage. Intersectionality acknowledges that characteristics such as gender, disability, age, ethnicity, poverty, displacement, religion and social status may interact and create unique experiences of exclusion.

A person may face barriers not because of one characteristic alone, but because several factors combine to create increased vulnerability.

ILA shall apply an intersectional approach by:

- a. recognizing diverse and overlapping identities and experiences;
- b. considering multiple vulnerabilities during programme planning;
- c. avoiding assumptions based on a single characteristic;
- d. collecting and analysing relevant disaggregated data;
- e. designing interventions that respond to complex needs;
- f. prioritizing individuals facing multiple barriers to justice;
- g. ensuring that institutional policies do not unintentionally exclude specific groups; and
- h. engaging affected communities in identifying appropriate solutions.

For example, a woman with a disability living in a displaced community may face barriers different from those experienced by other women or persons with disabilities. ILA shall ensure that such overlapping challenges are considered when designing services and interventions.

The Organization shall ensure that intersectionality informs:

- legal aid service delivery;
- safeguarding practices;
- human resource decisions;
- community engagement;
- monitoring and evaluation; and
- organizational risk management.

3.10 Do No Harm

ILA shall ensure that all organizational activities are designed and implemented in a manner that prevents unintended negative consequences for individuals, communities and stakeholders.

The Do No Harm principle requires the Organization to assess potential risks, understand local contexts and ensure that interventions do not reinforce existing inequalities, tensions or vulnerabilities.

ILA shall apply the Do No Harm principle by:

- a. conducting appropriate risk assessments before implementing programmes;
- b. considering possible impacts on different groups;
- c. identifying potential protection risks;
- d. preventing activities from increasing discrimination or exclusion;
- e. ensuring confidentiality and safety of beneficiaries;
- f. avoiding practices that may expose individuals to retaliation or harm;
- g. consulting communities and stakeholders;
- h. adapting programmes based on lessons learned; and
- i. monitoring unintended consequences throughout implementation.

Special attention shall be given to programmes involving:

- survivors of violence;
- children;
- persons with disabilities;
- displaced populations;
- marginalized communities; and
- individuals involved in sensitive legal matters.

ILA shall ensure that legal aid services protect the dignity, safety and confidentiality of beneficiaries while avoiding actions that may worsen their circumstances.

3.11 Survivor-Centred Approach

ILA recognizes that individuals who experience violence, discrimination, exploitation, abuse or other forms of harm require support approaches that prioritize their dignity, safety, rights and personal choices.

The Organization shall adopt a survivor-centred approach in all activities involving survivors of violence, abuse, exploitation or discrimination.

This approach shall be guided by the following principles:

a. Safety

ILA shall prioritize the physical and emotional safety of survivors and shall take reasonable measures to prevent further harm.

b. Confidentiality

Information relating to survivors shall be protected and shared only on a need-to-know basis or where legally required.

c. Respect

Survivors shall be treated with dignity, compassion and without judgment.

d. Informed Choice

Survivors shall be provided with adequate information to make informed decisions regarding available options and support services.

e. Non-Discrimination

All survivors shall receive support regardless of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, social status or other characteristics.

f. Empowerment

ILA shall support survivors in regaining control over decisions affecting their lives.

The Organization shall ensure that staff and partners involved in survivor support receive appropriate training and understand their responsibilities.

3.12 Confidentiality

ILA recognizes confidentiality as an essential principle for protecting dignity, privacy, trust and safety. The Organization shall ensure that personal, sensitive and confidential information relating to employees, beneficiaries, complainants, witnesses, partners and stakeholders is handled responsibly.

Confidentiality obligations shall apply to:

- a. personal information;
- b. legal aid client information;
- c. complaints and investigations;

- d. safeguarding concerns;
- e. employee records;
- f. medical or disability-related information;
- g. sensitive programme information; and
- h. any information designated as confidential.

ILA shall ensure that confidential information is:

- a. collected only for legitimate purposes;
- b. accessed only by authorized persons;
- c. stored securely;
- d. protected from unauthorized disclosure;
- e. shared only where necessary and lawful;
- f. handled in accordance with data protection requirements; and
- g. disposed of appropriately when no longer required.

Employees, consultants, volunteers and partners shall maintain confidentiality during and after their engagement with ILA.

Breaches of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action, contractual consequences or other appropriate measures in accordance with applicable laws and organizational policies.

The Organization shall balance confidentiality obligations with responsibilities to report serious misconduct, safeguarding concerns, legal obligations and risks of harm.

CHAPTER FOUR

GENDER EQUALITY

4.1 Institutional Commitment

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes gender equality as a fundamental human right, a core organizational value and a critical requirement for achieving justice, sustainable development and inclusive governance. The Organization acknowledges that gender inequalities remain significant barriers affecting access to justice, participation in decision-making, economic opportunities, protection and the enjoyment of fundamental rights.

ILA is committed to promoting gender equality within its internal operations, institutional governance, workplace culture, programme implementation, legal aid services and engagement with communities and stakeholders.

The Organization recognizes that gender equality requires more than equal treatment in policies and procedures. It requires proactive measures to identify and address structural, social, cultural and institutional barriers that prevent women, men, girls and boys from participating fully and benefiting equally from opportunities and services.

ILA shall therefore integrate gender equality considerations into all areas of organizational work, including:

- a. governance and leadership;
- b. strategic planning;
- c. human resource management;
- d. programme design and implementation;
- e. legal aid service delivery;
- f. community engagement;
- g. monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning;
- h. budgeting and resource allocation;
- i. partnership development; and
- j. institutional risk management.

The Organization shall promote a workplace culture where all individuals are respected, valued and provided equal opportunities regardless of gender.

ILA shall take deliberate measures to:

- a. prevent gender-based discrimination;
- b. promote women's participation and leadership;
- c. ensure gender-responsive programming;
- d. strengthen staff capacity on gender equality;
- e. address harmful gender stereotypes;

- f. promote equitable access to organizational resources and opportunities;
- g. protect employees and beneficiaries from gender-based violence, harassment and exploitation; and
- h. monitor progress toward gender equality objectives.

The Board of Directors and senior management shall provide leadership, oversight and resources necessary to implement gender equality commitments effectively.

4.2 Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is a central strategy through which ILA shall integrate gender considerations into all policies, programmes, projects, organizational systems and decision-making processes.

ILA recognizes that gender issues affect individuals differently depending on social roles, responsibilities, access to resources, power relations and cultural contexts. Therefore, gender considerations shall not be treated as separate activities but shall be incorporated throughout the entire organizational cycle.

ILA shall mainstream gender by ensuring that:

- a. gender considerations are included during policy development;
- b. gender analysis informs programme planning and implementation;
- c. organizational budgets consider gender-related needs;
- d. monitoring frameworks include gender indicators;
- e. staff understand their responsibilities regarding gender equality;
- f. partnerships promote gender-responsive approaches;
- g. communications reflect gender equality principles;
- h. leadership decisions consider gender impacts; and
- i. institutional practices are regularly reviewed for gender responsiveness.

Gender mainstreaming shall apply to all organizational departments and functions, including:

- legal aid programmes;
- human resources;
- finance;

- procurement;
- administration;
- ICT;
- communications;
- MEAL;
- partnerships; and
- governance structures.

Programme managers and departmental heads shall be responsible for ensuring that gender considerations are incorporated into planning, implementation and reporting processes.

4.3 Gender Analysis

ILA shall conduct gender analysis as an essential component of programme development, organizational planning and decision-making.

Gender analysis involves examining the different experiences, roles, needs, opportunities, risks and barriers affecting women, men, girls and boys within a particular context.

The purpose of gender analysis is to ensure that organizational interventions respond effectively to gender-related inequalities and avoid reinforcing existing disadvantages.

ILA shall conduct gender analysis by considering:

- a. the roles and responsibilities of different genders;
- b. access to and control over resources;
- c. participation in decision-making;
- d. legal and institutional barriers;
- e. social and cultural norms;
- f. risks of discrimination and violence;
- g. differences in access to justice;
- h. specific needs of vulnerable groups;
- i. opportunities for empowerment; and
- j. potential impacts of programmes on different genders.

Gender analysis shall inform:

- a. project proposals;
- b. programme strategies;
- c. legal aid interventions;
- d. community outreach activities;
- e. advocacy initiatives;
- f. policy development;
- g. monitoring and evaluation frameworks; and
- h. organizational decision-making.

Where appropriate, ILA shall collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data to support evidence-based planning.

4.4 Gender Responsive Planning

ILA shall ensure that organizational and programme planning processes are gender-responsive and consider the different needs, experiences and circumstances of all genders.

Gender-responsive planning requires the Organization to move beyond identifying gender differences and actively incorporate measures to address inequalities.

ILA shall ensure that planning processes:

- a. identify gender-related challenges and opportunities;
- b. establish gender equality objectives;
- c. include appropriate activities and interventions;
- d. allocate adequate resources;
- e. define measurable gender indicators;
- f. identify responsible persons;
- g. assess potential risks;
- h. consider community perspectives; and

i. incorporate lessons learned.

Programme proposals and operational plans shall, where applicable, include:

- gender analysis findings;
- gender objectives;
- gender-sensitive activities;
- gender indicators;
- gender-related risks;
- inclusion measures; and
- monitoring arrangements.

ILA shall ensure that gender-responsive planning applies to both internal operations and external programmes.

4.5 Gender Responsive Budgeting

ILA recognizes that financial resources are essential for achieving gender equality objectives. Accordingly, the Organization shall adopt gender-responsive budgeting principles in financial planning and resource allocation.

Gender-responsive budgeting involves assessing how financial decisions affect different genders and ensuring that resources are allocated fairly to address identified inequalities.

ILA shall promote gender-responsive budgeting by:

- a. considering gender needs during budget preparation;
- b. allocating resources for gender equality activities;
- c. ensuring that programme budgets support inclusive participation;
- d. monitoring expenditure related to gender objectives;
- e. integrating gender considerations into donor-funded budgets;
- f. assessing whether financial resources benefit different groups equitably; and
- g. strengthening financial accountability for gender commitments.

Departments and programme managers shall be responsible for identifying gender-related resource requirements within their areas of responsibility.

The Finance Unit shall support gender-responsive budgeting by ensuring that relevant expenditures are properly planned, recorded and reported.

4.6 Women's Leadership

ILA recognizes that women's meaningful participation in leadership and decision-making is essential for achieving gender equality and strengthening institutional effectiveness.

The Organization shall promote women's leadership at all levels, including governance structures, management positions, programme leadership and community engagement processes.

ILA shall support women's leadership by:

- a. promoting equal access to leadership opportunities;
- b. encouraging qualified women to apply for leadership positions;
- c. removing barriers that prevent women's advancement;
- d. providing mentorship and professional development opportunities;
- e. promoting inclusive decision-making;
- f. supporting women's participation in governance structures;
- g. recognizing and valuing women's contributions; and
- h. addressing gender stereotypes affecting leadership.

Recruitment and promotion decisions shall be based on competence, qualifications and performance while ensuring that systemic barriers do not prevent qualified women from advancing.

ILA shall encourage balanced representation of women and men in leadership positions while recognizing the importance of merit-based and transparent processes.

4.7 Equal Employment Opportunities

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes equal employment opportunity as a fundamental component of gender equality and an essential requirement for building a diverse, professional and inclusive workforce.

The Organization shall ensure that all employment-related decisions are based on objective criteria, including qualifications, skills, experience, competence, integrity and organizational needs, while ensuring that gender does not become a barrier to employment, advancement or professional development.

ILA shall prohibit discrimination in any stage of the employment cycle, including:

- a. workforce planning;
- b. job design;
- c. recruitment;
- d. advertising of vacancies;
- e. application procedures;
- f. interviews and selection;
- g. appointment and placement;
- h. remuneration and benefits;
- i. performance management;
- j. training and capacity development;
- k. promotion and career advancement;
- l. leadership opportunities; and
- m. termination or separation.

To promote equal employment opportunities, ILA shall:

- a. develop gender-responsive recruitment procedures;
- b. ensure vacancy announcements encourage applications from qualified candidates of all genders;
- c. avoid discriminatory language or requirements in recruitment materials;
- d. use transparent and objective selection criteria;
- e. ensure recruitment panels consider diversity and fairness;
- f. provide equal access to professional development opportunities;

- g. support career progression based on merit and performance;
- h. provide reasonable accommodation where required;
- i. address barriers affecting women's participation in employment; and
- j. monitor workforce composition to assess progress toward gender equality.

ILA recognizes that achieving gender balance may require targeted institutional measures, particularly in areas where women or men are significantly underrepresented. Such measures shall be implemented fairly and consistently while maintaining professional standards.

The Human Resource Unit shall maintain appropriate workforce data to monitor gender representation across departments, roles, leadership positions and employment categories.

4.8 Equal Pay

ILA recognizes equal remuneration for work of equal value as a fundamental principle of fairness, non-discrimination and gender equality.

The Organization shall ensure that employees performing work of equal value receive equitable remuneration and benefits regardless of gender or other protected characteristics.

ILA shall establish remuneration practices based on:

- a. job responsibilities;
- b. qualifications;
- c. professional experience;
- d. skills and competencies;
- e. performance;
- f. organizational salary structures; and
- g. applicable employment regulations.

The Organization shall not permit differences in salary, allowances, benefits or other employment advantages based solely on gender.

ILA shall promote equal pay by:

- a. maintaining transparent salary structures;

- b. regularly reviewing remuneration practices;
- c. ensuring consistent application of employment benefits;
- d. addressing unexplained gender-based pay differences;
- e. maintaining proper employment records; and
- f. ensuring that donor-funded positions follow approved and equitable compensation arrangements.

Where differences in remuneration exist, such differences must be objectively justified based on legitimate factors unrelated to gender.

The Human Resource Unit, in coordination with management, shall periodically review remuneration practices to identify and address potential gender inequalities.

4.9 Prevention of Gender Discrimination

ILA maintains a zero-tolerance approach towards gender discrimination and shall take proactive measures to prevent, identify and address discriminatory practices within the Organization and its programmes.

Gender discrimination includes any distinction, exclusion, restriction or unequal treatment based on gender that limits an individual's rights, opportunities, participation or access to benefits and services.

Gender discrimination may occur through:

a. Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs where an individual is treated less favourably because of gender.

Examples may include:

- refusing employment opportunities because of gender;
- denying promotion based on gender;
- excluding individuals from programmes because of gender;
- applying unequal workplace standards.

b. Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination occurs where a policy, practice or requirement appears neutral but disproportionately disadvantages persons of a particular gender.

Examples may include:

- workplace arrangements that unnecessarily prevent participation;
- programme designs that fail to consider gender-related barriers;
- communication approaches that exclude certain groups.

ILA shall prevent gender discrimination by:

- a. reviewing policies and procedures for discriminatory impacts;
- b. training employees on gender equality;
- c. promoting respectful workplace behaviour;
- d. establishing accessible reporting mechanisms;
- e. investigating complaints fairly and promptly;
- f. protecting complainants from retaliation;
- g. taking corrective and disciplinary action where appropriate; and
- h. monitoring organizational practices.

Managers and supervisors have a specific responsibility to identify and address gender discrimination within their areas of authority.

4.10 Gender-Sensitive Communications

ILA recognizes that communication plays an important role in shaping attitudes, perceptions and social norms relating to gender equality.

The Organization shall ensure that all internal and external communications promote dignity, respect, equality and inclusion.

Gender-sensitive communication requires the Organization to:

- a. use respectful and inclusive language;
- b. avoid gender stereotypes and discriminatory representations;
- c. portray women, men, girls and boys with dignity and fairness;
- d. recognize diverse experiences and perspectives;
- e. ensure communication materials do not reinforce harmful social norms;

- f. promote positive messages about equality and inclusion;
- g. ensure accessibility of communication materials;
- h. consider cultural and linguistic contexts; and
- i. protect the dignity and privacy of beneficiaries.

ILA shall apply gender-sensitive communication principles in:

- reports;
- publications;
- legal awareness materials;
- training resources;
- social media;
- websites;
- photographs;
- videos;
- public statements;
- donor communications; and
- community engagement activities.

Images and stories involving beneficiaries shall only be used with appropriate consent and in accordance with safeguarding and data protection requirements.

The Communications function shall work with programme teams to ensure that organizational messaging reflects ILA's commitment to gender equality and social inclusion.

4.11 Male Engagement

ILA recognizes that achieving gender equality requires the meaningful engagement of all members of society, including men and boys.

The Organization acknowledges that harmful gender norms, stereotypes and unequal power relations affect individuals, families, communities and institutions. Sustainable gender equality requires collective responsibility and constructive participation from all genders.

ILA shall promote positive male engagement by:

- a. encouraging men's participation in gender equality initiatives;
- b. promoting awareness of the benefits of gender equality;
- c. challenging harmful stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes;
- d. encouraging respectful and equitable relationships;

- e. involving men and boys in community awareness activities;
- f. promoting shared responsibility in social, family and professional roles;
- g. encouraging male leaders to support inclusive practices; and
- h. creating opportunities for dialogue on gender equality issues.

Male engagement shall not reduce or replace efforts to empower women or address gender-based inequalities. Rather, it shall complement women's empowerment initiatives by encouraging shared commitment to equality.

ILA shall encourage male employees, volunteers, partners and community members to act as advocates for dignity, respect and equality.

4.12 Gender Equality Performance Indicators

ILA shall establish measurable indicators to monitor progress toward achieving gender equality objectives. Monitoring shall enable the Organization to assess effectiveness, identify challenges, improve practices and strengthen accountability.

Gender equality indicators shall be integrated into organizational monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning systems.

Indicators may include:

Workforce Indicators

- a. percentage of women and men employed by the Organization;
- b. gender representation across departments and positions;
- c. representation of women in leadership roles;
- d. participation in training and professional development;
- e. recruitment and promotion patterns.

Programme Indicators

- a. number and percentage of women and men benefiting from legal aid services;
- b. participation of women in community activities;
- c. accessibility of services for different genders;

- d. gender-related outcomes achieved through programmes;
- e. beneficiary satisfaction levels.

Institutional Indicators

- a. implementation of gender-responsive policies;
- b. availability of gender-disaggregated data;
- c. completion of gender equality training;
- d. allocation of resources for gender activities;
- e. compliance with gender equality standards.

Organizational Culture Indicators

- a. employee perceptions of workplace inclusion;
- b. reported cases of gender discrimination or harassment;
- c. effectiveness of complaint mechanisms;
- d. staff awareness of gender equality responsibilities.

The MEAL Unit, Human Resource Unit and programme departments shall collaborate to collect, analyze and report gender equality data.

Gender equality performance shall be reviewed periodically by management and reported to the Board of Directors as part of institutional accountability.

Where gaps or challenges are identified, ILA shall develop corrective measures, allocate appropriate resources and monitor progress toward improvement.

