



# **INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE EMPOWERMENT AND JUSTICE (ISEJ)**

## **GENDER EQUALITY PLAN 2026-2028**

Adopted by the ISEJ Board of Trustees

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## 1. Statement of Commitment

The Institute for Sustainable Empowerment and Justice (ISEJ) is a Zimbabwe-registered Private Voluntary Organisation working at the intersection of law, public policy, gender equality, climate justice, public health and narrative change. Gender equality is not an add-on to ISEJ's work; it is one of its founding purposes. This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) turns that purpose inward: it commits ISEJ to the same standards of equality, fairness and safety in its own governance, employment and research practice that it advocates for in law and policy.

ISEJ is a young and deliberately small organisation. This Plan is therefore honest about scale. It does not borrow the machinery of a large institution; it commits to measures that a small team can actually implement, monitor and be held accountable for, and it is designed to grow with the organisation.

This Plan is a formal organisational document. It has been adopted by the Board of Trustees, is signed by ISEJ's top management, and is published on ISEJ's website. It applies to all trustees, staff, associates, consultants, interns and volunteers, and to all ISEJ programmes, research and partnerships.

## 2. Scope and Definitions

For the purposes of this Plan, gender equality means the equal rights, responsibilities, opportunities and treatment of all persons regardless of sex or gender, understood inclusively and in all its diversity. Gender mainstreaming means the systematic integration of a gender perspective into ISEJ's governance, operations, research design, analysis and dissemination. Gender-based violence (GBV) includes sexual harassment and any act of physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm inflicted on the basis of sex or gender.

The Plan covers the period January 2026 to December 2028, with a mid-term review in June 2027. It addresses the four process requirements of the Horizon Europe GEP eligibility criterion: publication and adoption, dedicated resources, data collection and monitoring, and training and sets concrete measures and targets across the five recommended thematic areas.

## 3. Governance, Resources and Expertise

### 3.1 Responsibility and sign-off

- **Board of Trustees:** adopts the Plan, receives the annual gender equality report, and holds the Team Lead accountable for implementation.
- **Team Lead:** carries overall responsibility for implementation and reports to the Board annually.
- **Gender Equality Focal Point:** a designated member of the core team responsible for coordinating data collection, monitoring, training and the annual report. The Focal Point role is written into the relevant role description and confirmed by Board minute.

### 3.2 Dedicated resources

ISEJ commits the following resources to implementation:



- **Staff time:** a defined allocation of the Gender Equality Focal Point's time (minimum five per cent of working time) and Team Lead oversight time, recognised in workplans.
- **Budget:** an annual budget line for GEP implementation (training, data collection, reporting and safeguarding measures) in ISEJ's organisational budget, and a costed gender equality component in project budgets where the donor framework allows.
- **Expertise:** ISEJ's in-house expertise in gender law and policy including the Team Lead's specialisation in gender equality, sexual and gender-based violence prosecution, and gender policy advisory work (including Global Fund Gender Equality Marker technical advisory) is formally placed at the service of this Plan. Where independent perspective is needed (notably for complaints handling and training delivery), ISEJ will engage external expertise.

## 4. Data Collection and Monitoring

ISEJ collects and maintains sex/gender-disaggregated data on its personnel, including trustees, staff, associates, consultants, interns and volunteers, disaggregated by role, seniority, contract type and remuneration band. Because ISEJ is small, data will be handled with strict confidentiality and reported in a form that does not expose identifiable individuals; where a category contains fewer than three persons, figures are reported in aggregate.

- **Baseline:** a first full data collection exercise will be completed by Q3 2026 and will constitute the baseline for all targets in this Plan.
- **Annual reporting:** the Focal Point produces an annual gender equality report against the indicators in Annex A, presented to the Board and used to adjust measures. This exceeds the Horizon Europe minimum of reporting every two years.
- **Research monitoring:** all ISEJ research and consultancy outputs are tracked for whether sex/gender-disaggregated data and gender analysis were applied (see Section 6.4).

Monitoring evidence (data tables, Board minutes, training records, the annual report) is retained and can be produced on request, including for EU grant compliance purposes.

## 5. Training and Awareness Raising

All ISEJ personnel and decision-makers explicitly including the Board of Trustees and Team Lead participate in gender equality training. The programme (Annex B) includes:

- An annual all-team session on gender equality and unconscious gender bias, including bias in recruitment, evaluation and authorship decisions.
- A dedicated session for trustees and decision-makers on gender-responsive governance and their oversight duties under this Plan.
- **Induction:** every new trustee, staff member, consultant or intern receives this Plan and a briefing on it within one month of engagement.
- Training on the prevention of sexual harassment and GBV, including reporting channels, for all personnel.



Attendance registers, agendas and materials are retained as evidence of delivery. Where appropriate, ISEJ draws on its own training capability; the unconscious bias and safeguarding sessions will use external or peer facilitators to preserve independence.



## 6. Thematic Areas: Measures and Targets

### 6.1 Work–life balance and organisational culture

ISEJ's work including its research on unpaid care and domestic work recognises that care burdens fall unequally. The organisation applies that insight to itself.

- Flexible and remote working arrangements are available to all personnel by default, subject only to programme delivery needs.
- Meetings are scheduled within core hours (09:00-16:00) to accommodate care responsibilities.
- Care responsibilities are treated as a legitimate scheduling constraint for fieldwork and travel, and planned around, not penalised.
- **Target:** a written flexible-working and leave note (including family and compassionate leave) adopted by Q4 2026; organisational culture questions included in an annual all-team check-in from 2027.