CHAPTER FIVE

DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

5.1 Diversity Principles

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes diversity as a fundamental strength that enhances organizational effectiveness, innovation, accountability and responsiveness to the communities it serves. Diversity reflects the existence of different identities, experiences, backgrounds, perspectives, abilities and characteristics among individuals and communities.

As a legal aid and human rights organization operating in a diverse social and cultural environment, ILA acknowledges that respecting and managing diversity is essential for promoting equality, reducing exclusion and ensuring effective access to justice.

ILA shall promote a culture where diversity is recognized, respected and valued. The Organization shall ensure that differences among individuals are not sources of discrimination, division or exclusion but are recognized as opportunities for learning, collaboration and institutional growth.

The Organization's diversity principles shall be guided by:

- a. respect for human dignity;
- b. equality of opportunity;
- c. non-discrimination;
- d. inclusion and participation;
- e. recognition of different identities and experiences;
- f. respect for cultural and social differences;
- g. fairness in organizational decision-making;
- h. protection of minority and vulnerable groups;
- i. inclusive leadership; and
- j. accountability for discriminatory conduct.

ILA shall integrate diversity considerations into:

- governance structures;
- recruitment and employment;
- workplace culture;
- programme implementation;
- community engagement;
- partnerships;
- communication practices;
- legal aid service delivery; and
- institutional planning.

The Organization shall ensure that diversity management is not limited to representation but also includes creating an environment where all individuals can participate meaningfully and contribute effectively.

5.2 Cultural Diversity

ILA recognizes that cultural diversity is an important aspect of South Sudanese society and reflects differences in traditions, customs, values, social practices, identities and ways of life.

The Organization acknowledges that cultural diversity contributes to community resilience, social cohesion and the development of effective solutions to justice and social challenges.

ILA shall respect cultural diversity while ensuring that cultural practices and beliefs are consistent with human rights principles, equality and dignity.

The Organization shall promote cultural diversity by:

- a. respecting different cultural backgrounds among staff, beneficiaries and stakeholders;
- b. ensuring that programmes are sensitive to local cultural contexts;
- c. engaging communities through culturally appropriate approaches;
- d. promoting dialogue and mutual understanding among diverse groups;
- e. preventing cultural discrimination and stereotypes;
- f. ensuring that cultural differences do not create barriers to accessing services;
- g. considering cultural factors during programme planning and implementation; and
- h. promoting peaceful coexistence among communities.

ILA recognizes that culture must not be used to justify discrimination, violence, exclusion or denial of fundamental rights. The Organization shall therefore balance cultural sensitivity with its commitment to human rights, gender equality and social inclusion.

5.3 Religious Diversity

ILA recognizes and respects religious diversity among employees, beneficiaries, partners and communities. The Organization acknowledges that individuals may hold different religious beliefs, practices or affiliations and that such differences must be respected within an inclusive environment.

ILA shall ensure that religion or belief does not become a basis for discrimination, exclusion or unequal treatment.

The Organization shall promote religious diversity by:

- a. respecting freedom of religion and belief;
- b. ensuring equal treatment regardless of religious affiliation;
- c. preventing religious harassment or discrimination;
- d. creating a workplace environment based on mutual respect;
- e. accommodating reasonable religious practices where possible;
- f. ensuring that programmes and services are provided impartially;
- g. avoiding religious bias in organizational decision-making; and
- h. promoting peaceful engagement among persons of different beliefs.

ILA shall maintain neutrality in service delivery and shall ensure that legal aid services are provided based on need, rights and eligibility criteria rather than religious identity.

The Organization recognizes that religious diversity can contribute positively to dialogue, peacebuilding and community engagement when managed with respect and tolerance.

5.4 Ethnic Diversity

ILA recognizes the ethnic diversity of South Sudan and acknowledges the importance of ensuring that ethnicity does not become a barrier to participation, employment, leadership or access to justice.

The Organization shall promote an environment where individuals from all ethnic backgrounds are treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

ILA shall prevent ethnic discrimination by:

- a. ensuring fair recruitment and employment practices;
- b. promoting diverse representation within organizational structures;
- c. providing equal access to legal aid services;
- d. preventing ethnic stereotypes and prejudice;
- e. promoting respectful workplace relationships;

- f. ensuring impartial programme implementation;
- g. engaging communities without ethnic bias;
- h. addressing ethnic-based exclusion within organizational processes; and
- i. promoting social cohesion through legal empowerment and community engagement.

ILA shall recognize that ethnic diversity requires sensitivity to historical, social and conflict-related realities. Programme activities shall therefore consider community dynamics and potential risks while promoting equality and peaceful coexistence.

The Organization shall ensure that ethnicity is never used as a basis for denying rights, opportunities or services.

5.5 Linguistic Diversity

ILA recognizes language as an important element of identity, participation and access to justice. Language barriers may prevent individuals from understanding their rights, accessing services and participating effectively in organizational activities.

The Organization shall promote linguistic inclusion by ensuring that language considerations are incorporated into its operations and programmes.

ILA shall:

- a. recognize the importance of local languages in community engagement;
- b. provide information in languages understandable to intended audiences where possible;
- c. use interpretation or translation support when necessary;
- d. ensure that language differences do not prevent access to legal aid services;
- e. consider language needs during programme planning;
- f. promote respectful communication among persons using different languages;
- g. avoid discrimination based on language or accent; and
- h. encourage staff capacity in relevant languages where beneficial to service delivery.

Legal information and awareness materials shall, where practicable, be adapted to ensure accessibility for communities with different linguistic backgrounds.

ILA recognizes that effective communication is essential for meaningful participation, informed decision-making and access to justice.

5.6 Age Diversity

ILA recognizes that individuals of different ages contribute unique experiences, knowledge, skills and perspectives. The Organization shall promote respect and inclusion across all age groups.

Age diversity shall apply to:

- employees;
- volunteers;
- beneficiaries;
- community members;
- partners; and
- stakeholders.

ILA shall prevent age-based discrimination by ensuring that:

- a. employment opportunities are based on competence and suitability;
- b. younger and older persons are treated with respect;
- c. programmes consider the needs of different age groups;
- d. youth participation is encouraged;
- e. older persons are not excluded from services or decision-making;
- f. intergenerational learning is promoted;
- g. age stereotypes are challenged; and
- h. organizational decisions consider the perspectives of different generations.

The Organization recognizes that youth may face barriers related to limited experience and opportunities, while older persons may face barriers related to mobility, technology or social exclusion. ILA shall consider these factors in designing inclusive interventions.

CHAPTER FIVE

DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

5.7 Educational Diversity

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes that individuals possess different educational backgrounds, learning experiences and professional development pathways. The Organization acknowledges that educational diversity contributes to institutional strength by bringing together different perspectives, skills, practical knowledge and approaches to problem-solving.

ILA shall ensure that educational background is considered fairly and objectively in employment, participation and professional development processes. The Organization shall not discriminate against individuals solely because of differences in educational opportunities or learning pathways.

ILA shall promote educational diversity by:

- a. valuing both formal education and practical experience;
- b. ensuring recruitment processes consider relevant skills and competencies;
- c. providing opportunities for continuous learning and professional development;
- d. supporting staff development regardless of educational background;
- e. encouraging knowledge-sharing among employees with different expertise;
- f. recognizing professional qualifications, technical skills and practical experience;
- g. promoting equal opportunities for training and advancement; and
- h. avoiding unnecessary educational barriers that exclude qualified individuals.

The Organization recognizes that individuals from disadvantaged communities may have experienced unequal access to education. Therefore, ILA shall consider broader competencies, experience and potential while maintaining appropriate professional standards.

Where appropriate, ILA shall provide capacity-building opportunities to strengthen staff skills and promote career growth.

5.8 Professional Diversity

ILA recognizes the importance of having a workforce and organizational structure that reflects diverse professional backgrounds, expertise and areas of specialization.

As a multidisciplinary organization, ILA benefits from contributions from legal professionals, programme specialists, finance personnel, administrators, ICT professionals, monitoring and evaluation specialists, community workers and other technical experts.

The Organization shall promote professional diversity by:

- a. encouraging collaboration among different professional disciplines;
- b. recognizing the value of different technical expertise;
- c. promoting teamwork and knowledge exchange;
- d. ensuring fair treatment among different professional categories;
- e. providing opportunities for professional development;
- f. respecting the contributions of both technical and support staff;
- g. preventing professional hierarchy from creating exclusion or disrespect;
- h. promoting interdisciplinary approaches to problem-solving; and
- i. ensuring that professional differences do not become sources of discrimination.

ILA recognizes that effective legal aid and human rights work requires cooperation among different professional fields. Accordingly, the Organization shall promote a culture where diverse expertise is respected and integrated into decision-making.

Professional diversity shall also be considered when forming project teams, committees, working groups and leadership structures to ensure balanced perspectives.

5.9 Diversity in Leadership

ILA recognizes that inclusive leadership is essential for promoting equality, strengthening institutional legitimacy and ensuring that diverse perspectives contribute to organizational decisions.

The Organization shall promote leadership structures that reflect diversity among staff, stakeholders and communities served.

ILA shall encourage diversity in leadership by:

- a. promoting equal opportunities for leadership advancement;
- b. ensuring transparent and merit-based appointment processes;
- c. encouraging participation of women and underrepresented groups in leadership roles;

- d. developing leadership capacity among staff from diverse backgrounds;
- e. promoting inclusive decision-making approaches;
- f. ensuring leadership positions are accessible based on competence and integrity;
- g. addressing barriers that limit representation of marginalized groups;
- h. encouraging leaders to model inclusive behaviour; and
- i. holding leaders accountable for promoting diversity.

Leaders within ILA shall have a responsibility to create an environment where employees feel respected, valued and able to contribute regardless of background.

The Board of Directors and senior management shall periodically review diversity representation within leadership structures and identify opportunities for improvement.

5.10 Diversity Risk Management

ILA recognizes that diversity-related risks may affect organizational effectiveness, workplace harmony, programme outcomes and institutional reputation. Failure to adequately manage diversity issues may contribute to discrimination, conflict, exclusion, reduced staff morale and limited access to services.

The Organization shall integrate diversity risk management into its broader risk management framework.

ILA shall identify, assess and address diversity-related risks, including:

- a. discrimination and unequal treatment;
- b. exclusion of vulnerable groups;
- c. ethnic or cultural tensions;
- d. religious intolerance;
- e. communication barriers;
- f. unequal participation opportunities;
- g. lack of representation in decision-making;
- h. workplace conflicts arising from diversity issues;

- i. inaccessible programmes or services; and
- j. reputational risks arising from failure to uphold inclusion principles.

To manage diversity risks, ILA shall:

- a. conduct periodic diversity assessments;
- b. establish mechanisms for reporting discrimination concerns;
- c. provide staff training on diversity and inclusion;
- d. monitor workforce and programme participation patterns;
- e. promote respectful workplace behaviour;
- f. address conflicts through fair and appropriate processes;
- g. integrate diversity considerations into programme risk assessments;
- h. engage communities to understand diversity-related challenges;
- i. implement corrective actions where risks are identified; and
- j. regularly review diversity management practices.

The Organization shall ensure that diversity risks are considered during:

- strategic planning;
- recruitment;
- programme design;
- partnership development;
- community engagement;
- procurement decisions;
- communications; and
- organizational change processes.

Managers and supervisors shall be responsible for identifying and addressing diversity-related challenges within their areas of responsibility.

CHAPTER SIX

SOCIAL INCLUSION

6.1 Inclusion Principles

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes social inclusion as a fundamental requirement for achieving equality, justice and sustainable development. Social inclusion requires ensuring that all individuals and communities, particularly those facing barriers or disadvantage, have meaningful opportunities to participate in society, access services, exercise their rights and contribute to decision-making processes.

ILA acknowledges that exclusion may result from multiple factors, including poverty, discrimination, disability, displacement, gender inequality, ethnicity, age, social status, geographical location, limited access to information or institutional barriers.

As a legal aid and human rights organization, ILA is committed to ensuring that vulnerable and marginalized individuals are not excluded from accessing justice, protection and opportunities for participation.

ILA shall apply social inclusion principles by:

- a. ensuring equal access to legal aid services and organizational programmes;
- b. identifying and addressing barriers affecting vulnerable groups;
- c. promoting participation of excluded communities in programme design and implementation;
- d. ensuring services are accessible, safe and responsive;
- e. recognizing the dignity and rights of every individual;
- f. promoting non-discrimination in all organizational activities;
- g. strengthening community engagement and accountability;
- h. considering social, economic and cultural factors affecting participation;
- i. promoting empowerment rather than dependency; and
- j. integrating inclusion considerations into planning, monitoring and evaluation.

ILA shall ensure that social inclusion is reflected across all areas of operation, including:

- legal aid service delivery;
- community legal awareness;
- human resource management;

- partnerships;
- advocacy;
- organizational governance;
- communication;
- monitoring and evaluation; and
- resource allocation.

The Organization recognizes that inclusion requires continuous effort and adaptation. Therefore, ILA shall regularly assess its approaches and strengthen measures to ensure that excluded groups are reached and meaningfully supported.

6.2 Persons with Disabilities

ILA recognizes persons with disabilities as rights holders entitled to equal dignity, participation, protection and access to justice. The Organization acknowledges that disability-related exclusion often results not from individual impairments but from environmental, social, communication and institutional barriers.

ILA is committed to promoting disability inclusion throughout its governance structures, employment practices, programmes and legal aid services.

The Organization shall ensure that persons with disabilities:

- a. have equal access to legal aid services;
- b. are treated with dignity and respect;
- c. participate in organizational activities and community processes;
- d. are protected from discrimination, exploitation and abuse;
- e. receive reasonable accommodation where necessary;
- f. have access to information in appropriate formats;
- g. are included in programme planning and evaluation processes; and
- h. are represented in discussions affecting their rights and interests.

ILA shall promote disability inclusion through:

a. Accessible Service Delivery

The Organization shall ensure that legal aid services consider disability-related needs, including physical access, communication support and appropriate assistance.

b. Reasonable Accommodation

ILA shall provide reasonable adjustments where necessary to enable persons with disabilities to participate effectively in employment, training, consultations and service delivery.

c. Disability Awareness

The Organization shall train staff, volunteers and partners on disability rights, inclusion and respectful engagement.

d. Prevention of Discrimination

ILA shall prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities and shall establish mechanisms to address complaints and concerns.

e. Inclusive Programme Design

All programmes shall consider the participation and accessibility needs of persons with disabilities from the planning stage.

ILA recognizes that persons with disabilities may experience additional vulnerabilities due to poverty, gender, displacement or social exclusion. Accordingly, the Organization shall apply an intersectional approach when addressing disability inclusion.

6.3 Youth

ILA recognizes young people as important contributors to social development, peacebuilding, justice promotion and community transformation. The Organization acknowledges that youth may face challenges including unemployment, limited participation opportunities, inadequate access to information and barriers to decision-making.

ILA shall promote youth inclusion by ensuring that young people have opportunities to participate in organizational activities, legal empowerment initiatives and community engagement processes.

The Organization shall:

- a. promote youth access to legal information and justice services;
- b. encourage youth participation in programme planning and implementation;
- c. support youth leadership and capacity development;
- d. provide opportunities for youth volunteers and interns where appropriate;
- e. promote awareness of youth rights and responsibilities;
- f. address barriers affecting youth participation;
- g. encourage youth involvement in peacebuilding and social cohesion initiatives;
- h. consider the needs of vulnerable youth, including unemployed youth and displaced youth; and
- i. promote positive engagement between young people and other generations.

ILA recognizes that young women and young persons with disabilities may face additional barriers and shall ensure that youth programmes consider diverse experiences and needs.

6.4 Older Persons

ILA recognizes older persons as valuable members of society with rights, dignity and contributions that must be respected and protected.

The Organization acknowledges that older persons may experience exclusion due to age-related discrimination, health challenges, mobility limitations, poverty, social isolation or reduced access to information.

ILA shall promote inclusion of older persons by:

- a. ensuring equal access to legal aid services;
- b. respecting their dignity and independence;
- c. considering accessibility needs in service delivery;
- d. preventing age-based discrimination;
- e. including older persons in community consultations where relevant;
- f. recognizing their knowledge and experience;
- g. ensuring communication approaches are appropriate and understandable;

- h. supporting protection against exploitation, abuse and neglect; and
- i. considering the specific needs of older persons affected by conflict or displacement.

ILA shall ensure that older persons are not overlooked in programmes addressing vulnerable communities.

6.5 Minority Communities

ILA recognizes the importance of protecting and including minority communities that may experience social, political, economic or institutional barriers.

Minority communities may face challenges related to representation, access to services, cultural recognition, language barriers or discrimination.

ILA shall promote the inclusion of minority communities by:

- a. ensuring equal access to legal aid services;
- b. preventing discrimination based on minority identity;
- c. respecting cultural and social diversity;
- d. consulting minority communities during relevant programmes;
- e. ensuring communication approaches are appropriate;
- f. promoting participation in decision-making processes;
- g. addressing barriers affecting access to justice;
- h. supporting peaceful coexistence and social cohesion; and
- i. promoting awareness of minority rights.

ILA shall ensure that minority status does not prevent any individual from receiving protection, support or equal treatment.

6.6 Indigenous Communities

ILA recognizes indigenous communities and traditional communities as important holders of cultural knowledge, social identity and collective rights.

The Organization shall respect indigenous and traditional communities while ensuring that engagement is consistent with human rights principles, equality and dignity.

ILA shall promote inclusion of indigenous communities by:

- a. respecting their cultural identity and traditions;
- b. engaging communities through culturally appropriate methods;
- c. ensuring meaningful participation in programmes affecting them;
- d. recognizing traditional knowledge and community perspectives;
- e. addressing barriers to justice and legal information;
- f. promoting protection of rights and dignity;
- g. supporting inclusive dispute resolution approaches where appropriate;
- h. preventing discrimination and exclusion; and
- i. ensuring that cultural practices are consistent with fundamental human rights standards.

ILA recognizes that indigenous and traditional communities may face particular challenges related to geographical isolation, limited services and socio-economic disadvantage. The Organization shall consider these factors when designing interventions.

6.7 Refugees

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes refugees as individuals entitled to protection, dignity, safety and access to fundamental rights regardless of their nationality, origin, legal status or circumstances that caused displacement.

The Organization acknowledges that refugees may face significant barriers, including limited access to justice systems, documentation challenges, language barriers, discrimination, economic hardship and increased risks of exploitation, violence and abuse.

ILA shall promote refugee inclusion by ensuring that refugees have equitable access to legal information, legal assistance and protection services.

The Organization shall:

- a. provide legal aid services to refugees based on need and applicable eligibility criteria;
- b. ensure refugees are not discriminated against because of nationality, displacement status or country of origin;
- c. provide legal awareness on rights, responsibilities and available protection mechanisms;

- d. support refugees facing legal challenges, including documentation issues, protection concerns and access to remedies;
- e. engage refugee communities in programme design and implementation;
- f. ensure communication methods consider language and cultural needs;
- g. establish appropriate referral mechanisms for specialized services;
- h. promote safe and confidential service delivery;
- i. coordinate with relevant humanitarian actors and authorities where appropriate; and
- j. include refugee perspectives in monitoring and evaluation processes.

ILA shall ensure that refugee women, children, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups receive appropriate attention due to their increased exposure to protection risks.

The Organization shall apply humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence when providing services to refugee populations.

6.8 Returnees

ILA recognizes returnees as individuals and families who have returned to their communities of origin or another location after displacement. The Organization acknowledges that returnees may face challenges relating to reintegration, access to property, documentation, livelihoods, social acceptance and access to justice.

ILA shall support the inclusion of returnees by:

- a. promoting equal access to legal aid services;
- b. supporting resolution of legal issues arising from displacement and return;
- c. providing legal information on rights and available remedies;
- d. supporting access to documentation and administrative processes where appropriate;
- e. addressing disputes related to property, land, family matters and reintegration;
- f. promoting peaceful community relations;
- g. engaging host communities and returnees in dialogue;
- h. ensuring that returnees are not subjected to discrimination;

- i. considering the needs of vulnerable returnees; and
- j. coordinating with relevant stakeholders involved in reintegration efforts.

ILA recognizes that return processes may create tensions related to land, resources, identity and community relationships. The Organization shall promote conflict-sensitive approaches and support peaceful resolution mechanisms.

6.9 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

ILA recognizes internally displaced persons (IDPs) as individuals and communities who have been forced to leave their homes but remain within the borders of their country. The Organization acknowledges that displacement may significantly increase vulnerability and create barriers to justice, protection and participation.

IDPs may face challenges including:

- loss of property and documentation;
- limited access to legal institutions;
- increased exposure to violence and exploitation;
- reduced economic opportunities;
- social exclusion;
- lack of information about rights and available services; and
- difficulties accessing justice mechanisms.

ILA shall promote the inclusion of IDPs by:

- a. ensuring equal access to legal aid services;
- b. providing legal awareness on rights and available remedies;
- c. supporting protection of land, housing and property rights;
- d. assisting with documentation-related legal issues;
- e. addressing gender-based violence and protection concerns;
- f. ensuring women, children and persons with disabilities among IDPs receive appropriate support;
- g. conducting outreach activities in displacement-affected communities;
- h. ensuring services are accessible and safe;
- i. engaging IDPs in programme planning and evaluation; and

j. coordinating with humanitarian and government actors.

ILA shall ensure that displacement status does not become a basis for exclusion, discrimination or denial of legal protection.

The Organization shall apply conflict-sensitive and community-based approaches to avoid creating tensions between displaced persons and host communities.

6.10 Survivors of Violence

ILA recognizes survivors of violence as individuals requiring protection, support, dignity and access to justice. The Organization acknowledges that violence may take different forms, including:

- gender-based violence;
- domestic violence;
- sexual violence;
- physical violence;
- psychological abuse;
- exploitation;
- trafficking;
- harmful practices; and
- other forms of human rights violations.

ILA shall adopt a survivor-centred approach when supporting survivors and shall prioritize safety, confidentiality, respect and informed decision-making.

The Organization shall:

- a. provide or facilitate access to legal assistance;
- b. ensure survivors are treated with dignity and without judgment;
- c. protect survivor confidentiality and privacy;
- d. provide information on available legal options;
- e. support referrals to appropriate medical, psychosocial and protection services;
- f. ensure services are accessible to persons with disabilities;
- g. prevent secondary victimization;
- h. ensure staff handling survivor cases receive appropriate training;
- i. establish safe reporting and complaint mechanisms; and

j. promote accountability for perpetrators of violence.

ILA shall recognize that survivors may experience additional vulnerabilities based on gender, age, disability, displacement status, ethnicity or economic circumstances.

The Organization shall ensure that its interventions empower survivors and respect their choices while promoting access to justice and protection.

6.11 Vulnerable Children

ILA recognizes children as individuals requiring special protection due to their age, developmental needs and increased vulnerability to abuse, exploitation, neglect and exclusion.

The Organization shall ensure that vulnerable children receive appropriate consideration in all programmes involving children.

Vulnerable children may include:

- children affected by conflict;
- separated or unaccompanied children;
- children with disabilities;
- children living in poverty;
- children affected by violence or abuse;
- displaced children;
- children in contact with the justice system;
- children without adequate family support; and
- children experiencing discrimination or exclusion.

ILA shall promote the protection and inclusion of vulnerable children by:

- a. applying the best interests of the child principle;
- b. ensuring child-sensitive legal aid services;
- c. protecting children from exploitation, abuse and harm;
- d. promoting access to legal information;
- e. ensuring confidentiality and privacy;
- f. establishing appropriate referral mechanisms;
- g. supporting children's participation in matters affecting them;
- h. training staff on child protection principles;

- i. working with relevant child protection actors; and
- j. ensuring programmes are safe and accessible.

ILA shall ensure that children are not excluded because of disability, gender, ethnicity, social background or other circumstances.

All organizational activities involving children shall comply with safeguarding standards and applicable child protection requirements.

6.12 Marginalized Populations

ILA recognizes marginalized populations as groups or individuals who experience systematic barriers that limit their ability to participate fully in society, access justice or enjoy their rights.

Marginalization may result from factors including:

- poverty;
- social exclusion;
- discrimination;
- disability;
- displacement;
- geographical isolation;
- limited education;
- gender inequality;
- ethnicity;
- social status; or
- other forms of disadvantage.

ILA shall promote the inclusion of marginalized populations by:

- a. identifying barriers affecting access to justice;
- b. designing programmes responsive to their needs;
- c. ensuring equal access to legal services;
- d. conducting outreach to underserved communities;
- e. promoting participation in decision-making;
- f. providing accessible information;
- g. strengthening community awareness;
- h. engaging local stakeholders;

- i. monitoring whether marginalized groups are benefiting from interventions; and
- j. adapting programmes based on evidence and feedback.

The Organization shall ensure that marginalized populations are not treated merely as beneficiaries but as active participants and rights holders.

ILA shall prioritize empowerment approaches that strengthen individuals' ability to understand, claim and exercise their rights.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ACCESSIBILITY AND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

7.1 Accessibility Standards

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes accessibility as a fundamental requirement for achieving genuine equality, diversity and social inclusion. Accessibility ensures that all individuals, including persons with disabilities and persons experiencing other barriers, can participate fully in organizational activities, access information, use services and contribute to decision-making processes.

ILA acknowledges that barriers may exist within physical environments, communication systems, information platforms, workplace practices and programme delivery mechanisms. The Organization shall therefore adopt proactive measures to identify, reduce and eliminate accessibility barriers.

Accessibility shall be integrated into all aspects of ILA operations, including:

- a. organizational infrastructure;
- b. workplace practices;
- c. legal aid services;
- d. community outreach;
- e. communication materials;
- f. digital systems;
- g. procurement processes;
- h. training and events;
- i. monitoring and evaluation; and

j. partnership arrangements.

ILA shall apply the following accessibility principles:

a. Universal Design

The Organization shall promote approaches that make environments, services and information usable by the widest possible range of people without requiring special adaptation.

b. Equality of Access

Individuals shall have equal opportunities to access organizational services, resources and participation mechanisms.

c. Reasonable Accommodation

Where universal accessibility is not immediately achievable, ILA shall provide reasonable adjustments to enable meaningful participation.

d. Inclusion from the Beginning

Accessibility shall be considered during planning and design stages rather than treated as an afterthought.

e. Participation of Persons with Disabilities

ILA shall consult persons with disabilities and relevant stakeholders when developing accessibility measures.

The Organization shall ensure that accessibility requirements are incorporated into policies, operational plans and programme strategies.

7.2 Physical Accessibility

ILA recognizes that physical barriers can prevent individuals from accessing offices, services, meetings, training activities and community programmes. The Organization shall therefore seek to ensure that physical environments are safe, accessible and inclusive.

ILA shall promote physical accessibility by considering:

- a. accessible entrances and pathways;
- b. safe movement within organizational premises;

- c. appropriate office arrangements;
- d. accessible meeting and training spaces;
- e. availability of suitable seating arrangements;
- f. accessible sanitation facilities where possible;
- g. clear signage and directions;
- h. safe emergency procedures;
- i. accessibility considerations when selecting programme locations; and
- j. removal or reduction of unnecessary physical barriers.

When establishing new offices, renovating facilities or selecting venues for organizational activities, ILA shall consider accessibility requirements as part of planning and decision-making.

Where existing infrastructure cannot immediately meet accessibility standards, the Organization shall identify practical improvements based on available resources and operational priorities.

ILA shall also consider accessibility when conducting community outreach activities to ensure that beneficiaries are not excluded because of location-related barriers.

7.3 Information Accessibility

ILA recognizes that access to information is essential for participation, empowerment and access to justice. Information that is difficult to understand, unavailable or inaccessible may prevent individuals from exercising their rights.

The Organization shall ensure that important information is provided in formats that are accessible and appropriate for different audiences.

ILA shall promote information accessibility by:

- a. using clear and understandable language;
- b. avoiding unnecessary technical terminology;
- c. providing information in relevant languages where possible;
- d. considering literacy levels of intended audiences;
- e. adapting materials for persons with disabilities where required;

- f. ensuring legal information is understandable to communities;
- g. using appropriate communication formats;
- h. providing sufficient information for informed decision-making; and
- i. ensuring confidentiality when handling personal information.

Legal aid materials, awareness resources, training materials and public communications shall be designed with consideration for diverse information needs.

Where appropriate, ILA may use:

- simplified explanations;
- translated materials;
- visual materials;
- audio formats;
- community-based communication approaches; and
- alternative formats.

7.4 Communication Accessibility

ILA recognizes that effective communication is essential for meaningful participation and equal access to justice. Communication barriers may affect persons with disabilities, persons from different linguistic backgrounds, individuals with limited literacy and marginalized communities.

ILA shall promote communication accessibility by ensuring that organizational communication methods are inclusive and responsive.

The Organization shall:

- a. provide communication support where reasonably necessary;
- b. consider language differences during service delivery;
- c. promote respectful and inclusive communication;
- d. use culturally appropriate communication approaches;
- e. support interpretation or translation where feasible;
- f. consider the needs of persons with hearing, visual or speech-related disabilities;
- g. ensure that staff understand inclusive communication practices;
- h. avoid communication practices that reinforce stereotypes or exclusion; and

- i. ensure beneficiaries understand their rights and available options.

In legal aid services, ILA shall ensure that clients are able to understand legal information, procedures and available remedies before making decisions affecting their rights.

7.5 Digital Accessibility

ILA recognizes that technology increasingly influences access to information, communication and services. Digital accessibility ensures that electronic systems and digital resources can be used by individuals with different abilities and circumstances.

The Organization shall promote digital accessibility by considering:

- a. accessibility of websites and online platforms;
- b. usability of digital information resources;
- c. compatibility with assistive technologies where possible;
- d. accessible electronic documents;
- e. availability of alternative communication methods;
- f. digital literacy considerations;
- g. data protection requirements; and
- h. equitable access to technology-based services.

ILA shall ensure that digital tools used for programme implementation, communication, monitoring and administration do not unintentionally exclude persons with disabilities or individuals with limited technological access.

Where digital systems create barriers, the Organization shall consider alternative access methods.

7.6 Workplace Accommodation

ILA recognizes that employees may require reasonable accommodation to perform their duties effectively and participate equally in workplace activities.

Reasonable accommodation refers to appropriate adjustments or modifications provided to individuals where necessary to ensure equal participation, unless such adjustments create disproportionate or unreasonable burden on the Organization.

Workplace accommodation may include:

- a. modification of work arrangements;
- b. accessible workspaces;
- c. adjustments to equipment or tools;
- d. flexible scheduling where appropriate;
- e. communication support;
- f. accessibility adjustments during recruitment processes;
- g. additional support during training activities; and
- h. other practical measures based on individual needs.

Requests for reasonable accommodation shall be handled fairly, respectfully and confidentially.

ILA shall ensure that employees requesting accommodation are not discriminated against or disadvantaged because of their needs.

The Human Resource Unit shall coordinate workplace accommodation processes in consultation with relevant managers and employees concerned.

7.7 Programme Accessibility

ILA shall ensure that accessibility is integrated into the design and implementation of all programmes and legal aid interventions.

Programme teams shall consider:

- a. who may face barriers to participation;
- b. whether programme locations are accessible;
- c. whether communication methods are appropriate;
- d. whether activities consider different needs;
- e. whether vulnerable groups are represented;
- f. whether beneficiaries can safely access services;
- g. whether feedback mechanisms are accessible; and

h. whether monitoring processes capture inclusion outcomes.

Programme managers shall ensure that accessibility considerations are reflected in:

- project proposals;
- implementation plans;
- budgets;
- risk assessments;
- monitoring frameworks; and
- evaluation processes.

ILA shall prioritize accessibility in legal aid outreach activities to ensure that justice services reach individuals who may otherwise remain excluded.

7.8 Procurement Considerations

ILA recognizes that procurement decisions can significantly influence accessibility and inclusion. The Organization shall therefore integrate accessibility considerations into procurement processes.

Where appropriate, procurement decisions shall consider:

- a. accessibility of equipment and facilities;
- b. suitability of goods and services for diverse users;
- c. inclusive design principles;
- d. accessibility requirements in contracts;
- e. supplier commitment to inclusion standards; and
- f. compliance with organizational policies.

Examples may include consideration of:

- accessible office equipment;
- inclusive communication materials;
- accessible venues;
- technology solutions supporting different users; and

- services that accommodate diverse needs.

Procurement personnel shall work with relevant departments to ensure that accessibility requirements are identified during planning and purchasing processes.

7.9 Monitoring Accessibility

ILA shall establish mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of accessibility measures and identify areas requiring improvement.

Accessibility monitoring shall include:

- a. assessment of physical environments;
- b. review of information and communication practices;
- c. feedback from beneficiaries and employees;
- d. identification of accessibility barriers;
- e. review of reasonable accommodation requests;
- f. assessment of programme accessibility;
- g. tracking corrective actions; and
- h. reporting on accessibility improvements.

The MEAL Unit, Human Resource Unit, Programme Departments and relevant management structures shall collaborate to monitor accessibility performance.

ILA shall use monitoring findings to strengthen institutional practices, improve service delivery and promote continuous learning.

Accessibility challenges identified through monitoring shall be addressed through appropriate corrective measures, resource allocation and policy improvements.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

8.1 Recruitment

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes that fair, transparent and inclusive recruitment processes are essential for promoting gender equality, diversity and social inclusion within the Organization.

ILA shall ensure that recruitment practices are based on merit, competence, integrity, qualifications, experience and organizational needs while eliminating barriers that may unfairly disadvantage individuals based on gender, disability, ethnicity, age, social background or other protected characteristics.

The Organization shall apply gender-responsive and inclusive recruitment practices throughout the recruitment cycle, including workforce planning, vacancy announcement, candidate selection and appointment.

ILA shall promote inclusive recruitment by:

- a. ensuring job descriptions are clear, objective and free from discriminatory requirements;
- b. using inclusive language in vacancy announcements;
- c. encouraging applications from qualified candidates of diverse backgrounds;
- d. ensuring recruitment processes are accessible to persons with disabilities;
- e. applying transparent selection criteria;
- f. ensuring recruitment panels are fair and impartial;
- g. considering diversity and inclusion during workforce planning;
- h. avoiding unnecessary barriers that exclude qualified candidates;
- i. maintaining confidentiality and fairness throughout recruitment; and
- j. documenting recruitment decisions appropriately.

Where appropriate, ILA shall take reasonable measures to improve representation of underrepresented groups while maintaining professional standards and merit-based selection.

Recruitment decisions shall not be influenced by:

- gender;
- ethnicity;
- religion;
- disability;
- age;

- social status;
- political affiliation;
- family background; or
- other irrelevant personal characteristics.

The Human Resource Unit shall ensure compliance with this Policy and coordinate with hiring managers to promote inclusive recruitment practices.

8.2 Selection

ILA shall ensure that employee selection processes are fair, objective and consistent with principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.

Selection decisions shall be based on candidates' ability to perform the requirements of the position and shall not be influenced by discriminatory considerations.

ILA shall promote fair selection by:

- a. establishing clear selection criteria before recruitment begins;
- b. using structured interview processes;
- c. applying consistent assessment methods;
- d. ensuring selection panels understand equality and inclusion principles;
- e. providing reasonable accommodation during assessments where required;
- f. documenting selection decisions;
- g. ensuring confidentiality of candidate information;
- h. avoiding unconscious bias during decision-making; and
- i. ensuring unsuccessful candidates are treated respectfully.

Selection panels shall consider candidates based on:

- qualifications;
- experience;
- technical competence;
- behavioural competencies;
- commitment to organizational values;
- ability to work effectively with diverse communities; and

- other legitimate job-related requirements.

ILA shall encourage diverse representation within recruitment panels where practical to strengthen fairness and reduce bias.

8.3 Promotion

ILA recognizes that equal access to promotion opportunities is essential for achieving gender equality and building an inclusive workforce.

The Organization shall ensure that promotion decisions are based on:

- a. performance;
- b. competence;
- c. qualifications;
- d. experience;
- e. demonstrated leadership;
- f. organizational requirements; and
- g. readiness for increased responsibility.

ILA shall prohibit discrimination in promotion decisions and shall ensure that gender, disability, ethnicity, age or other personal characteristics do not unfairly limit career advancement.

To promote equitable promotion practices, ILA shall:

- a. communicate promotion criteria clearly;
- b. provide equal access to development opportunities;
- c. encourage qualified employees from diverse backgrounds to compete for advancement;
- d. identify and address barriers affecting career progression;
- e. maintain transparent promotion processes;

- f. provide feedback to employees;
- g. monitor promotion patterns; and
- h. address disparities where identified.

The Organization shall pay particular attention to ensuring that women and underrepresented groups have fair opportunities to progress into leadership and decision-making positions.

8.4 Performance Management

ILA recognizes performance management as an important tool for staff development, accountability and professional growth. Performance management shall be conducted fairly, transparently and without discrimination.

The Organization shall ensure that performance evaluation processes:

- a. use clear and objective performance standards;
- b. focus on job responsibilities and organizational objectives;
- c. provide constructive feedback;
- d. identify professional development needs;
- e. recognize employee achievements;
- f. support career progression;
- g. avoid gender or other forms of bias;
- h. encourage inclusive workplace behaviours; and
- i. promote accountability for organizational values.

Managers shall evaluate employees based on their actual performance and not on stereotypes or assumptions relating to gender, disability, age, ethnicity or other characteristics.

Performance assessments may include consideration of:

- achievement of work objectives;
- teamwork and collaboration;
- professional conduct;
- respect for diversity and inclusion;

- commitment to organizational values; and
- contribution to programme outcomes.

Employees shall have opportunities to discuss performance expectations, receive feedback and raise concerns regarding unfair evaluation.