### 6.2 Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

- ISEJ maintains gender balance in its leadership: the Board of Trustees and core team leadership shall each maintain at least 40 per cent representation of women, with the ambition of parity.
- Decision-making bodies for research design, recruitment panels and evaluation panels are gender-balanced wherever the size of the organisation permits; where a panel of three or more is convened, it must not be single-gender.
- **Target:** ≥40 per cent women on the Board and in core team leadership throughout the Plan period, verified in the annual report against the Q3 2026 baseline.

### 6.3 Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

- All vacancy notices and calls for consultants use gender-neutral language and explicitly encourage applications from women and persons of all genders.
- Selection is by pre-agreed, transparent criteria; recruitment panels receive the unconscious bias briefing before shortlisting.
- Equal remuneration for work of equal value: consultant and staff rates are set by role and deliverable, not negotiation history; remuneration bands are reviewed annually in the gender equality report.
- Career progression: authorship, conference representation and media visibility opportunities are distributed transparently across the team and monitored by gender.
- **Target:** 100 per cent of recruitment processes from 2026 onward documented against these standards; zero unexplained gender remuneration gaps within role bands by end 2027.

### 6.4 Integration of the gender dimension into research and analysis content

This is where ISEJ's mandate and its GEP converge most strongly. ISEJ commits that:

- Every research design, evaluation methodology and policy analysis includes an explicit gender analysis at design stage, including how sex and gender shape the problem studied, the data collected and the interpretation of findings.



- Sex/gender-disaggregated data collection is the default in all primary research (surveys, FGDs, KIIs); departures are justified in writing.
- Research ethics protocols address gendered risks to participants, including safeguarding in GBV-related and other sensitive research.
- ISEJ's narrative and culture work continues to interrogate gendered master narratives as part of its epistemic justice mandate.
- **Target:** 100 per cent of ISEJ research outputs from 2026 include a documented gender dimension at design stage, tracked in the annual report.

## 6.5 Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

- Zero tolerance: ISEJ prohibits all forms of GBV, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse by or against any person within its work, including fieldwork, partner engagement and online conduct.
- **Policy:** a standalone Safeguarding and Anti-Harassment Policy with definitions, confidential reporting channels, protection from retaliation, survivor-centred handling and clear sanctions will be adopted within six months of this Plan's adoption.
- Reporting: complaints may be made to the Focal Point, the Team Lead, or directly to the Board Chair where the complaint concerns management; an external, independent handler will be designated for complaints concerning the Board or Team Lead.
- Fieldwork protocols include risk assessment for GBV and harassment affecting both researchers and participants.
- **Target:** policy adopted and all personnel trained on it by mid-2027; 100 per cent of complaints handled within the policy's timelines; annual reporting on complaints (in anonymised, aggregate form) to the Board.

## 7. Publication, Review and Accountability

- This Plan is published on the ISEJ website, together with any subsequent versions. Superseded versions remain available.
- The Plan is signed by the Team Lead and the Board Chairperson; the Board resolution adopting it is minuted and retained as evidence of adoption.
- Mid-term review June 2027; full revision and successor Plan by December 2028.
- The annual gender equality report is the accountability instrument: it reports against every indicator in Annex A and every target in Section 6.

## 8. Adoption and Signature

This Gender Equality Plan was considered and adopted by the ISEJ Board of Trustees by resolution recorded in the Board minutes.



## Annex A: Indicator and Data-Collection Framework

Collected by the Gender Equality Focal Point; reported annually to the Board. Baseline: Q3 2026. Small-number categories are reported in aggregate to protect confidentiality.

| Indicator                                                              | Disaggregation                             | Frequency   | Source                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Composition of Board of Trustees                                       | Sex/gender, role                           | Annual      | Board records         |
| Composition of core team, associates, consultants, interns, volunteers | Sex/gender, role, seniority, contract type | Annual      | Personnel records     |
| Remuneration by role band                                              | Sex/gender, band                           | Annual      | Finance records       |
| Recruitment: applications, shortlists, appointments                    | Sex/gender, per process                    | Per process | Recruitment files     |
| Authorship and public representation (publications, panels, media)     | Sex/gender                                 | Annual      | Output log            |
| Research outputs with documented gender dimension at design stage      | Per output (yes/no + note)                 | Annual      | Research files        |
| Training delivery: sessions held, attendance                           | Sex/gender, staff vs decision-makers       | Per session | Attendance registers  |
| GBV/harassment complaints received and resolved                        | Aggregate, anonymised                      | Annual      | Confidential register |
| Flexible working uptake and culture check-in results                   | Aggregate                                  | Annual      | Team check-in         |

## Annex B: Training and Awareness-Raising Calendar 2026-2028

| When    | Session                                                                                     | Audience                        | Evidence            |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Q3 2026 | GEP launch briefing: contents, responsibilities, reporting channels                         | All personnel + Board           | Agenda, register    |
| Q4 2026 | Gender equality and unconscious gender bias (incl. bias in recruitment and authorship)      | All personnel                   | Materials, register |
| Q1 2027 | Gender-responsive governance and GEP oversight duties                                       | Board of Trustees and Team Lead | Minutes, register   |
| Q2 2027 | Safeguarding, sexual harassment and GBV prevention; reporting and survivor-centred handling | All personnel + Board           | Materials, register |
| Q3 2027 | Gender dimension in research design (disaggregation, gendered risk, analysis)               | Research team and consultants   | Materials, register |



| When                   | Session                                                                                                                                                      | Audience                                | Evidence                    |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2028<br>(annual cycle) | Refresher: gender equality and unconscious bias; safeguarding refresher; induction briefings for all new personnel (ongoing, within one month of engagement) | All personnel + Board;<br>new personnel | Registers,<br>induction log |

*Sessions are delivered by ISEJ's in-house gender expertise or by external/peer facilitators where independence is required. All sessions cover unconscious gender bias directly or by module.*