8.5 Career Development

ILA recognizes that professional growth opportunities contribute to employee motivation, institutional capacity and gender equality.

The Organization shall provide equitable opportunities for employees to develop their knowledge, skills and professional abilities.

ILA shall promote career development through:

- a. training and capacity-building opportunities;
- b. professional development planning;
- c. access to relevant learning resources;
- d. leadership development programmes;
- e. mentoring and coaching;
- f. exposure to new responsibilities;
- g. opportunities for skills enhancement; and
- h. support for continuous learning.

Career development opportunities shall be provided based on:

- organizational priorities;
- individual performance;
- professional needs;
- available resources; and
- future responsibilities.

ILA shall ensure that women, persons with disabilities and employees from underrepresented groups have fair access to professional development opportunities.

The Organization shall identify barriers that may prevent certain groups from benefiting from career development and shall implement reasonable measures to address them.

8.6 Mentorship

ILA recognizes mentorship as an effective approach for strengthening professional growth, leadership development and knowledge transfer.

The Organization shall promote mentorship opportunities that support employees, particularly those who may face barriers to advancement.

Mentorship programmes may support:

- a. professional guidance;
- b. leadership development;
- c. skills improvement;
- d. knowledge sharing;
- e. confidence building;
- f. career planning;
- g. institutional learning; and
- h. succession planning.

ILA shall encourage experienced staff members to support colleagues through constructive mentorship relationships based on respect, confidentiality and professional development.

Mentorship opportunities shall be accessible without discrimination and shall encourage participation of women, young professionals and underrepresented groups.

Mentors shall be expected to:

- provide appropriate guidance;
- encourage professional growth;
- promote ethical conduct;
- respect confidentiality;
- support inclusive workplace practices; and
- avoid conflicts of interest.

8.7 Flexible Working Arrangements

ILA recognizes that employees may have different personal responsibilities and circumstances that affect their ability to participate fully in employment. Flexible working arrangements can contribute to employee well-being, retention and equality.

Subject to operational requirements, the Organization may consider flexible working arrangements, including:

- a. adjusted working schedules;
- b. flexible start and end times;
- c. remote or hybrid work arrangements where feasible;
- d. temporary adjustments for personal circumstances;
- e. flexible arrangements for employees requiring reasonable accommodation; and
- f. other approved workplace flexibility measures.

Flexible working arrangements shall be implemented fairly and shall not negatively affect career opportunities, performance evaluation or professional recognition.

Managers shall ensure that flexibility arrangements maintain:

- accountability;
- productivity;
- communication;
- confidentiality;
- service quality; and
- teamwork.

ILA shall particularly consider flexible arrangements that support gender equality, including responsibilities related to family care and personal well-being

8.8 Family-Friendly Workplace

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes that employees have responsibilities beyond the workplace and that creating a supportive working environment contributes to employee well-being, productivity, retention and gender equality.

The Organization shall promote a family-friendly workplace that enables employees to balance professional responsibilities with legitimate family and personal obligations while maintaining effective organizational performance.

ILA shall promote a family-friendly workplace by:

- a. respecting employees' family responsibilities;
- b. promoting reasonable flexibility where operationally possible;
- c. supporting employees during significant family-related circumstances;
- d. preventing discrimination based on family responsibilities;
- e. promoting equal participation of women and men in workplace opportunities;
- f. recognizing the importance of work-life balance;
- g. supporting employees returning from family-related leave;
- h. ensuring confidentiality and sensitivity when addressing personal circumstances; and
- i. creating a respectful workplace culture.

ILA shall ensure that family responsibilities do not unfairly limit:

- recruitment opportunities;
- promotion;
- professional development;
- participation in training;
- access to benefits; or
- career advancement.

The Organization recognizes that women often experience disproportionate burdens arising from unpaid care responsibilities. Therefore, ILA shall promote shared responsibility among employees and encourage workplace practices that support equality between women and men.

Managers shall play an important role in implementing family-friendly practices by supporting employees while maintaining accountability for organizational objectives.

8.9 Maternity Protection

ILA recognizes maternity protection as an essential element of gender equality, employee welfare and protection of women's rights.

The Organization shall provide appropriate maternity protection measures consistent with applicable labour standards, organizational policies and available resources.

ILA shall ensure that pregnant employees and employees on maternity leave are protected from discrimination, unfair treatment or adverse employment consequences.

Maternity protection shall include:

- a. maternity leave in accordance with applicable legal requirements and organizational provisions;
- b. protection from dismissal or disadvantage because of pregnancy or maternity responsibilities;
- c. reasonable workplace adjustments where necessary;
- d. support for safe continuation of work during pregnancy;
- e. protection of confidentiality regarding pregnancy-related information;
- f. fair treatment before, during and after maternity leave;
- g. support for reintegration into employment after maternity leave; and
- h. consideration of breastfeeding and childcare-related needs where applicable.

ILA shall ensure that pregnancy or maternity responsibilities do not negatively affect:

- performance assessment;
- employment status;
- access to training;
- promotion opportunities;
- professional development; or
- workplace dignity.

Managers shall ensure that employees returning from maternity leave receive appropriate support and are not disadvantaged because of their absence.

The Organization shall promote awareness among staff regarding maternity protection rights and responsibilities.

8.10 Paternity Leave

ILA recognizes the importance of encouraging shared family responsibilities and promoting gender equality through support for fathers and caregivers.

The Organization shall provide paternity leave or related family support arrangements in accordance with applicable labour requirements and organizational provisions.

Paternity leave shall support employees to:

- a. participate in early childcare responsibilities;
- b. support their partners during childbirth or adoption-related circumstances;
- c. strengthen family relationships;
- d. promote shared caregiving responsibilities; and
- e. contribute to reducing unequal care burdens.

ILA shall ensure that employees taking approved paternity leave are not subjected to discrimination or negative career consequences.

The Organization encourages a workplace culture where caregiving responsibilities are recognized as a shared responsibility between women and men.

Managers shall support employees exercising family-related leave rights while ensuring continuity of organizational operations.

8.11 Prevention of Workplace Discrimination

ILA maintains a zero-tolerance approach towards workplace discrimination and is committed to creating a professional environment where all employees are treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

Workplace discrimination includes any unfair treatment, exclusion, restriction or disadvantage based on personal characteristics unrelated to an individual's ability to perform their duties.

Discrimination may occur based on:

- gender;
- disability;
- ethnicity;
- religion;
- age;
- language;
- social background;
- marital or family status;
- pregnancy;
- health status where protected by law;
- or other prohibited grounds.

ILA shall prevent workplace discrimination by:

- a. implementing fair employment policies;
- b. providing staff awareness training;
- c. promoting respectful workplace behaviour;
- d. ensuring equal access to opportunities;
- e. establishing reporting mechanisms;
- f. investigating complaints fairly and confidentially;
- g. protecting complainants and witnesses from retaliation;
- h. taking corrective and disciplinary action where necessary; and
- i. monitoring workplace culture.

Managers and supervisors have a responsibility to:

- a. promote inclusive behaviour;
- b. address discriminatory conduct promptly;
- c. treat employees fairly;
- d. support diversity and inclusion objectives; and

- e. report serious concerns appropriately.

Employees shall not engage in discriminatory conduct, whether directly or indirectly, through words, actions, decisions or workplace practices.

Any employee found responsible for discrimination may be subject to disciplinary measures in accordance with ILA policies and applicable law.

8.12 Exit Management

ILA recognizes that employee separation is an important stage of the employment relationship and shall ensure that exit processes are conducted fairly, respectfully and transparently.

Exit management shall apply equally to all employees regardless of gender, disability, age, ethnicity or other personal characteristics.

ILA shall ensure that exit processes:

- a. comply with applicable employment requirements;
- b. respect employee dignity;
- c. are based on legitimate organizational or employment reasons;
- d. provide appropriate notice where required;
- e. ensure fair settlement of employment obligations;
- f. protect confidential employee information;
- g. provide opportunities for feedback;
- h. support orderly transfer of responsibilities; and
- i. maintain professional relationships after separation.

Exit processes may include:

a. Exit Interviews

ILA may conduct exit interviews to understand employee experiences, identify workplace challenges and improve organizational practices.

Exit interviews may consider:

- workplace culture;
- equality and inclusion experiences;
- management practices;
- professional development opportunities;
- reasons for departure; and
- recommendations for improvement.

b. Protection Against Retaliation

Employees leaving the Organization shall not face retaliation for raising concerns, reporting misconduct or participating in investigations.

c. Equal Treatment During Separation

Termination, resignation, redundancy or other forms of separation shall be handled without discrimination.

The Organization shall review exit information periodically to identify trends relating to gender equality, diversity and workplace inclusion.

CHAPTER NINE

PREVENTION OF HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE

9.1 Zero Tolerance Policy

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, inclusive and professional environment free from harassment, discrimination, violence, exploitation, abuse and any form of misconduct.

The Organization recognizes that harassment, discrimination and violence undermine human dignity, violate individual rights, negatively affect workplace relationships and may prevent individuals from fully participating in organizational activities and accessing services.

ILA adopts a zero-tolerance approach towards:

- a. harassment;
- b. sexual harassment;
- c. discrimination;
- d. bullying;
- e. abuse of authority;

- f. intimidation;
- g. exploitation;
- h. retaliation;
- i. gender-based violence;
- j. psychological or physical violence; and
- k. any conduct that creates a hostile, unsafe or discriminatory environment.

This commitment applies to:

- Board members;
- employees;
- volunteers;
- interns;
- consultants;
- contractors;
- partners;
- community representatives; and
- any person acting on behalf of ILA.

ILA shall take proactive measures to prevent misconduct through:

- a. awareness raising;
- b. staff training;
- c. clear policies and procedures;
- d. accessible reporting mechanisms;
- e. fair investigations;
- f. accountability measures; and
- g. continuous monitoring.

All individuals associated with ILA have a responsibility to promote a culture of respect, dignity and inclusion.

9.2 Workplace Harassment

ILA defines workplace harassment as any unwelcome conduct, behaviour or communication that has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, offensive or unsafe working environment.

Harassment may be verbal, physical, written, digital or behavioural in nature.

Examples of workplace harassment may include:

- a. offensive comments or jokes;
- b. repeated unwanted behaviour;
- c. insults or degrading remarks;
- d. intimidation or threats;
- e. unwanted personal attention;
- f. exclusion or isolation of individuals;
- g. spreading harmful rumours;
- h. inappropriate communication through digital platforms;
- i. humiliating or disrespectful treatment; and
- j. conduct that undermines a person's dignity.

Harassment may occur between:

- supervisors and employees;
- colleagues;
- employees and partners;
- staff and beneficiaries;
- consultants and organizational personnel; or
- any individuals connected to ILA activities.

ILA recognizes that harassment may affect individuals differently depending on gender, disability, age, ethnicity, social status or other circumstances.

The Organization shall ensure that workplace concerns are addressed promptly, fairly and confidentially.

Employees and associated persons shall avoid behaviour that may reasonably be perceived as disrespectful, threatening or harmful.

9.3 Sexual Harassment

ILA recognizes sexual harassment as a serious violation of human dignity, equality and professional ethics. The Organization strictly prohibits all forms of sexual harassment within the workplace, programmes, service delivery environments and organizational activities.

Sexual harassment refers to any unwelcome sexual conduct, behaviour or communication that affects an individual's dignity, employment, participation or safety.

Sexual harassment may include:

- a. unwanted sexual comments or suggestions;
- b. sexual jokes or remarks;
- c. inappropriate touching or physical contact;
- d. requests for sexual favours;
- e. sexual advances;
- f. displaying inappropriate sexual materials;
- g. sending unwanted sexual messages or images;
- h. making employment or programme benefits conditional on sexual cooperation;
- i. threatening negative consequences for refusing sexual conduct; or
- j. any other unwelcome sexual behaviour.

Sexual harassment may occur regardless of:

- gender of the person affected;
- gender of the person responsible;
- employment relationship;
- location where the conduct occurs; or
- method of communication.

ILA shall prevent sexual harassment by:

- a. providing awareness training;
- b. establishing reporting mechanisms;
- c. ensuring confidential handling of complaints;
- d. protecting complainants and witnesses;
- e. conducting impartial investigations; and
- f. taking appropriate disciplinary action.

All staff and representatives of ILA must maintain professional boundaries and respect the dignity of colleagues, clients and communities.

9.4 Bullying

ILA recognizes bullying as unacceptable behaviour that may negatively affect individual well-being, workplace relationships and organizational effectiveness.

Bullying refers to repeated or serious behaviour intended to intimidate, undermine, humiliate or harm another person.

Bullying may include:

- a. repeated verbal attacks;
- b. deliberate humiliation;
- c. unfair targeting of individuals;
- d. unreasonable criticism;
- e. social exclusion;
- f. spreading malicious information;
- g. misuse of authority to intimidate;
- h. deliberate obstruction of work;

- i. threats or aggressive behaviour; and
- j. other conduct that creates psychological harm.

ILA shall address bullying through:

- a. awareness and prevention measures;
- b. early identification of concerns;
- c. respectful conflict resolution;
- d. investigation of serious allegations;
- e. corrective action; and
- f. disciplinary procedures where appropriate.

Managers shall have particular responsibility to prevent bullying by promoting respectful communication and addressing harmful workplace behaviour.

Employees shall contribute to a workplace culture based on cooperation, professionalism and mutual respect.

9.5 Abuse of Authority

ILA recognizes that individuals in positions of authority have a responsibility to exercise power responsibly, fairly and ethically.

Abuse of authority occurs when a person misuses their position, influence or power to harm, disadvantage, intimidate or improperly benefit themselves or others.

Examples of abuse of authority may include:

- a. using authority to obtain personal benefits;
- b. threatening employees or beneficiaries;
- c. unfairly denying opportunities;
- d. favouritism or discrimination;
- e. pressuring individuals to act improperly;

- f. interfering with legitimate complaints;
- g. misusing organizational resources or information; and
- h. creating fear or dependency through improper conduct.

ILA shall ensure that authority is exercised in accordance with:

- organizational values;
- ethical standards;
- human rights principles;
- accountability requirements; and
- professional responsibilities.

Leaders and managers shall be held accountable for maintaining fair, transparent and respectful relationships with employees and stakeholders.

9.6 Victimization

ILA prohibits victimization of any person who raises concerns, reports misconduct, participates in investigations or supports another person seeking assistance.

Victimization refers to unfair treatment or retaliation against an individual because they exercised their rights or participated in a legitimate organizational process.

Victimization may include:

- a. threats or intimidation;
- b. unfair disciplinary action;
- c. exclusion from opportunities;
- d. workplace hostility;
- e. negative treatment after reporting concerns;
- f. harassment of complainants or witnesses;
- g. spreading harmful information; or
- h. any action intended to discourage reporting.

ILA shall protect individuals who:

- submit complaints;
- provide information;
- participate in investigations;
- raise safeguarding concerns; or
- seek support.

Any person found responsible for victimization may face disciplinary or contractual consequences.

9.7 Reporting Procedures

ILA shall establish accessible, confidential and safe mechanisms for reporting harassment, discrimination, violence and other forms of misconduct.

Reports may be submitted by:

- employees;
- beneficiaries;
- community members;
- volunteers;
- partners;
- contractors; or
- any person affected by ILA activities.

Reporting mechanisms shall be designed to ensure:

- a. accessibility;
- b. confidentiality;
- c. protection from retaliation;
- d. timely response;
- e. fair treatment;
- f. respect for complainants' rights; and
- g. appropriate documentation.

Reports may be made through designated channels established by ILA, including relevant management structures, Human Resource Unit, safeguarding focal persons or other approved mechanisms.

Individuals making reports shall be treated with dignity and shall receive appropriate information regarding available procedures.

ILA shall encourage reporting of misconduct while respecting individuals' choices and confidentiality.

9.8 Investigations

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes that effective investigation processes are essential for ensuring accountability, protecting affected individuals and maintaining trust in organizational systems.

ILA shall ensure that all allegations of harassment, discrimination, violence, abuse, exploitation or other misconduct are handled seriously, fairly and promptly.

Investigations shall be conducted in accordance with the principles of:

- a. fairness;
- b. impartiality;
- c. confidentiality;
- d. respect for all parties;
- e. protection of complainants and witnesses;
- f. due process;
- g. avoidance of conflicts of interest; and
- h. evidence-based decision-making.

Upon receiving a complaint or allegation, ILA shall:

- a. acknowledge receipt of the concern where appropriate;
- b. assess the nature and seriousness of the allegation;
- c. determine appropriate next steps;
- d. take immediate protection measures where necessary;
- e. appoint an appropriate investigator or investigation team;
- f. collect and review relevant information;

- g. provide affected parties an opportunity to be heard;
- h. maintain confidentiality throughout the process; and
- i. document findings and recommendations.

Investigators shall be selected based on:

- competence;
- independence;
- understanding of relevant policies;
- ability to handle sensitive matters;
- absence of conflicts of interest; and
- commitment to confidentiality.

Investigations involving sensitive issues such as sexual harassment, gender-based violence, safeguarding concerns or abuse of authority shall be handled with particular care to avoid causing further harm.

ILA shall ensure that investigations do not:

- blame survivors or complainants;
- expose confidential information unnecessarily;
- create further discrimination;
- discourage future reporting; or
- interfere with legal rights.

Where appropriate, ILA may refer matters to competent authorities or specialized service providers in accordance with applicable laws and organizational obligations.

9.9 Corrective Measures

ILA shall take appropriate corrective measures where investigations establish violations of this Policy or other organizational standards.

Corrective measures shall aim to:

- a. stop harmful behaviour;
- b. protect affected individuals;
- c. prevent recurrence;
- d. restore workplace safety and dignity;

- e. promote accountability; and
- f. strengthen organizational systems.

Corrective measures may include:

a. Administrative Actions

Depending on the circumstances, ILA may implement:

- counselling;
- warnings;
- mediation where appropriate;
- additional supervision;
- training requirements;
- workplace adjustments;
- reassignment of responsibilities; or
- other administrative measures.

b. Disciplinary Measures

Serious misconduct may result in disciplinary action, including:

- written warnings;
- suspension;
- removal from responsibilities;
- termination of employment or contract;
- termination of partnership arrangements; or
- other sanctions permitted under organizational policies and applicable law.

c. Programme and Institutional Measures

Where concerns relate to organizational systems or programme practices, ILA may implement:

- policy improvements;
- additional staff training;
- improved reporting mechanisms;
- strengthened supervision;
- risk management measures; or
- other institutional reforms.

Corrective actions shall be proportionate to:

- a. seriousness of the misconduct;
- b. impact on affected persons;

- c. intent and circumstances;
- d. position and responsibilities of the person involved;
- e. previous conduct; and
- f. applicable legal and organizational requirements.

ILA shall ensure that disciplinary decisions are applied consistently and fairly without discrimination.

9.10 Protection Against Retaliation

ILA is committed to protecting individuals who report concerns, participate in investigations or seek assistance from retaliation.

Retaliation includes any adverse action taken against an individual because they:

- a. reported misconduct;
- b. raised a concern;
- c. provided information;
- d. participated in an investigation;
- e. supported another person making a complaint;
- f. refused to participate in improper conduct; or
- g. exercised their rights under organizational policies.

Retaliation may include:

- threats;
- intimidation;
- harassment;
- unfair treatment;
- exclusion;
- reduction of responsibilities without justification;
- negative employment consequences;
- discrimination; or

- any action intended to discourage reporting.

ILA shall protect complainants, witnesses and affected persons by:

- a. maintaining confidentiality;
- b. limiting information sharing to those who need to know;
- c. monitoring for possible retaliation;
- d. taking immediate action where retaliation occurs;
- e. providing appropriate support and referrals;
- f. ensuring fair treatment throughout processes; and
- g. holding individuals accountable for retaliatory conduct.

Any person who engages in retaliation may be subject to disciplinary or contractual action.

The Organization recognizes that fear of retaliation can prevent individuals from reporting misconduct. Therefore, ILA shall promote a culture where concerns can be raised safely and responsibly.

CHAPTER TEN

GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

10.1 Programme Design

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes that effective programmes must respond to the diverse needs, experiences and circumstances of the communities it serves. Gender equality, diversity and social inclusion shall therefore be integrated into all stages of programme design to ensure that interventions are equitable, accessible and responsive.

ILA shall ensure that programme design processes consider the potential impact of activities on different groups, particularly individuals and communities who face barriers to accessing justice, protection and social services.

All programme designs shall incorporate gender and social inclusion considerations by:

- a. identifying the needs, priorities and challenges of different groups;
- b. assessing potential barriers to participation;

- c. considering gender roles, power relations and social dynamics;
- d. ensuring meaningful participation of affected communities;
- e. promoting equal access to programme benefits;
- f. incorporating accessibility requirements;
- g. identifying vulnerable and marginalized populations;
- h. establishing inclusion-focused objectives and indicators;
- i. considering protection risks; and
- j. ensuring consistency with ILA's values and organizational policies.

Programme teams shall avoid approaches that unintentionally reinforce discrimination, exclusion or inequality.

ILA shall ensure that programme proposals, concepts and strategies include appropriate analysis of:

- gender equality issues;
- diversity considerations;
- social inclusion challenges;
- accessibility needs;
- safeguarding risks;
- community participation mechanisms; and
- monitoring requirements.

The Organization shall prioritize programmes that strengthen access to justice, legal empowerment and rights protection for individuals and groups experiencing exclusion.

10.2 Project Planning

ILA shall ensure that project planning processes incorporate gender equality, diversity and social inclusion considerations from the beginning of project development.

Project planning shall involve identifying objectives, activities, resources and expected outcomes while ensuring that different groups are able to participate and benefit.

Project plans shall consider:

- a. who the intended beneficiaries are;

- b. who may face barriers to participation;
- c. how gender roles affect access and involvement;
- d. whether activities are accessible;
- e. whether communication approaches are appropriate;
- f. whether resources are sufficient to support inclusion;
- g. potential protection concerns;
- h. community engagement approaches;
- i. accountability mechanisms; and
- j. monitoring arrangements.

Project managers shall ensure that implementation plans include:

- inclusion objectives;
- gender-sensitive activities;
- accessibility measures;
- participation strategies;
- risk mitigation measures;
- responsible persons;
- timelines; and
- performance indicators.

Where projects are implemented in conflict-affected or vulnerable communities, ILA shall apply conflict-sensitive and context-specific approaches.

10.3 Community Consultations

ILA recognizes community consultation as an essential component of inclusive programming. Meaningful engagement with communities ensures that programmes respond to actual needs, respect local realities and promote ownership.

The Organization shall ensure that consultations are conducted in a manner that allows diverse groups to participate.

ILA shall promote inclusive consultations by:

- a. identifying relevant community groups and stakeholders;
- b. creating safe opportunities for participation;

- c. considering gender balance during consultations;
- d. ensuring participation of vulnerable and marginalized groups;
- e. using appropriate languages and communication methods;
- f. considering accessibility needs;
- g. documenting community perspectives;
- h. providing feedback on how input was considered; and
- i. maintaining respectful engagement.

Special efforts shall be made to engage:

- women;
- children where appropriate;
- persons with disabilities;
- youth;
- older persons;
- displaced communities;
- minority groups;
- survivors of violence; and
- other affected populations.

ILA shall recognize communities as partners and rights holders rather than only beneficiaries.

Community consultations shall be conducted in accordance with principles of:

- respect;
- informed participation;
- confidentiality;
- safety;
- cultural sensitivity; and
- accountability.

10.4 Inclusive Participation

ILA is committed to ensuring that all individuals and communities have meaningful opportunities to participate in programmes, decision-making processes and activities that affect them.

The Organization recognizes that participation is not achieved merely by inviting individuals to activities but requires removing barriers that prevent effective involvement.

ILA shall promote inclusive participation by:

- a. identifying groups at risk of exclusion;
- b. adapting activities to accommodate diverse needs;
- c. ensuring accessible venues and communication;
- d. encouraging participation of women and marginalized groups;
- e. creating safe spaces for engagement;
- f. considering different perspectives during decision-making;
- g. addressing social and cultural barriers;
- h. ensuring feedback mechanisms are accessible;
- i. promoting community ownership; and
- j. monitoring participation outcomes.

Programme teams shall ensure that participation is meaningful, voluntary and respectful.

ILA shall avoid token participation, where individuals or groups are included only for representation purposes without genuine involvement in decisions.

10.5 Gender Analysis

ILA shall integrate gender analysis into programme implementation to ensure that interventions respond effectively to gender-related realities and inequalities.

Gender analysis shall help programme teams understand:

- a. differences in experiences between genders;
- b. access to resources and opportunities;
- c. decision-making power;
- d. social expectations and gender roles;
- e. risks of discrimination or violence;

- f. barriers to accessing justice;
- g. specific needs of women, men, girls and boys;
- h. opportunities for empowerment; and
- i. potential unintended consequences.

Gender analysis shall inform:

- programme strategies;
- legal aid interventions;
- community outreach;
- advocacy activities;
- awareness campaigns;
- service delivery approaches;
- monitoring frameworks; and
- evaluation processes.

ILA shall use gender analysis findings to improve programme effectiveness and ensure that interventions contribute to reducing inequality.

10.6 Stakeholder Mapping

ILA recognizes stakeholder mapping as an important process for understanding actors, relationships, influence and inclusion considerations within programme environments.

Stakeholder mapping shall enable the Organization to identify:

- a. affected communities;
- b. vulnerable groups;
- c. government institutions;
- d. civil society organizations;
- e. community leaders;
- f. development partners;
- g. service providers;
- h. justice sector actors; and
- i. other relevant stakeholders.

ILA shall consider gender and social inclusion factors during stakeholder mapping by assessing:

- representation of different groups;
- accessibility of engagement mechanisms;
- potential power imbalances;
- risks of exclusion;
- stakeholder interests;
- opportunities for collaboration; and
- community influence.

Stakeholder analysis shall support effective partnerships and ensure that programmes reach individuals who may otherwise remain excluded.

10.7 Inclusive Budgeting

ILA recognizes that achieving gender equality and social inclusion objectives requires adequate financial resources.

The Organization shall integrate inclusive budgeting principles into programme financial planning to ensure that resources support equitable participation and access.

Inclusive budgeting shall involve:

- a. identifying costs associated with accessibility;
- b. allocating resources for vulnerable groups;
- c. considering gender-related programme needs;
- d. budgeting for inclusive communication;
- e. supporting community participation;
- f. considering reasonable accommodation requirements;
- g. monitoring expenditure related to inclusion objectives; and
- h. ensuring donor funds support equality commitments.

Programme budgets shall consider costs related to:

- accessibility improvements;
- interpretation services;
- community outreach;
- inclusive materials;
- safeguarding measures;

- specialized support services; and
- capacity development.

Finance and programme teams shall collaborate to ensure that budget decisions reflect ILA's commitment to inclusion.

10.8 Risk Assessments

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes that programmes may face risks that affect the ability of individuals and communities to participate equally and safely. Gender inequality, discrimination, social exclusion, accessibility barriers and protection concerns may negatively affect programme outcomes if not properly identified and managed.

ILA shall integrate gender and social inclusion considerations into programme risk assessments to ensure that potential harms, barriers and inequalities are identified before and during implementation.

Programme risk assessments shall consider:

- a. risks of discrimination or exclusion;
- b. barriers preventing participation of vulnerable groups;
- c. gender-related risks;
- d. accessibility challenges;
- e. protection concerns;
- f. risks affecting survivors of violence;
- g. risks affecting children and persons with disabilities;
- h. cultural and social sensitivities;
- i. conflict-related risks; and
- j. risks arising from unequal power relationships.

ILA shall apply a risk management approach that includes:

a. Risk Identification

Programme teams shall identify potential risks affecting different groups and assess how these risks may influence participation, safety and access to services.

b. Risk Analysis

Risks shall be analysed based on:

- likelihood;
- potential impact;
- affected groups;
- existing controls; and
- required mitigation measures.

c. Risk Mitigation

ILA shall establish measures to reduce identified risks, including:

- adapting programme activities;
- improving accessibility;
- strengthening safeguarding measures;
- increasing community engagement;
- providing appropriate referrals;
- improving communication approaches; and
- allocating necessary resources.

d. Risk Monitoring

Programme teams shall continuously monitor risks and adjust interventions where circumstances change.

The Organization shall ensure that risk assessments are conducted in a manner that does not create additional harm, expose vulnerable individuals or compromise confidentiality.

Gender and social inclusion risks shall be incorporated into broader organizational risk management systems.

10.9 Monitoring

ILA recognizes monitoring as an essential process for measuring progress, ensuring accountability and improving programme effectiveness.

The Organization shall establish monitoring systems that assess whether programmes are reaching diverse groups fairly and achieving intended gender equality and inclusion outcomes.

Programme monitoring shall include:

- a. tracking participation of different groups;
- b. measuring accessibility of services;
- c. assessing gender-related outcomes;
- d. collecting feedback from beneficiaries;
- e. identifying barriers to participation;
- f. monitoring safeguarding concerns;
- g. assessing unintended impacts;
- h. documenting lessons learned; and
- i. supporting evidence-based decision-making.

ILA shall promote the collection and analysis of disaggregated data, including where appropriate:

- sex;
- age;
- disability;
- location;
- displacement status;
- and other relevant characteristics.

Disaggregated data shall help the Organization understand whether certain groups are being excluded or underserved.

Monitoring tools shall be designed to ensure:

- a. confidentiality;
- b. informed participation;
- c. accessibility;
- d. ethical data collection;
- e. protection of vulnerable individuals; and
- f. responsible use of information.

Programme managers shall be responsible for ensuring that gender and social inclusion indicators are incorporated into monitoring frameworks.

The MEAL Unit shall support departments by developing appropriate tools, analysing findings and promoting learning.

10.10 Programme Evaluation

ILA recognizes programme evaluation as an important mechanism for assessing effectiveness, accountability, sustainability and impact.

Evaluations shall assess not only whether programme objectives were achieved but also whether interventions promoted gender equality, diversity and social inclusion.

Programme evaluations shall consider:

- a. whether different groups benefited equally;
- b. whether barriers to participation were addressed;
- c. whether accessibility measures were effective;
- d. whether programmes contributed to reducing inequalities;
- e. whether vulnerable groups were meaningfully included;
- f. whether community perspectives were considered;
- g. whether unintended negative impacts occurred;
- h. whether resources were used effectively; and
- i. what improvements are required.

Evaluation processes shall include, where appropriate:

- beneficiary feedback;
- community consultations;
- stakeholder interviews;
- document reviews;
- participation analysis;
- outcome assessments; and
- lessons learned exercises.

ILA shall ensure that evaluations consider the experiences of:

- women and girls;
- men and boys;
- persons with disabilities;
- youth;
- older persons;
- displaced populations;
- minority communities;
- survivors of violence; and
- other vulnerable groups.

Evaluation findings shall be used to:

- a. improve future programmes;
- b. strengthen organizational learning;
- c. inform strategic decisions;
- d. improve resource allocation;
- e. address identified gaps;
- f. strengthen accountability to communities and donors; and
- g. enhance gender-responsive and inclusive programming.

The Organization shall promote a culture of continuous improvement where lessons from evaluations contribute to stronger policies, practices and interventions.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

INCLUSIVE LEGAL AID SERVICES

11.1 Equal Access to Justice

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes access to justice as a fundamental human right and an essential element of the rule of law, human dignity and social development.

As a legal aid organization, ILA is committed to ensuring that all individuals, particularly vulnerable and marginalized persons, have equal opportunities to understand, claim and enforce their legal rights.

ILA acknowledges that barriers to justice may arise from:

- poverty;
- lack of legal awareness;

- geographical isolation;
- discrimination;
- disability;
- language barriers;
- displacement;
- social exclusion;
- gender inequality;
- fear of institutions;
- limited representation; and
- other social or economic circumstances.

ILA shall promote equal access to justice by:

- a. providing legal information and assistance based on need;
- b. ensuring services are accessible to vulnerable and marginalized groups;
- c. removing unnecessary barriers to legal assistance;
- d. promoting community legal awareness;
- e. supporting individuals who cannot otherwise access legal services;
- f. ensuring fair and respectful treatment of all clients;
- g. promoting confidence in justice institutions;
- h. supporting alternative dispute resolution where appropriate;
- i. providing referrals to specialized services where necessary; and
- j. advocating for improved justice accessibility.

ILA shall ensure that eligibility for legal aid services is determined fairly and transparently without discrimination.

No individual shall be denied access to ILA services because of:

- gender;
- disability;
- ethnicity;
- religion;
- age;
- nationality;
- displacement status;
- social background;

- economic status; or
- other irrelevant personal characteristics.

The Organization shall prioritize individuals and communities facing significant barriers to accessing justice.

11.2 Non-Discrimination in Service Delivery

ILA is committed to ensuring that legal aid services are delivered in a manner that respects equality, dignity and human rights.

All clients seeking assistance from ILA shall be treated fairly, professionally and respectfully regardless of their personal circumstances.

The Organization prohibits discrimination in any stage of service delivery, including:

- client intake;
- legal assessment;
- case prioritization;
- representation;
- referrals;
- communication;
- dispute resolution;
- follow-up; and
- closure of cases.

ILA shall ensure that service providers:

- a. apply objective eligibility criteria;
- b. communicate respectfully with clients;
- c. avoid stereotypes and assumptions;
- d. consider individual circumstances;
- e. provide appropriate support where barriers exist;
- f. maintain professional ethics;
- g. protect client dignity;
- h. avoid conflicts of interest; and
- i. promote equal participation in legal processes.

Legal aid staff shall receive training on:

- gender sensitivity;
- disability inclusion;
- child-sensitive approaches;
- trauma-informed communication;
- cultural awareness;
- safeguarding; and
- non-discriminatory service delivery.

ILA shall monitor service delivery patterns to identify whether certain groups experience barriers or unequal access.

Where inequalities are identified, the Organization shall take corrective measures to improve inclusion.

11.3 Services for Women

ILA recognizes that women and girls may face specific barriers in accessing justice due to gender inequality, discrimination, harmful practices, economic limitations, social norms and exposure to gender-based violence.

The Organization is committed to ensuring that women and girls receive safe, confidential and responsive legal assistance.

ILA shall promote access to justice for women through:

- a. provision of legal advice and representation;
- b. support for survivors of gender-based violence;
- c. legal awareness programmes;
- d. assistance with family and personal status matters;
- e. support in cases involving property, inheritance and economic rights;
- f. protection of confidentiality and privacy;
- g. survivor-centred approaches;
- h. referrals to appropriate support services;
- i. empowerment through knowledge of rights; and
- j. advocacy for laws and practices that promote equality.

ILA shall ensure that women seeking legal assistance are treated with dignity and without judgment.

The Organization shall consider barriers that may affect women's access to justice, including:

- financial dependence;
- fear of retaliation;
- social stigma;
- limited decision-making power;
- mobility restrictions;
- lack of information;
- caregiving responsibilities; and
- insecurity.

Where necessary, ILA shall adapt service delivery approaches to ensure women can safely access legal assistance.

11.4 Services for Children

ILA recognizes children as rights holders requiring special protection and child-sensitive approaches when accessing legal services.

The Organization shall ensure that legal aid services involving children are guided by:

- the best interests of the child;
- child participation;
- non-discrimination;
- protection from harm;
- confidentiality; and
- age-appropriate communication.

ILA shall provide or facilitate child-sensitive legal assistance in matters including:

- a. children in conflict with the law;
- b. child protection concerns;
- c. family disputes;
- d. child abuse and exploitation;
- e. guardianship and custody matters;

- f. documentation issues;
- g. access to education and essential services; and
- h. other matters affecting children's rights.

When working with children, ILA shall ensure:

- a. trained personnel handle child-related matters;
- b. communication is appropriate to the child's age and understanding;
- c. confidentiality is maintained;
- d. safeguarding procedures are followed;
- e. referrals are made where specialized support is required; and
- f. children are treated with dignity and respect.

ILA shall avoid practices that may cause further harm or trauma to children seeking legal assistance.

11.5 Services for Persons with Disabilities

ILA recognizes that persons with disabilities may experience barriers in accessing justice systems, legal information and representation.

The Organization shall ensure that persons with disabilities have equal opportunities to access legal aid services.

ILA shall promote disability-inclusive legal services by:

- a. ensuring accessible client intake procedures;
- b. providing reasonable accommodation where required;
- c. adapting communication methods;
- d. ensuring respectful engagement;
- e. supporting participation in legal processes;
- f. identifying disability-related barriers;
- g. providing referrals to relevant support services;

- h. training legal aid staff on disability inclusion; and
- i. promoting awareness of disability rights.

ILA shall ensure that disability does not affect:

- eligibility for assistance;
- quality of legal support;
- communication with clients;
- confidentiality protections; or
- respect for client decisions.

Where clients require additional assistance, ILA shall work to identify practical solutions that enable meaningful participation.

11.6 Services for Older Persons

ILA recognizes that older persons may face particular legal challenges related to property, inheritance, family matters, social protection, abuse and access to services.

The Organization shall ensure that older persons receive equal and respectful access to legal aid.

ILA shall:

- a. provide legal information in accessible forms;
- b. consider mobility and communication needs;
- c. support protection against exploitation and abuse;
- d. assist with legal documentation issues where appropriate;
- e. promote dignity and independence;
- f. provide appropriate referrals;
- g. ensure respectful communication; and
- h. consider vulnerability factors affecting older persons.

11.7 Services for IDPs and Refugees

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes that internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees often experience significant barriers in accessing justice, legal information and

protection services due to displacement, loss of documentation, limited resources, insecurity and social exclusion.

ILA is committed to ensuring that displacement status does not prevent individuals from accessing legal assistance, protection and remedies available under applicable laws and human rights standards.

ILA shall provide inclusive legal aid services to IDPs and refugees by:

- a. providing legal information on rights, obligations and available remedies;
- b. supporting access to justice institutions and legal procedures;
- c. assisting with documentation-related legal challenges where appropriate;
- d. supporting resolution of land, housing and property-related disputes;
- e. providing assistance in family, protection and civil matters;
- f. supporting survivors of violence and exploitation;
- g. ensuring confidential and safe service delivery;
- h. conducting legal awareness activities within displacement-affected communities;
- i. establishing appropriate referral mechanisms; and
- j. collaborating with relevant humanitarian, government and community actors.

ILA shall ensure that IDPs and refugees are treated with dignity and without discrimination based on:

- nationality;
- displacement status;
- place of origin;
- ethnicity;
- gender;
- disability;
- religion;
- social status; or
- other personal circumstances.

The Organization shall pay particular attention to vulnerable persons among displaced populations, including:

- women and girls;

- children;
- persons with disabilities;
- older persons;
- survivors of violence; and
- persons facing protection risks.

ILA shall apply conflict-sensitive approaches when providing services to displaced communities to avoid creating tensions or unintended harm.

11.8 Language Accessibility

ILA recognizes language as an important factor affecting access to justice, meaningful participation and understanding of legal rights.

The Organization shall promote language accessibility to ensure that clients are able to understand legal information, communicate their concerns and participate effectively in legal processes.

ILA shall promote language accessibility by:

- a. providing information in languages understandable to clients where possible;
- b. using interpreters or translators when necessary;
- c. avoiding unnecessary legal terminology;
- d. explaining legal concepts in clear and simple language;
- e. considering literacy levels during communication;
- f. ensuring clients understand available options before making decisions;
- g. respecting linguistic diversity within communities;
- h. training staff on effective communication approaches; and
- i. adapting awareness materials for different audiences.

Legal aid providers shall ensure that language barriers do not result in:

- misunderstanding of legal rights;
- inability to provide informed instructions;
- unequal treatment;
- exclusion from services; or
- denial of meaningful participation.

Where interpretation services are used, ILA shall ensure that interpreters maintain:

- confidentiality;
- neutrality;
- professionalism; and
- respect for clients.

The Organization shall consider local languages and communication practices when conducting community legal awareness activities.

11.9 Confidentiality

ILA recognizes confidentiality as a fundamental principle of legal aid services and an essential requirement for protecting client dignity, safety and trust.

The Organization shall ensure that all client information, case records and personal data are handled responsibly and in accordance with applicable laws, professional obligations and organizational policies.

Confidential information may include:

- personal details;
- legal advice provided;
- case documents;
- communication records;
- family information;
- sensitive circumstances;
- allegations;
- protection concerns; and
- other information obtained during service delivery.

ILA shall ensure that:

- a. client information is only accessed by authorized persons;
- b. information is collected for legitimate purposes;
- c. records are securely stored;
- d. communication with clients is conducted safely;
- e. staff understand confidentiality obligations;
- f. information sharing occurs only with appropriate authorization or legal basis;
- g. vulnerable clients receive additional protection where necessary;

- h. confidentiality continues after completion of services; and
- i. breaches are investigated and addressed.

Legal aid staff shall not disclose client information except:

- with informed consent of the client;
- where required by law;
- where necessary to prevent serious harm;
- where permitted under organizational policies; or
- for legitimate professional purposes with appropriate safeguards.

ILA shall ensure that confidentiality measures consider the specific risks faced by:

- survivors of violence;
- children;
- persons with disabilities;
- displaced persons;
- individuals involved in sensitive legal matters; and
- other vulnerable clients.

11.10 Client Satisfaction

ILA recognizes client satisfaction as an important measure of service quality, accountability and organizational effectiveness.

The Organization shall establish mechanisms to understand client experiences, identify areas for improvement and ensure that legal aid services remain responsive to community needs.

Client satisfaction mechanisms shall promote:

- a. accessibility;
- b. confidentiality;
- c. fairness;
- d. respect;
- e. accountability;
- f. continuous improvement; and

g. meaningful feedback.

ILA shall collect client feedback through appropriate methods, including:

- client satisfaction surveys;
- feedback forms;
- community consultations;
- interviews;
- complaints and response mechanisms;
- follow-up discussions; and
- other appropriate approaches.

Client feedback may assess:

- a. accessibility of services;
- b. quality of legal assistance;
- c. respect and treatment received;
- d. communication effectiveness;
- e. timeliness of services;
- f. confidentiality practices;
- g. staff professionalism;
- h. whether clients understood available options; and
- i. overall experience.

ILA shall ensure that feedback mechanisms are accessible to:

- persons with disabilities;
- persons with limited literacy;
- women and girls;
- children where appropriate;
- displaced persons;
- marginalized communities; and
- other vulnerable groups.

The Organization shall use client feedback to:

- a. improve legal aid services;

- b. strengthen staff capacity;
- c. identify service gaps;
- d. address complaints;
- e. improve inclusion practices;
- f. strengthen accountability; and
- g. enhance community trust.

Client satisfaction information shall be analysed by relevant departments, including the Programme Unit and MEAL Unit, and used to inform organizational learning and planning.

ILA shall ensure that age is not a barrier to accessing justice services.

CHAPTER TWELVE

LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

12.1 Responsibilities of the Board

The Board of Directors of the Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes that effective leadership and governance are essential for achieving gender equality, diversity and social inclusion throughout the Organization.

The Board has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that GEDSI principles are integrated into organizational governance, strategic direction, policies, risk management and accountability systems.

The Board shall provide oversight by:

- a. approving and supporting the implementation of this Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion Policy;
- b. ensuring that GEDSI commitments are reflected in organizational strategies and plans;

- c. promoting an organizational culture based on equality, dignity, respect and inclusion;
- d. ensuring adequate resources are allocated for implementation of GEDSI initiatives;
- e. monitoring organizational performance on gender equality and inclusion;
- f. ensuring compliance with applicable legal, ethical and donor requirements;
- g. promoting diversity within governance structures;
- h. ensuring accountability for discrimination, harassment and exclusion;
- i. reviewing reports relating to GEDSI performance and risks; and
- j. supporting continuous improvement of organizational practices.

The Board shall ensure that leadership decisions consider the needs and perspectives of diverse groups and that governance processes remain inclusive and transparent.

The Board shall also promote accountability by ensuring that senior leadership is responsible for implementing GEDSI commitments within their respective areas.

12.2 Executive Director

The Executive Director is responsible for providing overall leadership and ensuring that GEDSI principles are effectively implemented throughout ILA's operations.

The Executive Director shall:

- a. promote a culture of equality, inclusion and respect;
- b. ensure implementation of this Policy across all departments;
- c. provide leadership in addressing discrimination, harassment and exclusion;
- d. ensure that adequate financial and human resources are available;
- e. integrate GEDSI considerations into strategic and operational planning;
- f. ensure managers are accountable for implementation;
- g. support capacity development on GEDSI issues;

- h. ensure appropriate mechanisms exist for reporting and addressing concerns;
- i. represent ILA's commitment to inclusion with external stakeholders; and
- j. report to the Board on progress, challenges and improvements.

The Executive Director shall ensure that GEDSI is not treated as a separate activity but as an institutional responsibility integrated into all organizational functions.

12.3 Senior Management

Senior Management is responsible for translating organizational GEDSI commitments into practical actions within departments and operational areas.

Senior Managers shall:

- a. integrate GEDSI considerations into departmental plans;
- b. promote inclusive workplace practices;
- c. ensure compliance with organizational policies;
- d. identify barriers affecting participation and service delivery;
- e. support staff training and awareness;
- f. monitor departmental performance;
- g. address discriminatory practices promptly;
- h. ensure programmes respond to diverse community needs;
- i. allocate resources appropriately; and
- j. promote accountability among staff members.

Senior Management shall work collaboratively to ensure consistency in GEDSI implementation across all departments.

They shall also ensure that operational decisions consider:

- gender equality;
- accessibility;
- diversity;
- safeguarding;
- community participation; and

- protection of vulnerable groups.

12.4 Human Resource Unit

The Human Resource Unit shall serve as a key institutional mechanism for promoting gender equality, diversity and inclusion within employment practices and workplace culture.

The Human Resource Unit shall:

- a. integrate GEDSI principles into recruitment and employment procedures;
- b. promote fair and inclusive hiring practices;
- c. maintain workplace equality standards;
- d. support prevention of discrimination and harassment;
- e. manage reasonable accommodation processes;
- f. promote staff awareness and training;
- g. monitor workforce diversity;
- h. support family-friendly workplace measures;
- i. maintain confidential employee records; and
- j. advise management on human resource-related GEDSI matters.

The Human Resource Unit shall regularly review employment practices to identify potential barriers affecting:

- women's participation;
- persons with disabilities;
- young professionals;
- minority groups; and
- other underrepresented employees.

The Unit shall recommend improvements to strengthen equality and inclusion.

12.5 Programme Managers

Programme Managers are responsible for ensuring that GEDSI principles are integrated into programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Programme Managers shall:

- a. incorporate GEDSI considerations into programme designs;
- b. identify barriers affecting beneficiary participation;
- c. ensure inclusive outreach strategies;
- d. promote accessible programme activities;
- e. collect and analyse relevant inclusion data;
- f. monitor participation of diverse groups;
- g. identify and manage GEDSI-related risks;
- h. ensure community engagement processes are inclusive;
- i. support accountability to affected communities; and
- j. report implementation challenges and achievements.

Programme Managers shall ensure that legal aid and community-based interventions respond to the needs of:

- women;
- children;
- persons with disabilities;
- displaced populations;
- marginalized communities; and
- other vulnerable groups.

They shall promote learning and adaptation based on monitoring findings and community feedback.

12.6 GEDSI Focal Person

ILA shall designate a Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Focal Person responsible for supporting coordination, technical guidance and monitoring of GEDSI implementation.

The GEDSI Focal Person shall:

- a. support implementation of this Policy;
- b. provide technical advice to departments;
- c. promote GEDSI awareness and training;

- d. support development of inclusion indicators;
- e. monitor organizational progress;
- f. identify gaps and recommend improvements;
- g. support reporting on GEDSI performance;
- h. promote coordination between departments;
- i. support integration of GEDSI into programmes and operations; and
- j. maintain knowledge on relevant standards and good practices.

The GEDSI Focal Person shall work closely with:

- Human Resource Unit;
- Programme Department;
- MEAL Unit;
- Safeguarding structures;
- Management; and
- external stakeholders where appropriate.

The role of the GEDSI Focal Person shall not replace the responsibility of managers and staff. Rather, it shall support institutional accountability and coordination.

12.7 Staff Responsibilities

All ILA staff members share responsibility for promoting gender equality, diversity and social inclusion.

Staff shall:

- a. comply with this Policy;
- b. treat colleagues, clients and communities with dignity and respect;
- c. avoid discriminatory behaviour;
- d. promote inclusive practices;
- e. report concerns or violations appropriately;
- f. participate in relevant training;

- g. support accessibility and reasonable accommodation;
- h. respect cultural and social diversity;
- i. maintain professional conduct; and
- j. contribute to an inclusive organizational culture.

Staff members shall recognize that GEDSI is a shared responsibility and applies to all aspects of organizational work.

Failure to comply with GEDSI requirements may result in corrective or disciplinary action in accordance with applicable policies.

12.8 Volunteers

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes volunteers as important contributors to advancing access to justice, community engagement, legal empowerment and organizational objectives.

ILA is committed to ensuring that volunteers operate within an environment that promotes equality, diversity, inclusion and respect.

Volunteers shall be expected to:

- a. comply with this Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion Policy;
- b. respect the dignity and rights of all individuals;
- c. treat colleagues, clients and community members without discrimination;
- d. promote inclusive participation during organizational activities;
- e. maintain professional conduct and ethical standards;
- f. respect confidentiality requirements;
- g. report concerns relating to harassment, discrimination, exploitation or abuse;
- h. participate in relevant training and awareness activities;
- i. support accessibility measures where required; and
- j. represent ILA's values positively.

ILA shall ensure that volunteer recruitment and engagement processes are inclusive and accessible.

The Organization shall:

- a. provide clear roles and responsibilities;
- b. ensure volunteers understand organizational policies;
- c. provide appropriate orientation and training;
- d. create safe reporting mechanisms;
- e. protect volunteers from harassment and discrimination;
- f. recognize volunteer contributions fairly; and
- g. ensure volunteers are not excluded based on gender, disability, ethnicity, age or other personal characteristics.

Volunteers working directly with vulnerable populations shall receive appropriate guidance on:

- safeguarding;
- confidentiality;
- respectful communication;
- inclusion principles;
- protection of vulnerable persons; and
- professional boundaries.

12.9 Consultants

ILA recognizes consultants as important contributors who provide specialized knowledge, technical expertise and professional support to organizational activities.

Consultants engaged by ILA shall be required to respect and promote the Organization's commitment to gender equality, diversity and social inclusion.

Consultants shall:

- a. comply with this Policy and relevant organizational standards;
- b. perform their duties without discrimination;
- c. respect cultural and social diversity;
- d. maintain confidentiality;
- e. apply inclusive approaches in their work;

- f. avoid conduct that may harm individuals or communities;
- g. promote accessibility where applicable;
- h. respect safeguarding requirements;
- i. maintain professional ethics; and
- j. report concerns appropriately.

Consultancy agreements shall, where appropriate, include requirements relating to:

- non-discrimination;
- prevention of harassment;
- confidentiality;
- safeguarding;
- ethical conduct;
- accessibility; and
- compliance with organizational policies.

ILA shall consider GEDSI principles when selecting consultants by assessing:

- a. technical competence;
- b. professional conduct;
- c. understanding of inclusion principles;
- d. ability to work with diverse communities; and
- e. commitment to ethical standards.

Consultants who violate organizational requirements may be subject to:

- termination of contracts;
- exclusion from future engagements;
- reporting to relevant authorities where appropriate; or
- other corrective measures.

12.10 Partners

ILA recognizes that effective partnerships are essential for achieving sustainable gender equality, diversity and social inclusion outcomes.

The Organization shall work with partners who share its commitment to:

- equality;
- human rights;
- dignity;
- non-discrimination;
- accessibility;
- accountability; and
- protection of vulnerable groups.

ILA shall promote GEDSI principles in partnerships by:

- a. assessing partner commitment to inclusion;
- b. conducting appropriate partner due diligence;
- c. including GEDSI expectations in partnership agreements;
- d. encouraging inclusive programme implementation;
- e. monitoring partner compliance;
- f. addressing identified concerns;
- g. supporting partner capacity development;
- h. promoting accountability to communities; and
- i. strengthening learning and collaboration.

Partners shall be expected to:

- a. respect the rights and dignity of all persons;
- b. avoid discriminatory practices;
- c. promote inclusive participation;
- d. maintain safeguarding standards;
- e. protect confidential information;
- f. support accessibility;

- g. prevent harassment and exploitation;
- h. comply with applicable laws and standards; and
- i. cooperate with monitoring and accountability processes.

ILA shall assess partnership risks relating to:

- discrimination;
- exclusion;
- safeguarding failures;
- unequal power relationships;
- accessibility barriers;
- reputational risks; and
- non-compliance with organizational values.

Where partners fail to uphold GEDSI commitments, ILA may take appropriate actions, including:

- providing corrective guidance;
- developing improvement plans;
- strengthening monitoring;
- suspending activities;
- terminating agreements; or
- taking other measures consistent with partnership arrangements.

ILA shall encourage partnerships that strengthen inclusion, community participation and equal access to justice.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

PARTNERSHIPS AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

13.1 Partnership Standards

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes partnerships and stakeholder engagement as essential mechanisms for advancing gender equality, diversity and social inclusion. Effective partnerships enable collaboration, resource sharing, knowledge exchange and broader impact in promoting access to justice and protecting human rights.

ILA shall establish and maintain partnerships that are consistent with its values, mission and commitment to equality, dignity, inclusion and accountability.

All partnerships shall be guided by the following standards:

a. Shared Values and Principles

ILA shall collaborate with organizations and stakeholders that demonstrate commitment to:

- human rights;
- non-discrimination;
- gender equality;
- social inclusion;
- safeguarding;
- accountability;
- transparency; and
- respect for human dignity.

b. Mutual Respect and Collaboration

Partnerships shall be based on mutual respect, shared responsibility and recognition of the contributions of each partner.

ILA shall promote partnerships where all parties:

- communicate openly;
- respect different perspectives;
- share responsibilities;
- resolve disagreements constructively; and
- work towards common objectives.

c. Inclusion and Participation

Partners shall be encouraged to promote meaningful participation of:

- women;
- children where appropriate;
- persons with disabilities;
- marginalized communities;
- displaced populations;
- vulnerable groups; and
- affected communities.

d. Accountability

ILA shall ensure that partnerships include appropriate accountability mechanisms to monitor:

- performance;
- resource utilization;
- compliance with policies;
- protection standards; and

- achievement of inclusion objectives.

e. Ethical Conduct

Partners shall be expected to operate ethically and avoid:

- discrimination;
- exploitation;
- corruption;
- harassment;
- abuse;
- conflicts of interest; and
- practices inconsistent with ILA values.

ILA shall incorporate GEDSI expectations into partnership agreements, memoranda of understanding, contracts and other collaboration arrangements.

13.2 Partner Due Diligence

ILA recognizes that effective partnership management requires appropriate assessment of potential partners before formal engagement.

Partner due diligence shall ensure that organizations working with ILA have the capacity, integrity and commitment necessary to implement activities responsibly.

ILA shall assess potential partners based on:

- a. legal status and registration;
- b. organizational capacity;
- c. governance structures;
- d. financial management systems;
- e. safeguarding practices;
- f. commitment to gender equality and inclusion;
- g. reputation and ethical standards;
- h. previous experience;
- i. compliance with applicable laws and regulations; and

j. ability to manage programme risks.

The due diligence process may include review of:

- organizational policies;
- financial records;
- governance documents;
- previous project experience;
- references;
- safeguarding systems;
- complaints mechanisms; and
- inclusion practices.

ILA shall pay particular attention to risks relating to:

- discrimination;
- exclusion of vulnerable groups;
- misuse of resources;
- safeguarding failures;
- reputational harm;
- weak accountability systems; and
- non-compliance with donor requirements.

Where gaps are identified, ILA may:

- a. provide capacity-building support;
- b. develop corrective action plans;
- c. establish additional monitoring measures;
- d. limit the scope of partnership activities; or
- e. decline partnership engagement.

13.3 Community Engagement

ILA recognizes communities as key stakeholders and rights holders whose participation is essential for effective and sustainable interventions.

The Organization shall promote meaningful community engagement throughout programme cycles, including planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Community engagement shall be guided by principles of:

- respect;
- inclusion;
- participation;
- transparency;
- accountability;
- cultural sensitivity; and
- informed involvement.

ILA shall ensure that community engagement processes:

- a. identify diverse community groups;
- b. provide opportunities for participation;
- c. consider gender and social dynamics;
- d. include marginalized populations;
- e. use accessible communication methods;
- f. provide opportunities for feedback;
- g. respect community knowledge and perspectives;
- h. manage expectations responsibly; and
- i. promote community ownership.

ILA shall make deliberate efforts to engage groups that may otherwise be excluded, including:

- women and girls;
- persons with disabilities;
- youth;
- older persons;
- displaced persons;
- minority communities; and
- vulnerable households.

The Organization shall ensure that community engagement does not reinforce existing inequalities or exclude individuals because of social status, identity or circumstances.

13.4 Government Collaboration

ILA recognizes the importance of cooperation with government institutions in strengthening access to justice, legal protection and social inclusion.

The Organization shall engage relevant government authorities while maintaining independence, impartiality and commitment to human rights principles.

Government collaboration may include:

- a. coordination on justice-related initiatives;
- b. engagement with relevant authorities;
- c. participation in policy discussions;
- d. strengthening legal awareness;
- e. supporting institutional capacity development;
- f. promoting referral pathways;
- g. sharing knowledge and expertise; and
- h. contributing to improved justice accessibility.

ILA shall ensure that government engagement supports:

- equality before the law;
- protection of vulnerable groups;
- non-discrimination;
- accountability;
- community access to justice; and
- respect for human rights.

Government partnerships shall be managed transparently and shall not compromise ILA's independence, ethical standards or organizational objectives.

13.5 Civil Society Collaboration

ILA recognizes civil society organizations as important partners in promoting human rights, legal empowerment, gender equality and social inclusion.

The Organization shall collaborate with civil society actors to:

- a. strengthen collective impact;
- b. share knowledge and experience;

- c. improve service coordination;
- d. promote advocacy efforts;
- e. support vulnerable communities;
- f. strengthen referral systems;
- g. develop joint initiatives; and
- h. promote accountability.

ILA shall encourage collaboration with organizations working on areas including:

- human rights;
- women's rights;
- child protection;
- disability inclusion;
- peacebuilding;
- humanitarian assistance;
- community development; and
- access to justice.

Civil society partnerships shall promote complementarity and avoid duplication of efforts.

ILA shall ensure that collaboration arrangements include appropriate standards relating to:

- ethical conduct;
- safeguarding;
- confidentiality;
- inclusion;
- accountability; and
- responsible information sharing.

13.6 Development Partners

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes development partners as important stakeholders in supporting sustainable interventions, institutional strengthening and advancement of gender equality, diversity and social inclusion objectives.

Development partners may include:

- international organizations;
- donor agencies;
- foundations;
- humanitarian actors;
- research institutions;
- regional organizations; and
- other entities supporting justice, human rights and community development initiatives.

ILA shall establish relationships with development partners based on:

- a. shared objectives and values;
- b. transparency and accountability;
- c. mutual respect;
- d. effective communication;
- e. responsible resource management;
- f. commitment to human rights principles;
- g. gender-responsive programming;
- h. social inclusion; and
- i. measurable results.

ILA shall ensure that development partnerships contribute to:

- improved access to justice;
- empowerment of vulnerable communities;
- protection of human rights;
- strengthening of institutional capacity;
- inclusive programme implementation; and
- sustainable community outcomes.

Development partners shall be encouraged to support:

- a. programmes that address barriers faced by marginalized groups;
- b. inclusive approaches to legal aid delivery;
- c. capacity development initiatives;

- d. evidence-based programming;
- e. innovation and learning;
- f. community participation; and
- g. accountability mechanisms.

ILA shall ensure that donor and development partner requirements are consistent with organizational values and do not compromise:

- independence;
- impartiality;
- confidentiality;
- ethical standards;
- community interests; or
- human rights principles.

The Organization shall maintain effective reporting, communication and monitoring systems to demonstrate responsible partnership management.

13.7 Private Sector Engagement

ILA recognizes that responsible engagement with the private sector can contribute to innovation, resource mobilization, knowledge sharing and advancement of social inclusion objectives.

The Organization may collaborate with private sector entities where such partnerships support ILA's mission and values.

Private sector engagement may include:

- a. corporate social responsibility initiatives;
- b. technical support;
- c. professional expertise;
- d. resource contributions;
- e. technology solutions;
- f. awareness initiatives;
- g. skills development; and

h. support for community programmes.

Before entering into private sector partnerships, ILA shall assess:

- a. compatibility with organizational values;
- b. ethical reputation;
- c. commitment to social responsibility;
- d. compliance with applicable laws;
- e. potential conflicts of interest;
- f. human rights considerations;
- g. safeguarding risks; and
- h. reputational implications.

ILA shall not establish partnerships with entities whose activities or practices are inconsistent with:

- human rights principles;
- anti-discrimination standards;
- ethical conduct requirements;
- safeguarding obligations; or
- organizational values.

Private sector partners shall be expected to respect:

- a. equality and non-discrimination;
- b. confidentiality requirements;
- c. community dignity;
- d. responsible communication;
- e. protection of vulnerable groups; and
- f. applicable partnership agreements.

ILA shall ensure that private sector engagement does not influence legal aid decisions, compromise client confidentiality or affect organizational independence.

13.8 Community Accountability

ILA recognizes accountability to communities as a fundamental responsibility and an essential component of inclusive programming.

The Organization acknowledges that communities have the right to understand, participate in and provide feedback regarding programmes and services that affect them.

ILA shall establish community accountability mechanisms that promote:

- a. transparency;
- b. participation;
- c. feedback;
- d. complaints management;
- e. responsiveness;
- f. learning; and
- g. trust.

Community accountability shall include:

a. Access to Information

ILA shall provide communities with relevant information regarding:

- available services;
- programme objectives;
- eligibility criteria;
- rights and responsibilities;
- complaint mechanisms;
- expected standards of service; and
- available support pathways.

Information shall be communicated in accessible and understandable formats.

b. Community Feedback Mechanisms

ILA shall establish safe and accessible mechanisms through which communities can:

- provide suggestions;
- raise concerns;
- report misconduct;
- provide feedback on services; and
- request clarification.

Feedback mechanisms shall consider the needs of:

- persons with disabilities;
- persons with limited literacy;
- women and girls;
- children where appropriate;
- displaced populations; and
- marginalized groups.

c. Complaints and Response Mechanisms

ILA shall ensure that complaints are:

- received respectfully;
- handled confidentially;
- assessed fairly;
- responded to appropriately;
- documented securely; and
- used for organizational improvement.

d. Participation in Decision-Making

Where appropriate, ILA shall involve communities in:

- programme design;
- implementation decisions;
- monitoring;
- evaluation; and
- improvement processes.

e. Learning and Improvement

Community feedback shall be analysed and used to:

- improve service delivery;
- address barriers;
- strengthen inclusion;
- enhance accountability; and
- improve organizational performance.

ILA shall ensure that community accountability mechanisms do not expose individuals to harm, retaliation or discrimination.

The Organization shall promote a culture where communities are viewed as partners and rights holders whose voices contribute to effective and sustainable justice interventions.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT, TRAINING AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

14.1 Capacity Development Framework

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes that achieving meaningful gender equality, diversity and social inclusion requires continuous development of knowledge, skills, attitudes and institutional practices.

ILA shall establish a structured capacity development framework to ensure that Board members, employees, volunteers, consultants and partners have the necessary understanding and ability to implement GEDSI principles effectively.

The capacity development framework shall aim to:

- a. strengthen awareness of gender equality, diversity and social inclusion;
- b. improve organizational capacity to identify and address exclusion;
- c. promote inclusive workplace practices;
- d. enhance quality and accessibility of legal aid services;
- e. strengthen leadership commitment;
- f. improve programme design and implementation;
- g. promote respectful and ethical behaviour;
- h. reduce discrimination and harmful practices; and
- i. support continuous institutional improvement.

ILA's capacity development approach shall be based on:

- organizational needs assessments;
- identified skills gaps;
- programme requirements;
- legal and donor standards;
- staff performance needs;
- community feedback; and
- lessons learned.

Capacity development activities may include:

- induction sessions;
- workshops;
- coaching;
- mentoring;
- awareness sessions;
- technical training;
- peer learning;
- knowledge sharing forums;
- online learning; and
- practical guidance materials.

The Organization shall ensure that training opportunities are accessible and inclusive, considering:

- different learning needs;
- language requirements;
- disability-related accommodations;
- work schedules; and
- participation barriers.

14.2 Staff Induction

ILA recognizes staff induction as a critical process for introducing new personnel to organizational values, policies, expectations and professional responsibilities.

All new staff members shall receive appropriate induction on gender equality, diversity and social inclusion as part of their introduction to the Organization.

The induction process shall include awareness of:

- a. ILA's mission, vision and values;
- b. this Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion Policy;

- c. organizational commitments to equality and inclusion;
- d. workplace conduct standards;
- e. prevention of harassment and discrimination;
- f. safeguarding obligations;
- g. confidentiality requirements;
- h. reporting mechanisms;
- i. accessibility responsibilities; and
- j. professional ethics.

The Human Resource Unit shall coordinate induction processes in collaboration with relevant departments.

Induction shall ensure that staff understand:

- their responsibilities;
- expected behaviours;
- organizational procedures;
- consequences of misconduct; and
- available support mechanisms.

ILA shall maintain records of staff participation in induction activities for accountability and compliance purposes.

14.3 Continuous Learning

ILA recognizes that GEDSI knowledge and practice require continuous improvement due to changing social contexts, legal developments and organizational learning.

The Organization shall promote continuous learning through regular training, reflection and knowledge exchange.

Continuous learning activities shall address areas including:

- a. gender analysis;
- b. disability inclusion;

- c. social exclusion;
- d. inclusive communication;
- e. safeguarding;
- f. human rights approaches;
- g. trauma-sensitive practices;
- h. cultural awareness;
- i. inclusive leadership;
- j. accessible programme design; and
- k. community accountability.

ILA shall encourage staff to apply learning in their daily responsibilities and professional practice.

Managers shall support continuous learning by:

- identifying staff development needs;
- encouraging participation;
- providing opportunities for practical application;
- recognizing improvement; and
- integrating learning into performance discussions.

The Organization shall evaluate training effectiveness through:

- participant feedback;
- knowledge assessments;
- workplace observations;
- performance reviews; and
- programme outcomes.

14.4 Leadership Development

ILA recognizes that leadership commitment is essential for creating and sustaining an inclusive organizational culture.

Leadership development programmes shall strengthen the ability of managers and leaders to:

- a. promote equality and inclusion;
- b. identify and address discrimination;
- c. manage diverse teams;
- d. support inclusive decision-making;
- e. prevent harassment and abuse of authority;
- f. promote accountability;
- g. manage conflicts constructively;
- h. encourage participation;
- i. support employee development; and
- j. model ethical behaviour.

Leaders shall be expected to demonstrate commitment through:

- fair treatment of staff;
- inclusive communication;
- transparent decision-making;
- responsible use of authority;
- support for diverse perspectives; and
- accountability for organizational culture.

ILA shall encourage leadership approaches that recognize diversity as a strength and promote collaboration across different backgrounds and experiences.

14.5 Awareness Campaigns

ILA shall conduct awareness campaigns to promote understanding of gender equality, diversity and social inclusion among staff, partners, communities and stakeholders.

Awareness activities shall aim to:

- a. increase understanding of rights and responsibilities;
- b. challenge harmful stereotypes and discrimination;
- c. promote respectful relationships;

- d. encourage inclusive participation;
- e. strengthen reporting awareness;
- f. promote accessibility;
- g. improve community understanding of justice rights; and
- h. support behavioural change.

Awareness campaigns may include:

- public discussions;
- community outreach;
- information materials;
- social media communication;
- legal awareness sessions;
- workshops;
- staff forums; and
- advocacy activities.

ILA shall ensure that awareness materials are:

- culturally appropriate;
- accessible;
- gender-sensitive;
- easy to understand; and
- available through appropriate communication channels.

14.6 Community Sensitization

ILA recognizes that achieving social inclusion requires engagement beyond the Organization and depends on community awareness and participation.

The Organization shall conduct community sensitization activities to promote:

- a. understanding of legal rights;
- b. gender equality;
- c. respect for diversity;

- d. prevention of discrimination;
- e. inclusion of vulnerable groups;
- f. access to justice services;
- g. protection of women and children;
- h. disability rights; and
- i. peaceful dispute resolution.

Community sensitization approaches shall consider:

- local context;
- cultural practices;
- language needs;
- accessibility requirements;
- community leadership structures; and
- participation of marginalized groups.

ILA shall work with community representatives, local organizations and relevant stakeholders to ensure that sensitization activities are effective and sustainable.

14.7 Knowledge Management

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes knowledge management as an essential component of institutional strengthening, learning and continuous improvement in advancing gender equality, diversity and social inclusion.

Effective knowledge management enables the Organization to capture, organize, share and apply information, experiences and lessons that improve programmes, workplace practices and service delivery.

ILA shall establish knowledge management approaches that support:

- a. documentation of good practices;
- b. sharing of lessons learned;
- c. preservation of institutional knowledge;
- d. improvement of programme quality;
- e. strengthening of staff capacity;

- f. evidence-based decision-making;
- g. innovation and adaptation;
- h. organizational accountability; and
- i. continuous improvement.

Knowledge management activities shall include:

- documentation of successful approaches;
- development of guidance materials;
- collection of case studies;
- sharing of research findings;
- learning sessions;
- internal discussions;
- communities of practice;
- experience-sharing forums; and
- maintenance of relevant organizational records.

ILA shall ensure that GEDSI-related knowledge is integrated into organizational systems, including:

- programme planning;
- monitoring and evaluation;
- reporting;
- policy development;
- staff training;
- advocacy initiatives; and
- strategic decision-making.

The Organization shall promote knowledge sharing among:

- Board members;
- management;
- employees;
- volunteers;
- consultants;
- partners; and
- community stakeholders.

Knowledge generated through programmes shall be managed responsibly, ensuring respect for:

- confidentiality;
- privacy;
- informed consent;
- protection of vulnerable individuals; and
- ethical information use.

14.8 Organizational Learning

ILA recognizes organizational learning as a continuous process through which the Organization reflects on experiences, adapts practices and improves effectiveness.

The Organization shall promote a learning culture where successes, challenges, feedback and evidence contribute to better decision-making and stronger GEDSI outcomes.

Organizational learning shall involve:

- a. reviewing programme experiences;
- b. analysing monitoring and evaluation findings;
- c. learning from community feedback;
- d. identifying institutional strengths and gaps;
- e. adapting policies and procedures;
- f. improving staff practices;
- g. sharing lessons across departments;
- h. encouraging innovation; and
- i. promoting accountability.

ILA shall use learning processes to identify:

- barriers affecting inclusion;
- successful approaches;
- areas requiring improvement;
- emerging risks;
- changing community needs; and
- opportunities for stronger impact.

Learning shall be integrated into:

- strategic planning;
- annual work plans;
- programme reviews;
- staff performance processes;
- policy revisions;
- partnership management; and
- resource allocation decisions.

ILA shall encourage a culture where staff and stakeholders can openly discuss challenges without fear of blame, while maintaining accountability for professional responsibilities.

Managers shall support organizational learning by:

- a. encouraging reflection and feedback;
- b. documenting lessons from activities;
- c. sharing experiences;
- d. supporting improvement initiatives;
- e. recognizing innovation; and
- f. applying lessons to future actions.

The Organization shall periodically review the effectiveness of its capacity development and learning approaches to ensure they remain relevant, inclusive and responsive.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

MONITORING, EVALUATION, REPORTING AND COMPLIANCE

15.1 Monitoring Framework

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes monitoring as an essential process for ensuring accountability, measuring progress and strengthening the implementation of Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) commitments.

ILA shall establish a structured monitoring framework to assess whether organizational policies, programmes, workplace practices and service delivery approaches effectively promote equality, accessibility and inclusion.

The monitoring framework shall support:

- a. tracking implementation of this Policy;
- b. measuring progress towards GEDSI objectives;
- c. identifying challenges and barriers;
- d. assessing organizational performance;
- e. strengthening accountability;
- f. informing decision-making;
- g. improving programme effectiveness; and
- h. promoting continuous learning.

The GEDSI monitoring framework shall be integrated into existing organizational systems, including:

- strategic planning;
- programme monitoring;
- MEAL systems;
- human resource management;
- risk management;
- compliance monitoring; and
- reporting processes.

ILA shall monitor GEDSI performance at different levels, including:

a. Institutional Level

Monitoring shall assess:

- organizational culture;
- workforce diversity;
- policy implementation;

- leadership commitment;
- staff capacity;
- workplace inclusion;
- prevention mechanisms; and
- accountability systems.

b. Programme Level

Monitoring shall assess:

- accessibility of services;
- participation of diverse groups;
- inclusion outcomes;
- community engagement;
- beneficiary experiences;
- safeguarding considerations; and
- programme impacts.

c. Service Delivery Level

Monitoring shall assess:

- access to legal aid services;
- equal treatment of clients;
- responsiveness to vulnerable groups;
- client satisfaction;
- confidentiality practices; and
- barriers affecting service access.

ILA shall develop appropriate monitoring tools, procedures and responsibilities to ensure consistent collection and analysis of GEDSI-related information.

15.2 Performance Indicators

ILA shall establish clear performance indicators to measure progress in implementing gender equality, diversity and social inclusion commitments.

Indicators shall be developed according to organizational priorities, programme objectives and available resources.

GEDSI indicators may include:

a. Workforce Indicators

Examples include:

- representation of women and men within the workforce;
- diversity of staff composition;
- participation in training activities;
- workplace satisfaction;
- promotion and career development opportunities;
- reported discrimination concerns; and
- accessibility of workplace systems.

b. Programme Indicators

Examples include:

- number and diversity of persons accessing legal aid services;
- participation of vulnerable groups;
- accessibility of programme activities;
- inclusion of gender considerations in project plans;
- community feedback results;
- referrals provided to vulnerable persons; and
- outcomes achieved for marginalized groups.

c. Organizational Culture Indicators

Examples include:

- staff awareness of GEDSI principles;
- compliance with organizational policies;
- completion of mandatory training;
- effectiveness of complaints mechanisms;
- leadership commitment; and
- implementation of corrective actions.

Performance indicators shall be:

- a. relevant;
- b. measurable;
- c. realistic;
- d. time-bound;

- e. evidence-based; and
- f. aligned with organizational objectives.

ILA shall periodically review indicators to ensure they remain appropriate and responsive to changing needs.

15.3 Data Collection

ILA recognizes that effective monitoring requires accurate, ethical and reliable information.

The Organization shall establish data collection systems that support assessment of GEDSI outcomes while protecting individual rights and confidentiality.

Data collection shall be guided by:

- a. necessity;
- b. relevance;
- c. accuracy;
- d. informed participation;
- e. confidentiality;
- f. responsible use;
- g. data protection principles; and
- h. ethical standards.

ILA may collect information through:

- programme records;
- client intake systems;
- surveys;
- interviews;
- focus group discussions;
- staff assessments;
- community consultations;
- monitoring visits;

- evaluations; and
- feedback mechanisms.

Data collection processes shall consider accessibility needs and ensure participation of diverse groups.

ILA shall avoid collecting unnecessary personal information and shall ensure that sensitive information is handled responsibly.

Staff involved in data collection shall receive appropriate guidance on:

- ethical engagement;
- confidentiality;
- safeguarding;
- respectful communication;
- informed consent; and
- responsible data management.

15.4 Sex-, Age- and Disability-Disaggregated Data

ILA recognizes the importance of disaggregated data in understanding whether programmes and services reach diverse populations effectively.

The Organization shall promote the collection and analysis of sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data (SADD) where appropriate and relevant.

Disaggregated data shall support understanding of:

- a. who is accessing services;
- b. who may be excluded;
- c. whether programmes benefit different groups equally;
- d. barriers affecting participation;
- e. effectiveness of inclusion measures; and
- f. areas requiring improvement.

Where appropriate, data may also consider other relevant factors, such as:

- geographic location;
- displacement status;
- vulnerability factors;
- social circumstances; and

- access barriers.

ILA shall ensure that collection of disaggregated data:

- respects privacy;
- protects confidentiality;
- avoids discrimination;
- does not create harm;
- is collected for legitimate purposes; and
- complies with applicable data protection requirements.

Data analysis shall be used to improve:

- programme design;
- resource allocation;
- outreach strategies;
- service accessibility;
- organizational planning; and
- accountability mechanisms.

15.5 Reporting Requirements

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes reporting as an essential mechanism for promoting transparency, accountability and effective implementation of Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) commitments.

ILA shall establish reporting processes to document progress, challenges, achievements and areas requiring improvement.

Reporting shall provide information on:

- a. implementation of this Policy;
- b. achievement of GEDSI objectives;
- c. programme inclusion outcomes;
- d. workplace diversity and inclusion practices;
- e. identified risks and mitigation measures;
- f. complaints and response mechanisms;
- g. training and capacity development activities;
- h. compliance with organizational requirements; and

- i. recommendations for improvement.

Reports shall be prepared at appropriate levels, including:

a. Departmental Reporting

Departments shall provide updates on GEDSI integration within their areas of responsibility.

Departmental reports may include:

- activities implemented;
- participation of diverse groups;
- challenges encountered;
- corrective measures;
- lessons learned; and
- recommendations.

b. Programme Reporting

Programme teams shall incorporate GEDSI considerations into project reports, including:

- beneficiary participation;
- inclusion outcomes;
- accessibility measures;
- community feedback;
- risks identified;
- mitigation actions; and
- results achieved.

c. Management Reporting

Senior Management shall periodically review GEDSI implementation and provide consolidated reports to relevant governance structures.

d. Board Reporting

The Executive Director shall provide the Board of Directors with periodic updates regarding:

- policy implementation;
- organizational performance;
- emerging risks;
- compliance issues;
- improvement measures; and
- strategic recommendations.

ILA shall ensure that reporting information is accurate, evidence-based and presented in a manner that supports decision-making.

Where reports contain sensitive information, appropriate confidentiality and data protection measures shall be applied.

15.6 Internal Audits

ILA recognizes internal audits as an important accountability mechanism for assessing compliance, identifying gaps and strengthening institutional systems.

The Organization shall conduct periodic internal reviews or audits to assess implementation of GEDSI commitments across relevant operational areas.

Internal audits may examine:

- a. compliance with this Policy;
- b. recruitment and employment practices;
- c. programme accessibility;
- d. service delivery standards;
- e. training and awareness activities;
- f. complaints and response mechanisms;
- g. data management practices;
- h. partnership arrangements;
- i. resource allocation; and
- j. organizational culture.

Internal audits shall assess whether:

- policies are being implemented effectively;
- responsibilities are clearly assigned;
- procedures are being followed;
- risks are properly managed;
- resources are used appropriately; and
- improvement actions are required.

Audit processes shall be conducted objectively and may involve:

- document reviews;
- interviews;
- observations;
- staff consultations;
- programme assessments; and
- analysis of relevant records.

Findings from internal audits shall be documented and communicated to relevant management structures.

ILA shall ensure that audit findings are used constructively to strengthen systems and improve organizational performance.

15.7 Compliance Reviews

ILA shall conduct periodic compliance reviews to ensure that organizational practices remain consistent with:

- this Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion Policy;
- applicable laws;
- human rights standards;
- donor requirements;
- organizational policies; and
- professional obligations.

Compliance reviews shall assess:

- a. implementation of policy requirements;
- b. adherence to inclusion standards;
- c. effectiveness of accountability mechanisms;
- d. workplace practices;
- e. programme approaches;
- f. partner compliance;
- g. safeguarding requirements;
- h. accessibility measures; and
- i. risk management practices.

Compliance reviews may be conducted by:

- management;
- Human Resource Unit;
- MEAL Unit;
- GEDSI Focal Person;
- internal review teams;
- external reviewers; or
- other authorized persons.

The review process shall identify:

- strengths;
- weaknesses;
- areas of non-compliance;
- risks;
- recommended actions; and
- responsible persons.

Where non-compliance is identified, ILA shall establish appropriate corrective measures within reasonable timelines.

The Organization shall maintain records of compliance reviews for accountability and institutional learning.

15.8 Corrective Action Plans

ILA recognizes that monitoring and compliance processes are meaningful only when identified gaps result in appropriate action.

Where weaknesses, risks or instances of non-compliance are identified, the Organization shall develop corrective action plans.

Corrective action plans shall include:

- a. identified issue or gap;
- b. analysis of underlying causes;
- c. required corrective measures;
- d. responsible persons;
- e. implementation timelines;

- f. required resources;
- g. monitoring arrangements; and
- h. expected outcomes.

Corrective actions may include:

- policy improvements;
- additional training;
- changes to procedures;
- improved accessibility measures;
- strengthened supervision;
- enhanced communication;
- resource adjustments;
- disciplinary action where necessary; or
- other appropriate interventions.

Responsible departments shall monitor implementation of corrective actions and provide updates to management.

The Organization shall prioritize corrective actions based on:

- seriousness of the issue;
- potential impact;
- affected persons;
- organizational risks;
- legal obligations; and
- available resources.

Failure to implement agreed corrective measures may result in further management action.

15.9 Continuous Improvement

ILA recognizes that gender equality, diversity and social inclusion require ongoing commitment, reflection and improvement.

The Organization shall promote continuous improvement by regularly reviewing policies, practices, programmes and institutional approaches.

Continuous improvement shall involve:

- a. learning from monitoring and evaluation findings;

- b. reviewing feedback from communities and staff;
- c. adapting to changing contexts;
- d. strengthening organizational capacity;
- e. improving service delivery approaches;
- f. addressing emerging risks;
- g. adopting good practices;
- h. strengthening accountability systems; and
- i. updating policies where necessary.

ILA shall encourage innovation and learning by:

- documenting experiences;
- sharing knowledge;
- encouraging constructive feedback;
- supporting staff initiatives;
- reviewing successful approaches; and
- applying evidence-based improvements.

The Organization shall periodically assess whether its GEDSI commitments remain effective and relevant.

Continuous improvement shall ensure that ILA remains responsive to:

- changing community needs;
- evolving legal standards;
- emerging social challenges;
- donor expectations;
- organizational growth; and
- lessons from implementation.

Through continuous improvement, ILA shall strengthen its commitment to equality, inclusion, dignity and access to justice for all.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, REVIEW AND TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

16.1 Implementation Strategy

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes that effective implementation of the Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Policy requires coordinated action, institutional commitment, adequate resources and continuous monitoring.

This Policy shall be implemented through an integrated organizational approach that ensures GEDSI principles are incorporated into governance, operations, programmes, human resource management, legal aid services and stakeholder engagement.

ILA shall implement this Policy through the following approaches:

a. Institutional Integration

GEDSI principles shall be integrated into:

- strategic plans;
- annual work plans;
- departmental plans;
- programme designs;
- human resource procedures;
- procurement processes;
- partnership agreements;
- risk management systems;
- monitoring and evaluation frameworks; and
- organizational decision-making.

b. Leadership Commitment

The Board of Directors and senior management shall provide leadership and oversight to ensure that GEDSI commitments are implemented effectively.

Leadership shall promote:

- accountability;
- inclusion;
- transparency;
- responsible decision-making;
- prevention of discrimination; and
- continuous improvement.

c. Capacity Development

ILA shall strengthen the knowledge and skills of staff, volunteers, consultants and partners through:

- induction programmes;
- training sessions;

- awareness activities;
- technical guidance;
- learning initiatives; and
- professional development.

d. Programme Integration

All programmes and projects shall consider GEDSI principles throughout the programme cycle, including:

- assessment;
- design;
- implementation;
- monitoring;
- evaluation; and
- reporting.

e. Accountability Mechanisms

ILA shall establish mechanisms to ensure accountability, including:

- reporting channels;
- complaints mechanisms;
- monitoring systems;
- compliance reviews;
- feedback processes; and
- corrective actions.

f. Continuous Review

Implementation shall be reviewed periodically to identify achievements, challenges and opportunities for strengthening organizational practice.

16.2 Institutional Responsibilities

Effective implementation of this Policy requires clear responsibilities across all levels of the Organization.

a. Board of Directors

The Board shall:

- provide governance oversight;
- approve the Policy;

- ensure strategic alignment;
- monitor institutional performance; and
- promote accountability.

b. Executive Director

The Executive Director shall:

- provide overall leadership;
- ensure implementation across the Organization;
- allocate resources;
- ensure compliance;
- report progress to the Board; and
- promote organizational commitment.

c. Senior Management

Senior Management shall:

- integrate GEDSI into departmental operations;
- supervise implementation;
- support staff compliance;
- identify risks;
- monitor performance; and
- promote inclusive practices.

d. Human Resource Unit

The Human Resource Unit shall:

- integrate GEDSI into employment practices;
- support workplace inclusion;
- manage staff-related procedures;
- coordinate training;
- address workplace concerns; and
- maintain relevant records.

e. Programme Department

The Programme Department shall:

- integrate GEDSI into programmes;
- promote inclusive service delivery;
- monitor beneficiary participation;
- identify barriers;
- collect relevant data; and

- apply lessons learned.

f. MEAL Unit

The MEAL Unit shall:

- support monitoring frameworks;
- develop indicators;
- analyse data;
- measure outcomes;
- support reporting; and
- promote learning.

g. GEDSI Focal Person

The GEDSI Focal Person shall:

- coordinate implementation support;
- provide technical guidance;
- promote awareness;
- monitor progress;
- support reporting; and
- identify improvement opportunities.

h. All Staff

All staff members shall:

- comply with this Policy;
- promote inclusion;
- respect diversity;
- prevent discrimination;
- report concerns; and
- contribute to a positive organizational culture.

16.3 Resource Mobilization

ILA recognizes that effective implementation of GEDSI commitments requires adequate financial, human, technical and institutional resources.

The Organization shall mobilize resources necessary to support implementation of this Policy through:

- a. organizational budgeting processes;
- b. programme funding proposals;

- c. donor engagement;
- d. partnership development;
- e. capacity-building initiatives; and
- f. other legitimate resource opportunities.

Resource mobilization shall consider the costs associated with:

- staff training;
- accessibility measures;
- inclusive communication;
- community engagement;
- monitoring and evaluation;
- safeguarding;
- reasonable accommodation;
- technical support; and
- institutional strengthening.

ILA shall ensure that resource allocation decisions support equitable participation and do not create barriers for vulnerable groups.

The Organization shall promote responsible resource management by ensuring that resources dedicated to GEDSI activities are:

- planned;
- properly managed;
- monitored;
- reported; and
- used effectively.

16.4 Budgeting

ILA shall integrate GEDSI considerations into organizational and programme budgeting processes.

Inclusive budgeting shall ensure that financial planning reflects commitments to:

- equality;
- accessibility;
- diversity;
- participation;

- protection; and
- accountability.

Budgeting processes shall consider:

- a. costs associated with inclusive programme delivery;
- b. accessibility requirements;
- c. training and capacity development;
- d. community participation;
- e. communication needs;
- f. monitoring and evaluation activities;
- g. safeguarding measures;
- h. support services where necessary; and
- i. implementation of corrective actions.

Programme managers and finance personnel shall collaborate to ensure that budgets adequately support GEDSI objectives.

ILA shall monitor expenditure related to GEDSI commitments to ensure:

- effective utilization of resources;
- transparency;
- accountability; and
- achievement of intended outcomes.

16.5 Risk Management

The Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA) recognizes that implementation of Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) commitments may involve institutional, operational, financial, programme and reputational risks.

ILA shall integrate GEDSI-related risks into its broader organizational risk management framework to ensure that potential challenges are identified, assessed, mitigated and monitored.

GEDSI-related risks may include:

- a. discrimination within the workplace or programmes;
- b. exclusion of vulnerable groups;
- c. inadequate accessibility measures;
- d. failure to meet legal or donor requirements;
- e. insufficient staff capacity;
- f. resistance to organizational change;
- g. ineffective accountability mechanisms;
- h. safeguarding concerns;
- i. misuse of resources;
- j. inadequate community participation; and
- k. reputational risks arising from non-compliance.

ILA shall manage GEDSI-related risks through:

a. Risk Identification

The Organization shall regularly identify risks affecting:

- employees;
- clients;
- communities;
- partners;
- programmes; and
- institutional systems.

b. Risk Assessment

Identified risks shall be assessed based on:

- likelihood of occurrence;
- potential impact;
- affected persons;
- existing controls; and
- required mitigation measures.

c. Risk Mitigation

ILA shall develop appropriate measures, including:

- strengthening policies and procedures;
- providing training;
- improving accessibility;
- enhancing supervision;
- strengthening reporting mechanisms;
- improving communication;
- allocating resources; and
- engaging relevant stakeholders.

d. Risk Monitoring

Risk management measures shall be periodically reviewed to ensure effectiveness and relevance.

ILA shall ensure that risk management approaches do not create additional harm, reinforce exclusion or negatively affect vulnerable individuals.

16.6 Policy Review

ILA recognizes that policies must remain relevant, effective and responsive to changing organizational, legal and social contexts.

This Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion Policy shall be reviewed periodically to assess:

- a. effectiveness of implementation;
- b. relevance of policy provisions;
- c. compliance with legal and regulatory developments;
- d. alignment with organizational strategy;
- e. emerging GEDSI challenges;
- f. stakeholder feedback;
- g. lessons learned; and
- h. opportunities for improvement.

The Policy shall normally be reviewed every three (3) years or earlier where significant changes occur, including:

- changes in applicable laws;

- changes in organizational structure;
- significant programme expansion;
- new donor requirements;
- emerging risks; or
- lessons from implementation.

The review process shall involve relevant stakeholders, including:

- Board members;
- management;
- staff representatives;
- GEDSI focal persons;
- programme teams;
- MEAL personnel;
- partners where appropriate; and
- community representatives where relevant.

Review findings shall be documented and shall inform possible amendments, improvements or further actions.

16.7 Amendment Procedures

ILA recognizes that amendments may be necessary to ensure that this Policy remains effective and aligned with organizational needs and external requirements.

Proposals for amendment may arise from:

- a. Board decisions;
- b. management recommendations;
- c. policy review findings;
- d. legal or regulatory changes;
- e. donor requirements;
- f. monitoring and evaluation findings;
- g. stakeholder feedback; or
- h. organizational learning.

The amendment process shall include:

a. Identification of Proposed Changes

Proposed amendments shall clearly identify:

- the provision requiring amendment;
- reasons for change;
- expected benefits;
- potential impacts; and
- implementation considerations.

b. Review and Consultation

Proposed amendments shall be reviewed by relevant departments and stakeholders to ensure appropriateness and consistency.

c. Approval

No amendment shall become effective unless approved through the appropriate organizational approval process.

d. Communication

Approved amendments shall be communicated to:

- staff;
- volunteers;
- consultants;
- partners; and
- other relevant stakeholders.

e. Implementation

The Organization shall update relevant procedures, tools, training materials and practices to reflect approved amendments.

16.8 Version Control

ILA shall maintain proper version control to ensure that the current approved version of this Policy is clearly identified, accessible and used consistently.

The Policy shall contain:

- policy title;
- policy number;

- version number;
- approval date;
- effective date;
- review date;
- approving authority; and
- amendment history.

The Human Resource Unit or designated policy custodian shall maintain official records of:

- a. approved versions;
- b. amendment records;
- c. review dates;
- d. distribution records; and
- e. obsolete versions.

Only the approved current version shall be considered valid for implementation.

Previous versions shall be retained for institutional records but clearly marked as superseded.

ILA shall ensure that staff and relevant stakeholders have access to the current Policy version.

16.9 Transitional Arrangements

ILA recognizes that implementation of this Policy may require gradual institutional adjustment and strengthening.

During the transition period, the Organization shall undertake necessary actions to align existing systems, procedures and practices with GEDSI commitments.

Transitional measures may include:

- a. reviewing existing policies and procedures;
- b. conducting staff awareness sessions;
- c. establishing GEDSI coordination mechanisms;
- d. identifying implementation gaps;

- e. developing action plans;
- f. strengthening reporting mechanisms;
- g. improving accessibility measures;
- h. updating programme tools;
- i. integrating GEDSI indicators; and
- j. conducting capacity-building activities.

Existing programmes, contracts and operational arrangements shall continue while being progressively aligned with this Policy.

Where immediate compliance is not possible, ILA shall develop reasonable improvement measures and timelines.

The transition process shall prioritize:

- protection of affected persons;
- continuity of essential services;
- organizational learning;
- responsible resource management; and
- sustainable implementation.

16.10 Approval

This Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion Policy shall become effective upon approval by the Board of Directors of the Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA).

The approval process shall confirm that:

- a. the Policy aligns with organizational objectives;
- b. appropriate consultation has been undertaken;
- c. implementation responsibilities are clear;
- d. required resources have been considered; and
- e. accountability mechanisms are established.

Upon approval, the Policy shall be formally adopted as an organizational policy and shall guide all relevant operations, programmes and relationships.

The Board shall maintain oversight of implementation and may request periodic reports on progress and compliance.

16.11 Effective Date

This Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion Policy shall take effect on the date approved by the Board of Directors.

Policy Title: Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Policy

Organization: Initiative for Legal Aid (ILA)

Version: 1.0

Approval Authority: Board of Directors

Effective Date: _____

Review Date: _____

From the effective date, all ILA departments, personnel, volunteers, consultants and partners shall be required to comply with the provisions of this Policy.

The Organization shall ensure that this Policy is incorporated into relevant operational procedures, programme frameworks, employment practices, partnership arrangements and accountability systems.

